

LAMPLIGHTER

9 Tammuz
Parshas
Chukas
1353
22 June
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion Chukat begins, "This is the statute of (chukat) the Torah..." The portion describes the special laws associated with the purification that comes about through the Red Heifer.

The word "chukat" refers to "statutes." When speaking about the different types of mitzvot (commandments), the Torah singles out chukim - statutes - as being unique. There is no reason given for the observance of chukim. We don't know of any material or spiritual advantage that will be garnered by their observance; we fulfill them simply because G-d commands us to.

There are some who explain that it is important to have such commandments to show that our Torah observance involves a commitment beyond our personal will. Even when we do not understand what G-d has commanded us, we are willing to carry out His commandments. According to this understanding, the observance of these mitzvot is rather dry. Yes, it is necessary, but there is really no warmth or vibrancy to it.

Not everyone observes chukim in this way, however. On the contrary, we see some people who have a special joy in fulfilling chukim. Why? Because chukim relate to a point in the soul that is above our own will and our understanding. In the observance of these mitzvot, a person identifies with G-d on His terms. He or she is doing what G-d wants because He wants it and for no other reason. In essence, that is the most encompassing form of satisfaction a person can have.

The above enables us to appreciate one of the unique dimensions of the era of the Redemption. In his book of Jewish law entitled "Mishneh Torah," Moses Maimonides (the Rambam) states that "In that age, the occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d." Indeed, the singleness of aspiration that characterizes the chukim will resonate through all mankind, as the Prophet states: "All the nations will be transformed to [speak] a pure language ... to serve Him with a single purpose." For our energies will focus on comprehending G-d's truth.

We have a multitude of different desires. Now it's true, the inner motivation for any of our desires is G-dliness. At present, however, that inner dimension is covered by many other externals. We think we are seeking things like love, wealth, or power. We aren't aware of the essential drive propelling our will. For in any experience, what we are really seeking is the G-dly truth it contains. In the era of the Redemption, by contrast, this truth will surface, and in everything that we do, we will appreciate the G-dly intent.

Kvetch!

By Levi Avtzon

Jews love kvetching. And we love kvetching about the kvetchers. "Oy vey!" "I'm telling you . . . I'm totally overwhelmed from all his meshugasen!" "There she goes again! Oy, how much more can I handle?"

Well, if you think you have heard it all, check out the Torah portions of Behaalotecha, Shelach, Korach and Chukat. First, the Israelites bemoan their lengthy travels in the desert. Then there's a sob story about the manna, followed by the spies coming back from Israel with a false report, which causes a national meltdown. Then Korach forms a rebellion against the leadership of Moshe and Aaron, and they complain about water, and they defy Moshe and try to enter Israel and are massacred. . . . It goes on and on. The attitude of "woe is me" reigns supreme.

Question: A group of slaves is redeemed from Egypt after generations of slavery. Instead of feeling gratitude, they verbally abuse their redeemer and bicker relentlessly. Why?

An answer: Here we come to the upside of kvetching. Kvetching is one step up from slavery. A slave cannot kvetch because of fear of the whip. More importantly, the slave mentality breeds apathy and a clogging of the emotional valves. It's too painful, so it's easier to disengage.

The first step out of slavery is to release suppressed feelings, performing emotional bypass surgery to unclog the indifference that has crept into the heart. The first step to freedom is to re-humanize ourselves.

Once the heart begins to feel, it will inevitably feel positivity and optimism. However, at first, the predominant feelings (in most people) will be those of pain, loss and confusion as one struggles to adjust to the new reality. This is considered progress.

It took 40 years of unclogging emotions for the Israelites to be ready to finally enter Israel with optimism, passion and a commitment to freedom.

Historically, Jews have mastered the art of kvetching, and have even turned it into an art form: some of the best and most innovative comedians are Jewish. Comedy is often a sophisticated version of kvetching (and sometimes a better earner). Why did we kvetch so much?

Because life for Jews has been so difficult and overwhelming, and often we couldn't do anything concrete about our troubles. Yet we made sure to keep our hearts open, to not fall into the abyss of depression or allow our hearts to turn to stone. We kvetched to keep our hearts open and our emotions flowing. Kvetching has been our national safety net against emotional death.

Kvetching is the first step out of slavery and a way of ensuring that we don't enter a soul-destroying slave mentality.

After reading this, you might think that I consider it a mitzvah to kvetch! Not exactly. You see, kvetching is great when there is no option to take action, or immediately after being released from captivity.

