

LAMPLIGHTER

9 Tammuz
Parshas
Chukas
1252
15 July
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Chukat, tells of the death of Aaron, Moses' brother, in whose merit the miraculous "Clouds of Glory" used to accompany the Jews on their journey through the desert. When Aaron died the clouds disappeared, but later reappeared in the merit of Moses. Two other outstanding miracles that accompanied the Israelites during their 40 years in the desert were the Manna that fell daily, and the "Well of Miriam" which supplied them with water.

Each of these three miracles had very different characteristics.

The Clouds of Glory protected the people externally. The clouds protected them from harsh winds, snakes and serpents. They smoothed out the mountains, and kept the Israelites' clothes clean. All of these are external functions.

The Manna was a wonderful food in which one could experience any taste one desired. Food is something that is absorbed internally and provides nourishment and sustenance.

The Well of Miriam was a source of water - which is not, in itself, nourishing. The principal function of water in the body is to act as a medium to carry food to all parts of the body.

Three different aspects or "dimensions" of Torah are signified and paralleled by the Clouds, the Manna and the Well. There is an aspect of Torah which is absorbed internally like the Manna; there is an aspect that provides external protection, like the Clouds of Glory; and there is that aspect of Torah that carries the "external protection" and the "nourishment" to all Jews - like the water of Miriam's Well.

There is another way in which the "Clouds of Glory" are similar to the Torah, for they encompassed and protected all the Jews - even those few who still clung to idolatry - from the crossing of the Red Sea until their entry into Israel. In a similar way, the Torah encompasses each and every one of our people from the greatest to the smallest; it gives us the strength to go through the wilderness, not to fear the snakes and serpents, and to be constantly imbued with a spirit of self-sacrifice.

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, related how he was once standing with a large group of diverse Jews taking shelter from the Nazi bombardment of Warsaw. The group was made up of Jews from every spectrum and every level of spirituality, from great tzadikim such as the Rebbe, to simple Jews, and even those who had no connection with Judaism. But when a bomb exploded not far from them, the entire group cried out in unison, "Shema Yisrael."

Through studying the Torah, even if one understands no more than the simple explanation, one receives the nourishment (Manna) and protection (Clouds of Glory) of Torah.

The New Me

By Elisha Greenbaum

Every time I resolve to turn over a new leaf the same thing happens:

The first day of the rest of my life I wake up bright and early. I plan my day, mentally checking off a series of decisions and resolutions to be accomplished. I set off on my first vital task, and, just about then, a little voice goes off in my mind and points out that the job I'm about to start isn't so important after all. There are more important things I should be focusing on.

Right this voice is, after all failing to plan is planning to fail. So I make a cup of coffee, review my to-do list, prioritize and prune, and then settle down to setting off again.

But maybe I was right the first time after all? I'd hate to waste all my newfound energy and rapidly dwindling time on an inconsequential, so I phone a friend or wake my wife and request their advice. I have another coffee and commit myself to really getting on with it, whatever it is.

By the end of the day I've planned a lot and procrastinated even more. I've got nothing to show for all my reformist zeal and lost my enthusiasm for self-improvement. I'm probably better off going back to my old ways. Or am I? I'll wake up early and decide, first thing tomorrow morning. What went wrong?

This week's Torah reading introduces the perplexing mitzvah of the "Red Heifer," with the words: "This is the chok [supra-rational commandment] of the Torah." Rashi remarks that the Satan will often attempt to confuse you before you begin to do a mitzvah by asking, "Why are you doing this mitzvah?"

It's a trick. Your yetzer hara (evil inclination) is trying to distract you from your task. Why this mitzvah and not another one? How do you know that this is the priority, is it not possible that you're neglecting another, more important responsibility?

You get so hung up deciding and defending yourself that you never actually get around to doing the mitzvah.

The solution is in the text: This is the chok of the torah. Just do it. Think less and do more. As Rashi puts it: "It's a decree from G-d, and you don't need to contemplate so much."

Whatever presents itself, so long as it is one of G-d's mitzvot, you can't go wrong. Roll up your sleeves, get stuck into it, finish one job and then, and only then, look up just long enough to pick another post-it note off your desk.

