Parshas Chukas contains the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, the red cow that is used in the process of purifying someone who is impure—or ritually impure as a result of coming in contact with a dead body. Regarding this mitzvah, the Midrash says that the Parah Adumah symbolizes the Jewish people. Shlomo HaMelech commented (Koheles 7:23) regarding the Parah Adumah: “I thought that I would be wise concerning it, but it is still distant from me.” The Midrash explains that this refers to the fact that Shlomo HaMelech understood the reason for every mitzvah in the Torah except for Parah Adumah.

The Jews keep going and flourishing, always rebuilding themselves even after they have fallen.

Parah Adumah eludes understanding, so, too, the Jewish people are beyond the grasp of the nations of the world. They do not understand why the Jewish people still exist. There have been many nations much bigger and more powerful than the Jewish people—the mighty empires of the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The world has seen them all come and go. While they are completely gone, the Jews keep going and flourishing, always rebuilding themselves even after they have fallen. Just as the Parah Adumah is an inexplicable phenomenon that no one can understand, so, too, the existence of the Jews is an inexplicable phenomenon.

DEAD TO THE WORLD

Resh Lakish interpreted these words allegorically. “This is the Law.” This is how to acquire Torah: “When a man dies in a tent (of study).” The words of Torah are only sustained by a person who is committed to exert himself and undergo self-deprivation when necessary for the sake of study. -- Gemara Berachos 63b

How are we to understand the virtue of being willing to die in the tent of Torah, when the Gemara (Yoma 85b) teaches us that the mitzvos of the Torah are to be fulfilled in a vibrant and life-sustaining manner. The Torah teaches us (Vayikra 18:5), “You shall live by them”, and not that we should die for them.

The Chofetz Chaim illustrates with a parable. There was once a very successful businessman. Many customers from near and far flocked to his warehouses and merchandise outlet facilities. Due to his popularity and thriving endeavors, he prospered. Yet, this success kept him exceedingly busy. He was so overwhelmed with supervising his dealings that he did not have time to go to the local shul to daven with a minyan.

Many years passed, and the man was getting older. His strength began to diminish, and he started to consider the end of his days. He decided that he had to prepare “provisions for his eternal destination”. The next morning he awoke and went to daven with a minyan in the shul. After davening, he sat for two hours to learn Torah. When he finally arrived at his business, several hours later than usual, his wife confronted him. “The store is filled with people asking for you! They are anxious and getting impatient! Where have you been?”, she quizzed him. He calmly responded that he had been delayed with an important matter.

The next morning when the man was again delayed in arriving at work, his wife went out to find him. She was shocked when she eventually found him in shul, sitting
and studying Torah. She angrily began to scold him. “Are you out of your mind? The store is filled with customers, and you are sitting here studying! Don’t you care about the loss of money which we might suffer as a result of this? We can’t just chase them away when there is so much competition from all the other vendors in the city!”

The husband explained to his wife why he had been sitting and studying at such a moment. “Please try to understand. If the Angel of Death would now come and tell me that the time has come for me to go, would I be able to negotiate and buy time claiming that I was busy with my customers? Try to think of me as being unavailable due to my being dead. Now, the truth is that in two hours from now I will come back from this extreme situation of being unavailable due to being ‘dead’, but that is to our fortune. I will then enter the store and take care of business together with you.”

This is how to understand the directive of our Sages in our verse. The world is a busy place, and people become very occupied. Yet the Torah can be sustained if a person considers himself as “dead to the world” during those precious hours when he does sit down to learn. Using this approach, a person can succeed in devoting time to Torah study and mitzvah observance, each of which provides life and eternal benefit to those who partake of them.

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TOTAL DEDICATION TO TORAH

Sefer Ein Ayah (Volume II) notes that while the topic of this pasuk is the ritual impurity (טומאה) that comes from contact with the dead, the Talmud (Berachos 63b) gives a homiletic interpretation about those who toil in the study of Torah:

From where do we learn that Torah study is only truly absorbed by one who “kills himself” over it? As it says, “This is the Torah - when a man dies in the tent [of Torah learning]”.

Why does Torah study require such a high degree of self-sacrifice and commitment? The purpose of society is to provide reasonable living conditions, without excessive hardships, for its citizens. In order to achieve this goal, however, there must be some individuals who are willing to serve the community beyond the ordinary call of duty. For example, firefighters, soldiers, police officers and other security personnel must be prepared to work long and irregular hours, and accept the dangers inherent in their jobs. Without their willingness to accept these hardships, the entire populace would suffer from untended fires, violence, crime, war, and other threats to the community’s stability and safety.

In a similar fashion, those individuals who are willing to dedicate their lives to Torah study are guardians for the entire Jewish people. Just as a soldier cannot properly perform his service to the nation without a willingness for self-sacrifice, so too, Torah scholars must totally dedicate themselves to their mission. Only with this spirit of commitment will they succeed in nurturing the spiritual light of Israel and enriching the authentic inner life of the nation.