But the Jew in the 21st century is not in these conditions. We are physically freer than we've been in a long time, and have been privileged with more opportunities for activism than our ancestors could even dream about. Today, kvetching is an escape from the myriads of opportunities for activism. It is time to bury it and its twin, pessimism, forever. They have served their purpose, and are outdated, dangerous and holding us back from moving forward.

Anti-Semitism? Do something about it. Moral decay? Talk about it. Family disintegration? Take the lead. Country in crisis? Add light and activism to the conversation. Radicalism? Be the voice of reason. Kvetching is so old-fashioned. It's time to forward march!

Slice of LIFE

DID I THINK ABOUT YOU? Rabbi Berel Baumgarten of blessed memory

By *Eliyahu and Malka Touger*

On the 12th of Tamuz, 1927, the Previous Rebbe, R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, was released from prison in Stalinist Russia. Ever since then, the date is celebrated as a major holiday among Lubavitcher Chassidim.

Rabbi Berel Baumgarten, the Rebbe's emissary in Argentina, cherished this occasion, and often spent the day at 770 Eastern Parkway, Lubavitch World Headquarters, attending the Rebbe's farbrengen (gathering). At other times, he used the holiday as an opportunity to spread awareness of Chassidim to others.

One year, however, he realized that on the 12th of Tammuz he would be in the middle of a journey from Argentina to Brazil. Disturbed at the prospect of spending this auspicious date far from anyone with whom he could share his feelings, he sent the Rebbe a telegram before he left home, asking to be remembered on that date.

In order to reach Brazil, Rabbi Baumgarten had to cross the Iguacu River by ferry. The ferry had an open deck covered by an awning, with several heavy-duty rafts tied together to carry cars and cargo. Rabbi Baumgarten followed instructions and drove his car onto the raft. As soon as his car was parked, he joined the other travelers enjoying the fresh air beneath the awning.

Rabbi Baumgarten was happy to find that two of his fellow passengers were Jews. But his joy was short-lived as he discovered that they had no desire to hear about anything to do with Judaism. One of them even brazenly flaunted a ham sandwich before him. Feeling that further conversation would be futile, and offended by their actions, Rabbi Baumgarten returned to his car and opened his books to study.

Suddenly, there was a powerful jolt—a banana boat had slammed into the raft. Huge beams that had been piled in a corner of the raft began tumbling down, pushing cars off the raft and into the Iguacu River. To his shock, Rabbi Baumgarten's car also began to move. He slammed his foot on the brake, but was powerless to stop his car's motion. It too crashed into the waves and started to sink!

Now Rabbi Baumgarten was a big man, over six feet tall and more than 250 pounds. Yet, he couldn't open the car door; the water pressure was simply too great.

He never knew how it happened, but suddenly his door opened, and he found himself out of the car and in the water, being pulled upward.

His troubles, however, were far from over, for Rabbi Baumgarten had never learned to swim. Frantically flailing for what seemed like hours, he was at the end of his strength when his head suddenly broke through the water. Exhausted, Rabbi Baumgarten could only bob helplessly up and down; he had no idea what was keeping him afloat. Between waves, he could see the raft close by, but was powerless to move towards it.

To make matters even worse, he could hear a rumbling thunder in the distance, and realized with horror that the river's powerful current was beginning to pull him away from the raft, and towards a waterfall! As the white water crashed over him, Rabbi Baumgarten looked up to see a man heaving a life preserver toward him. It splashed into the river just within reach.

Rabbi Baumgarten grabbed the life preserver and drew it close. Though his strength was giving out he held on to it for it was too small to fit over his body. While in the water, he pictured the Rebbe's face before him.

After he had been hauled out of the river and was able to regain his composure, the two Jews whom he had met previously approached him, overcome with remorse. They realized that it was because of them that Rabbi Baumgarten had returned to his car, and apologized for their previous conduct. The man who had flaunted the sandwich

even promised to begin keeping kosher.

After Rabbi Baumgarten reached the far shore, he began to contemplate his situation. He had no explanation for the miracle that had occurred. Days later, he understood. When he called the Rebbe's office and requested that the Rebbe be told what had happened, one of the secretaries told him when his telegram had been delivered. Calculating the difference in time zones, he realized that the Rebbe must have been reading the telegram at precisely the time the accident occurred!

All these calculations, however, came later; at the moment he had more immediate concerns. His personal belongings had sunk with the car, and he was far from any Jewish community. Where would he find a talit and tefillin with which to pray?