Nothing invigorates like success. The knowledge that I'm plowing my way through my problems, fulfilling my potential and living up to my G-d, will be enough to keep me on the bandwagon

Slice of LIFE

The Kohen Pals

As told by Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Shimon Freundlich, the Rebbe's 'Shliach' (emissary) in Beijing China, and his wife run a successful and very busy Chabad House catering to the Jews that live, visit or come to do business there. His approach is so genuinely friendly that everyone that comes in contact with him or spends any time in his Chabad House is affected.

In 2007, while on a visit to New York, he was invited to be the personal guest of honour at the Tish (public meal) of the Rebbe of Satmar in the Williamsburg district of Brooklyn. Satmar is a very large, wealthy, and influential group of Chasidim that was for a long time at odds with Chabad for various reasons. Nevertheless, because of the many Satmar Chasidim that had benefited from the Beijing Chabad House, the invitation was extended.

Hundreds of Satmar Chasidim were present as their Rebbe whispered something to one of his assistants, whereupon the man pounded on the table and announced: "The Rebbe requests that 'the Lubavitcher' guest should speak."

Rabbi Freundlich began by thanking the chasidim and their Rebbe for inviting him. He discussed an interesting idea from the weekly Torah portion, as is traditional and then asked permission to tell a story, something that had recently occurred in his Chabad House. The Rebbe nodded yes and he began.

"A lot of people come to visit our Chabad House for Shabbat, as you know. Well, one Shabbat evening a few months ago, an older man, maybe about eighty years old, who didn't look very religious, appeared accompanied by a younger man in his forties.

"The old fellow found a seat and just minutes after we began the prayers he put his face in his hands and began to cry. He kept it up for almost an hour; he would calm down for a few minutes, dry his eyes and blow his nose and then begin again.

"I quietly approached him and asked

him if everything was all right. He told me not to worry. After the prayers he and his friend joined us all for the Shabbat evening meal.

"There were over fifty people there. I sat him next to me and after he calmed down he asked if he could speak. He wanted to explain the reason for his weeping.

I stood, and after only a few words I introduced him. He cleared his throat and began,

"My name is Sam Katz (pseudonym). The reason that I want to speak now is because I became very emotional this evening and I want to tell you about it. The last time I was in a Synagogue was over sixty years ago in Poland. I was a young man then when the Germans came and took the entire Jewish population of my city to Buchenwald. I was there for four years and in that time I lost everyone; my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, my friends; all killed, some of them before my eyes. But I survived and when the war ended I spent a few years searching for family or friends with no results. Finally, I moved to Australia.

"I was totally alone and angry at G-d. I managed to succeed at business and make a lot of money, and to marry and have children. But my wounds and anger were so deep that I swore to never go into a Synagogue or have anything to do with Judaism again. Nothing!

"But then just yesterday I came to China with my friend and he said we should visit the Chabad House. At first I didn't want to come of course, but he said that he'd been here before and the food is good and anyway there was no better alternative, so I shrugged and agreed.

"But as soon as the prayers began everything suddenly came back to me. I remembered how good it is to be a Jew; how proud and happy my father and mother were. Suddenly it was as if a wall of ice just melted. That's why I cried. I thought I'd never forgive G-d again, but now I feel like a small child that just wants to be home. All thanks to this Chabad House and the Rabbi here."

The crowd clapped, wiped tears from their eyes and congratulated him for the beautiful story. Then one woman stood up and asked:

"Tell me Mr. Katz. If you were in Buchenwald until the end, maybe you knew my father. His name is Naftali

Kogen (pseudonym); he also was in Buchenwald."

Mr. Katz's jaw dropped, his eyes bolted open and he held his head in wonder "Naftali Kogen!? What? Naftali is still alive?! Why we were the only two Kohanim in the camp and we were always together. We risked our lives for each other, and not just once. We were like brothers! Oy! Naftali!

"There was such total confusion in those days; everything was upside down. We were put in different recovery camps and got separated. I searched for him for a long time after the war but finally I gave up. I thought he was dead. Now you say he is alive and you are his daughter! It's a miracle!!"