Rabbi Baumgarten found that there was a small airport nearby, but he would not be able to reach another city before sunset on the scheduled flights. He was unable to conceive of letting the day pass without putting on tefillin.

He inquired about hiring a private plane. Although the cost was exorbitant, he was able to find a pilot who could fly him to another city before sunset. He sent a telegram to the leaders of the Jewish community there, asking them to meet him at the airport with tefillin.

There was a mix-up in communications, however, and no one greeted Rabbi Baumgarten at the airport. With less than an hour left before nightfall, Rabbi Baumgarten grabbed a cab and told the driver to hurry to the nearest synagogue. Unfortunately, night fell before he could get there. Broken-hearted, he stopped the cab and sat down on a nearby park bench and cried.

At his next yechidut (private audience with the Rebbe), he asked the Rebbe how he could atone for not putting on tefillin that day.

Before answering his question, the Rebbe looked up at him and asked, "Well, did I think about you? Yes or no?"

He then instructed Rabbi Baumgarten to study the laws of tefillin in the Code of Jewish Law, and the discourses in Chassidic thought that speak about the subjugation of heart and mind—the spiritual message associated with the mitzva of tefillin.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Does Chassidism Shun the World?

It is surprising to me to note in your letter that it is your impression as though Chassidim do not participate in the outside world, etc. As a matter of fact, the reverse is true, for there is hardly any sphere or area in the world at large which Chassidim exclude from their interest. This attitude is the direct result of the emphasis in Chassidus on the true concept of Monotheism. The Chassidic concept of the Oneness of G-d goes much further than the generally accepted view that there is only One Deity and no more, but that there is only One G-d and nothing else. For, inasmuch as G-ds word (whereby he brought the world into existence) constantly and without interruption creates and vitalizes the whole Universe and every particular of it, and without this creative force, which is the true essence of every existing thing, nothing could exist, it follows that there is no true reality other than G-d, and there is actually nothing but G-dliness. Chassidus emphasizes that it is one of the central aspects of man's purpose in life to establish this truth and to spread it to the utmost extent of his influence. This is not merely an idea, but a way of life which is expressed in the daily life, and which permeates the whole inner being of the Chossid.

A corollary of this viewpoint is another fundamental principle in the teachings of Chassidus, namely that Divine Providence extends to each and every particular in the Creation, not only to each individual of the human race, but each particular in the realm of the animal world, the vegetable and even the mineral, as is well known to everyone who studies Chassidus.

Thus it is fundamental for the Chassidic philosophy and way of life not to exclude any part of the world from its sphere of interest.

As for your writing that you have not come across any names of Chassidim who participate in certain movements, such as civil rights, etc., this is also surprising, inasmuch as many have taken an active part in this and other constructive movements. Many more, however, among those who participate in such constructive movements do so while avoiding publicity and headlines in the press.

With blessing,

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

How to Stop Snapping at Your Kids

Question: I have a dark secret. I have an anger problem. And I never knew it until I became a parent. Because the only people I take my anger out on are my own kids. I never had a temper before, but sometimes when my children misbehave and I am at my limit, I just explode and lose control. I don't like myself at those moments, and know it is wrong. And yet I haven't been able to control it. Any pointers on how to not lose it with my kids?

Answer: Your dark secret is the dark secret of every parent. We all have our weak moments, when a combination of lack of sleep, pressures of life and our imperfect hearts conspire to make us lose it. And who are the poor victims of our fury? Those we love most, our children.

If it is happening frequently or if you are really harming your kids, you need urgent professional help. But if you're loving and good to your kids overall, and you just snap now and then, you're human. That doesn't excuse your behavior; it just means you need to work on yourself, like everybody does.

Here are some wise words the Rebbe offered to a father who had the same dark secret.

The Rebbe asked, "If your neighbor dropped off his kids at your house to look after while he went out, and during that time the neighbor's kids misbehaved, would you lose your temper with them?"

The father had to admit that no, when it is someone else's kids misbehaving, we don't allow ourselves to lose control, because they are not our kids. How could we face our neighbor when he returns to pick up his kids, only to find them crying and hurt? We don't feel free to lose ourselves when the kids aren't ours.

"Well," continued the Rebbe, "your children are not yours either. They are G-d's children. He has entrusted them to you for a while to take care of. And you are answerable to G-d for how you treat them."

This simple but profound insight redefines the parents' role. Children are not our property; they do not belong to us. They belong to G-d, and we have been honored with the heavy responsibility of caring for them in their young years and guiding them for their future. If we'd be embarrassed to return our neighbor's children having hurt them, then how much more should we recoil from the thought of hurting G-d's children.