Rabbi Freundlich finished his story by saying that after Shabbat a meeting was arranged between the two old friends and this is only one example of the miracles that happen in Beijing thanks to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

At that point, much to everyone's surprise, a head of a Yeshiva in the Satmar community by the name of Rav Yaakov Kaplan (pseudonym) who had listened intently to the story called out! He raised himself in his seat a bit and fell back, his face pale as chalk and his eyes staring wildly at the ceiling. The others were startled and those seated near him rose to help him, but he came to himself in just seconds. He stood up to his full height and yelled aloud to all those present, "Tell them that Yaakov is still alive!"

In the midst of an emotional hurricane, he continued to call out: "There weren't just two Kohanim in Buchenwald, there were three! Sam Katz, Naftali Kogen and me too!"

He was obviously experiencing some sort of emotional hurricane.

"There weren't just two Kohanim in Buchenwald." He continued, "There were three; Sam Katz, Naftali and Me! "We stuck together like brothers.... more than brothers. But just a few days before the end of the war I was moved to another camp. They probably thought I was dead, and I almost was, and I was sure that they were. I never considered it possible that they could still be alive even now!"

Needless to say, soon after this story there was another joyous reunion.

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ISSUE 1252

MOSHIACH MATTERS

There is a profound link between the precept of the "red heifer" and the principle of Messianic redemption: Mitzvot (commandments) signify life. When one follows the commandments one attaches himself to the Al-mighty and draws spiritual vitality from the Source of All Life. Sin signifies death. Violating G-d's will disrupts attachment to the Creator, thus bringing about the "impurity of death." Both the red cow and the Redemption effect purification. For just as the ashes of the red cow are used for removing a legal state of impurity, the Final Redemption with Moshiach will purify the entire people of Israel from any trace of deficiency in their bond with G-d. (Peninei HaGeula)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

7th of Nissan, 5740 [1980]

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter in which you write on various aspects of Torah and Yiddishkeit [Judaism] etc., requesting a reply.

No doubt you understand that these are topics that can hardly be discussed adequately in a letter. Besides, there is no need for it, inasmuch as here is a wealth of articles and books in which all aspects of Yiddishkeit have been discussed, and you can also discuss them personally with knowledgeable people in your community, especially as you mention several by name. However, inasmuch as you have written to me, I will discuss very briefly several pertinent points.

There are matters over which a human being has control and can change and not merely a human being, but also in the so-called animal kingdom, certain species can adapt themselves to changing conditions in terms of habitat, diet, etc. But insofar as one's essence is concerned, this is not something that is left to a person's choice. By way of a well-known analogy, our Sages cite the example of a fish which, when taken out of its vital element, the water, will for a time feel very distressed and could not survive. Yet there are occasions when some fishes jump out of the water and are trapped on the shore. Unless they can in some way get back to their own element, their fate is inevitable.

The Torah and mitzvos [commandments] and Yiddishkeit in general, are for a Jew what water is to a fish. There have always been Jews, individuals or groups, who attempted to jump out of their element and seek other pastures. Historically, this resulted in one of two ways: either they returned to the fold or were eventually lost to the Jewish people. The only difference is that insofar as a fish is concerned, it can be out of its element for a relatively short period of time, but in the case of Jews who deviate from authentic Judaism, G-d gives them a longer opportunity to return, and this may sometimes take years. If one will take the trouble to reflect on our Jewish history, which is more than three thousand years old, it will be seen that there have been deviating movements ever since the Golden Calf worshippers right after the Torah was given at Sinai but, as mentioned, the results have always been the same, either-or: either they did teshuva [returned to Jewish observance] or were completely lost through assimilation and the like.

Noting in your letter that you are about to graduate from college and surely have some acquaintance with the scientific method, I trust it is unnecessary to explain to you that in every branch of true science, conclusions are made on the basis of actual experience and facts, even if the facts in themselves are not understood fully. The true scientist will accept the facts and will try or understand them, but it would be both illogical and unscientific to ignore the facts only because they are not fully understood.

To summarize the above, at any rate briefly: while a Jew has the choice of being one hundred percent observant or less, since the Creator has given every human being free choice of conduct, such a decision is limited only to the actual conduct, but the inevitable results are clear, inasmuch as no Jew can change his essence.

As for the problem of one's upbringing or environment, etc., there is surely no need to explain to you that every grown-up and mature person can become master of his conduct and way of life regardless of how these were in the past. Certainly one's upbringing and environment can make it easier or more difficult to carry out the proper decision, but once one has decided to make the necessary change, "there is nothing that stands in the way of the will," as our Torah, *Toras Emes*, assures us. Moreover, since G-d expects every Jew to live up fully to the Will of G-d, He certainly provides the necessary capacities to do so, so that in the final analysis it is a matter of one's own personal will and determination.

I trust that the above lines, though scanty in terms of the subject matter, will suffice to provide food for thought, to help you reflect deeply on your personal problems and make the proper decision, even if this may mean giving up certain material conveniences and pleasures. But this is a small price to pay for the great and everlasting reward of fulfillment as a Jew, with the consequent satisfaction and peace of mind.

... With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

PIDYAN HABEN

The obligation only applies if both of the parents are Israelites. If either the father or the mother is the child of a father who is a kohen (priest) or Levite, the Pidyán HaBen is not required.

If a woman converts to Judaism (even whilst pregnant) her firstborn son requires a Pidyán Haben. If a woman who has already had children converts, her first Jewish-born son does not need to be redeemed.

A WORD

from the Director

Monday, July 18 corresponds to the 12th day of the Hebrew month Tammuz. On this day in 1927, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, the Previous Rebbe was informed of his release from Soviet exile and on the 13th of the month he actually left Kostrama.

The foremost commentator on the Torah, Rashi, explains that "The Nasi - the leader of the generation - is the entire people." Thus, whatever happened to the Previous Rebbe effects not only him but the entire generation and, in fact, the entire Jewish people for all eternity.

The redemption of the Previous Rebbe on the 12th of Tammuz, sparked an increase in the service of spreading of Chasidic teachings.

Moreover, it ultimately led to the Previous Rebbe coming to America which brought about a marked increase in spreading the teachings of Judaism in general and Chasidic thought in particular.

In a gathering in honour of 12 Tammuz, the Rebbe suggested, "In connection with the 12th of Tammuz, efforts should be made to organize gatherings in each and every place where Jews are found to inspire each other in the service of spreading the wellsprings of Chasidus outward. This will generate the potential of the transformation of the Three Weeks into a positive period, with the coming of the ultimate Redemption. Even before that redemption comes, we will merit a succession of Divine miracles.

When one Jew will ask another, 'What was the last miracle that happened?' he will be unable to answer because the miracles are taking place in such rapid succession. And these miracles will lead to the ultimate miracles, those which accompany the Redemption from exile, when 'As in the day of your exodus from Egypt, I will show you wonders.'"

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe's birthday and the anniversary of his release from imprisonment by the Communists are both on the 12th of Tamuz. The following stories took place during and immediately after the Previous Rebbe's imprisonment.

Immediately after being arrested the Previous Rebbe (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn) made a firm resolution in his mind that he would pay no attention to his captors, as though they posed no threat to him at all. Several days later, after he had been exposed to the murder and sadism of the prison, he was taken into a room and ordered to sign certain papers. As per his resolution he paid no attention to the demand and was beaten. But still he remained unmoved. Furious, one of the interrogators pulled out a pistol, put it to the Rebbe's head and said, "This little toy has convinced everyone to do what we say."

This fellow, like all the other prison staff, was a murderer and there was absolutely no reason for him not to simply pull the trigger. He had obviously done so many times before.

The Rebbe replied matter of factly, "That 'toy' scares people like you who have only one world and many gods. But I have one G-d and two worlds [physical and spiritual] so it does not scare me."

The guard inexplicitly did nothing.

After a few days, the Rebbe's fate was sealed. He was found guilty of subversion and was sentenced to death. Through world pressure, the sentence was commuted to three years in Siberian exile.

Then, even more inexplicitly, the Rebbe was given special permission to leave the jail three days early, visit his family for several hours and then travel, at his own expense, to Kostroma, his town of exile.