As parents, we need to discipline our kids—that is an essential part of our role. But that must come from a place of love, not anger. It must be deliberate and thought-out, not impulsive and reactive.

This is all easy to say when we are calm and well-rested. But what do you do when you haven't had a good night's sleep in weeks, and you haven't had three minutes to yourself since your five-year-old was born, and there's pressure at work, and your sister-in-law has been driving you crazy about her silly issues, and everyone is hungry, and dinner is late, and just then your little boy kicks his soccer ball (which he knows he isn't allowed to do indoors), and it knocks the platter of chicken onto the floor, which was just mopped by the overpriced cleaning lady (who told you she's not coming back, as she got a permanent job), and as it smashes into a thousand pieces, your daughter says, "Good, I don't like chicken," and your other son says, "Can we go out for dinner now?" What do you do then?

You say two words to yourself: G-d's kids.

A WORD

from the Director

This coming Monday is the twelfth day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz. This day marks both the birthday of the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, and his liberation from Soviet prison and exile.

When the Bolshevik revolution succeeded in overthrowing the Czarist regime in 1917, it set about destroying religion. Judaism, and particularly Chabad-Lubavitch, was a prime target. The Previous Rebbe, devoted himself to keeping the flame of Judaism alive in the early days of Communist Russia.

So powerful was the Previous Rebbe's impact that at one point he was even offered a deal by the Communist government! He would be allowed to continue to support rabbis, ritual slaughterers, etc., and even continue to encourage Jews to attend prayer services on one condition: He had to stop educating the children in the ways of the Torah.

To the Previous Rebbe this was unacceptable, and he refused, saying, "If there are no kid goats, there will be no adult goats..." Without the proper Jewish education for our children, we as a nation, cannot survive. And even when the Previous Rebbe reached the shores of America, he continued to strengthen Jewish life by establishing schools here as well.

The Previous Rebbe showed great courage and determination when it came to preserving the Jewish way of life through Jewish education. He stood up to both Communist oppression and to those here in America who told him that it couldn't be done, that yeshivot couldn't thrive in this modern new world. His legacy, Chabad schools the world over, has outlived Soviet Communism and at the same time continues to prove that those who doubted him were wrong.

The Previous Rebbe was a living example of his teachings. His strength and courage were not for his own personal needs, but for the spiritual needs of the entire Jewish people.

Let us stand strong together, and demand from G-d the thing we need most, the arrival of our righteous Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption.

J. I. Gutterick

IT HAPPENED



The Holy Slop Bucket

By Yerachmiel Tilles

The two saintly brothers, Rebbe Zusha and Rebbe Elimelech, who lived in 18th century Poland, wandered for years disguised as beggars, seeking to refine their characters and encourage their deprived brethren.

In one city, the two brothers, who later became mentors to many thousands of Jews, earned the wrath of a "real" beggar who informed the local police and had them cast into prison for the night.

As they awoke in their prison cell, Rabbi Zusha noticed his brother weeping silently. "Why do you cry?" asked Rabbi Zusha.

R. Elimelech pointed to the pail situated in the corner of the room which the inmates used for a toilet. "Jewish law forbids one to pray in a room inundated with such a repulsive odor," he told his brother. "This will be the first day in my life in which I will not have the opportunity to pray."

"And why are you upset about this?" asked R. Zusha.

"What do you mean?" responded his brother. "How can I begin my day without connecting to G-d?"

"But you are connecting to G-d," insisted R. Zusha. "The same G-d who commanded you to pray each morning, also commanded you to abstain from prayer under such circumstances. In a location such as this, you connect to G-d by the absence of prayer."

His brother's viewpoint, allowing him to view his problem as part and parcel of his relationship with G-d, elated R. Elimelech's heart. The awareness that the waste-filled pail in the corner of the room allowed him the opportunity to enjoy an intimate -- though different -- type of relationship with G-d inspired him so deeply that he began to dance. The two brothers were now holding hands and dancing in celebration of their newly discovered relationship with their Father in heaven.

The non-Jewish inmates imprisoned in the same cell were so moved by the sight, that they soon joined the dancing. It did not take long before the entire room was swept away by an electrifying energy of joy, as dozens of prisoners were dancing and jumping around ecstatically.

When the prison warden heard the commotion coming from the cell, he burst open the gate, only to be stunned by the inmates enjoying such a lively dance. In his fury, he attempted to stop the dancing, but to no avail: The prisoners were by now totally consumed by an awesome happiness, stemming from a very deep place within their souls.