This was a true miracle. Every instant in the prison was a true danger to his life; he was easy prey for the anti-Semitic guards and prisoners. Hundreds of Jews "disappeared" or "died" daily and he could easily be one of them.

But to everyone's amazement, as soon as he realized that according to their itinerary he would have to travel on Shabbat, he refused to leave until after Shabbat ended. He actually stayed extra time in that hell so as to not desecrate the Sabbath.

Why did the Rebbe do this? According to Jewish law he was permitted to travel on Shabbat in order to leave that place, as every additional moment there was a threat to his life. But the Rebbe was determined to show even his evil captors that G-d, not Stalin, is the Boss of the world. And that they were powerless against the Torah.

That Sunday as he boarded the train to leave the prison, when a large crowd of people threw caution to the wind and came to see him off (we must remember that the Rebbe was imprisoned for teaching anti-communist doctrines and everyone connected to him was immediately suspected of the same). They could not forego the opportunity of drawing inspiration from the Rebbe.

Just moments before the train left, the Rebbe made a stirring emotional and revolutionary speech. Here is a translation (from Yiddish) of some of what he said:

"We must make one thing known to all the nations are on the

face of the earth: That only our bodies are in exile and servitude to the gentiles, but our souls never entered exile and were never servants to the other nations.

"We must announce and advertise before the entire world that anything that relates to our Jewish religion, the Torah, the commandments and even the customs, can never be changed by opinions. We Jews have no outside forces or opinions that can change us. We must declare with the greatest Jewish stubbornness with thousands of years of Jewish self-sacrifice, 'Never touch My anointed and My prophets do not harm.'

"We must pray that G-d give us the proper strength to not be affected in any way by these physical tribulations but rather to treat them with joy! That every, punishment we receive, G-d forbid, for opening a children's school, teaching Torah or doing the commandments should give us more enthusiasm in our holy task of strengthening Judaism. Remember! The jails and camps are temporary. But Torah, the commandments and the Jewish people are eternal..."

In other words, to a crowd filled with informers and secret police he exhorted Russian Jewry to continue the very "subversive" work for which he was imprisoned.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

This is the statute of the Torah which the L-rd has commanded (Num. 19:2)

The sin of the Golden Calf was due to a lack of faith; the mitzva of the red heifer is therefore a Chok, a commandment whose reason is not revealed to us, to "counteract" that sin: The only reason we observe it is our faith.

(Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorky)

Comments Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator: "Such is My decree: you do not have permission to second-guess [the Torah]." The same word for permission appears in Ethics of the Fathers (3:15): "Everything is foreseen, yet permission [freedom of choice] is granted." Permission implies that something is possible; "you do not have permission" implies that second-guessing G-d is outside the realm of possibility. In truth, it is against the Jew's nature to question a Divine decree. If doubts do exist, they are only the product of the Evil Inclination.

(The Rebbe)

Aaron shall be gathered unto his people (Num. 20:24)

Why does the Torah use this unusual phrase to mean that Aaron was about to pass away? Because despite the fact that Aaron would no longer be alive in the physical sense, his positive character traits and exemplary behaviour would be "gathered up" and perpetuated by the Jewish people forever.

(Peninei Torah)

CANDLE LIGHTING



BEGINS:	July 15, 2016	ENDS:
5:02	MELBOURNE	6:03
5:04	ADELAIDE	6:04
4:53	BRISBANE	5:49
6:19	DARWIN	7:10
4:50	GOLD COAST	5:46
5:16	PERTH	6:10
4:46	SYDNEY	5:45
4:52	CANBERRA	5:51
4:43	LAUNCESTON	5:47
5:05	AUCKLAND	6:06
4:53	WELLINGTON	5:57
4:38	HOBART	5:44
4:48	BYRON BAY	5:44

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS CHUKAS • 9 TAMMUZ • 15 JULY

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5.02 PM
	MINCHA:	5.10 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.35 PM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.57 AM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6.03 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS	
	SUN-FRI:	8.00 AM/9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	5.10 PM
	MAARIV:	5.55 PM