Finally, the warden pulled aside one of the inmates, demanding from him an explanation for what was going on.

The frightened prisoner related that the outburst was not his fault, nor was it the fault of the other inmates. It was rather the two Jews dancing in the center of the circle who triggered the trouble.

"And what inspired the two Jews to go into such a dance?" thundered the warden.

The prisoner pointed to the pail in the corner of the room. "It is the pail, they claim, that brought about the joy in their heart; they discovered some new type of relationship through the pail."

"If that's the case, I will teach them a lesson that they will remember for a very long time," shouted the furious warden. He took the pail and threw it out of the cell.

Rebbe Zusha turned to his brother and said: "And now, my brother, you can begin your prayers."

Ellis Island Aggravations

By Yerachmiel Tilles

R' Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel of Kopischnitz [1888 - 16 Tammuz 1967] followed the ways of his ancestor, the Apter Rov as an Ohev Yisroel, a lover of Jews. In post-WWII America, he carried the pain and suffering of countless individuals on his weak and frail shoulders. Indeed, often when he heard the problems of others he would break down in uncontrollable weeping. The grief of his fellow Jews tormented him much more than his own afflictions, and countless times the Rebbe put his name and honor at risk in an attempt to help others.

Once a broken survivor of the Nazi inferno showed up at the Rebbe's door, crying hysterically. He had just arrived from Europe and was hoping to settle in America. His wife, however, had been refused entry due to her ill health and was on Ellis Island awaiting imminent deportation. The man was inconsolable and indicated that if his wife was indeed deported, he wouldn't think twice about taking his own life. "Don't worry, please don't worry!", implored the Rebbe. "I promise you that by next week your wife will be here together with you!" Upon hearing the Rebbe's words an immediate feeling of calm overtook the distressed man, and greatly relieved, he went away a new person.

R' Morgenshtern, one of the chassidim who had witnessed the scene gathered up his courage and asked the Rebbe how it was possible for him to make an outrageous guarantee like that with such ease. It was no less than promising a miracle!

"You saw how hysterical the poor man was," the Rebbe replied. "My first concern was to calm him down and thank G-d, I succeeded. At least for the next week he will feel better. If after a week he sees that I was wrong and his wife was deported, he will say, 'Avrohom Yehoshua is not a real Rebbe, Avrohom Yehoshua is a liar.' But at least for a week I succeeded in bringing some hope into his life."

With that the Rebbe took his Tehillim (book of Psalms) and began to recite it's verses with intense emotion. As the tears were streaming down his face he could be heard pleading, "Please Hashem, please, see to it that Avrohom Yehoshua didn't say a lie. I was only trying to help a Jew in a pathetic situation. Please don't let me be a liar!" And in this fashion his prayers continued long into the night.

Hashem heard his prayers and within a week the woman was granted permission to stay in America, and was reunited with her husband.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

Moses is taught the laws of the red heifer, whose ashes purify a person who has been contaminated by contact with a dead body.

After forty years of journeying through the desert, the people of Israel arrive in the wilderness of Zin. Miriam dies, and the people thirst for water. G-d tells Moses to speak to a rock and command it to give water. Moses gets angry at the rebellious Israelites and strikes the stone. Water issues forth, but Moses is told by G-d that neither he nor Aaron will enter the Promised Land.

Aaron dies at Hor Hahar and is succeeded in the high priesthood by his son Elazar. Venomous snakes attack the Israelite camp after yet another eruption of discontent in which the people "speak against G-d and Moses"; G-d tells Moses to place a brass serpent upon a high pole, and all who will gaze heavenward will be healed. The people sing a song in honor of the miraculous well that provided them water in the desert.

Moses leads the people in battles against the Emorite kings Sichon and Og (who seek to prevent Israel's passage through their territory) and conquers their lands, which lie east of the Jordan.

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 22 - 23 June	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	4:50	5:52
Adelaide	4:54	5:53
Brisbane	4:44	5:40
Darwin	6:12	7:05
Gold Coast	4:41	5:38
Perth	5:02	6:00
Sydney	4:36	5:35
Canberra	4:41	5:41
Launceston	4:31	5:35
Auckland	4:54	5:55
Wellington	4:40	5:45
Hobart	4:25	5:31
Byron Bay	4:39	5:36

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS CHUKAS • 9 TAMMUZ • 22 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	4.55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5.25 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.56 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	4.40 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	4.55 PM
	MAARIV	5.40 PM