The breadth and depth of knowledge required for true Torah scholarship necessitates long and intensive hours of study. This must come at the expense of pleasures and activities that are acceptable for the general population. Only by overcoming the desire for creature comforts and “the easy life” - by demonstrating their willingness to “kill themselves” in the tents of Torah – do these scholars prove their worthiness to lead the nation in attaining its spiritual aspirations.

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RAIN OR DROUGHT

Since Bnei Yisrael thought that they were on the verge of dying from thirst, it is bewildering that they expressed a concern about their animals. If they were concerned that they themselves would die, they would have no need for animals after their deaths.

Alexander of Macedon visited King Katzia beyond the dark mountain (presumably Africa) in order to observe how justice was carried out in that country. As he sat with King Katzia, a man came with a complaint against his neighbor. “This man sold me a garbage heap,” he stated, “and I found a treasure in it. I must return it, for it is not what I bought.” The vendor maintained, “I must honestly admit that I sold the heap and all that it contained.” The king said to one, “Have you a son?” “Yes,” he replied. “And have you a daughter?” he asked the other. “Yes,” was the answer. “Then let them marry and let the treasure belong to both.” The king noticed that Alexander was sitting there astonished, and asked him, “Have I not judged well?” “Yes,” he replied. “Had this happened among you, how would you have judged?” Alexander answered, “I would have slain both and kept the treasure for myself.” “Does rain descend in your country?” asked the king. “Yes” was the answer. “Does the sun shine?” “Yes.” “Have you small cattle, such as sheep and goats?” “Yes,” he replied. “By heaven!” he exclaimed, “then the rain and the sun are provided not for your sake, but for the sake of the cattle, as it is written (Tehillim 36:7), ‘Man and beast You preserve; O Lord, You preserve man for the sake of beast, O Lord.’” -- BeMidbar Rabba 33:1

HaRav Yisrael MiSalant explains that when man sins, or is unjust, his punishment may be that rain is withheld and drought ensues. Yet, we see that the
situation may be overlooked and rain may be provided solely for the sake of the livestock, who are innocent creatures and for whom Hashem mercifully cares. Sometimes, however, a divine decree is issued that there shall be no rain in a certain place. Under such a condition, Hashem does not give rain even for the sake of the animals, for there is still the option to move to another place, and neither man nor animals are compelled to settle in such a cursed place.

This was the charge of Bnei Yisrael against Moshe: “Why did you bring us to this bad place? It cannot be that our sins caused this lack of water, for since our animals have also been brought into this threatening thirst, it seems as though the place has caused this! For if it were as you say, that we are at fault, then Hashem would provide water for the animals’ sake.”

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WITH ANGER THE SHECHINA DEPARTS

Some of the commentaries (see Ramban) explain that the sin of Moshe at Meriva was specifically in that he addressed the crowd harshly, as he called to them (Verse 10) and said, “Listen, now, you rebels!” This was a lapse in Moshe’s leadership of the people, for a leader must always be calm and deliberate, even at a moment of crisis and confrontation.

This must be explained. Kuntros Otzros Chaim notes that Moshe was a supreme prophet, and the Zohar (Pinchas 132a, 3:306b) seems to indicate that every word he spoke was an expression direct from the Shechina. Why, then, should Moshe have been punished if his role was simply one of being an agent to convey the word of God?

The Gemara (Pesachim 66b) tells us that whenever a wise person expresses anger, his wisdom departs from him. If he is a prophet, his prophecy leaves him. Accordingly, here, as Moshe began to respond with words of anger, his level of prophecy no longer remained with him, and the words he then spoke were his own.

The verses in Tehillim (106:32-33) which describe this incident can now be understood in this light. “They provoked at the Waters of Meriva, and Moshe suffered because of them. Because they acted contrary to his spirit, so he spoke thoughtlessly with his lips.”

The message is that Moshe was indeed deserving of punishment due to his having become angered and because he referred to the people as rebels. This was because the people provoked Moshe and caused him to become angry. At that moment, as the Shechina left him, Moshe’s words were those which he pronounced on his own, and he was therefore liable for the consequences of his accusation of the people.

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IDENTIFIABLE SIGNS

This nation which attacked was Amalek...They changed their language and spoke in the language of the Canaanites so that when the Jews prayed that they should be saved from the “Canaanite” threat, their prayers would be inaccurate. Bnei Yisrael saw that their garments were like those of Amalek, but their language was the language of Canaan. They said: “Let us pray in general, as it is stated (Yalkut 764), ‘If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand.’” -- Rashi

The Rav HaKadosh, Rav Yaakov of Vorka, explains that if the Amalekites really wanted to fool the Jews totally, they should have also changed their mode of dress to that of the style of Canaan. Why did they keep their Amalekite fashion of dress and thereby risk being detected, as actually happened?

We can say that if, in fact, the people of Amalek had spoken and dressed like the Canaanites, they would in effect have been considered as genuine Canaanites, and the prayers of the Jews to be saved “from the threat of the Canaanite nation” would have been accepted. Although they were born as Amalekites, when someone changes his language and mode of dress, he is then transformed into being a new person.

This is something we must keep in mind while maintaining our identity as Jews. We must take care that we not forfeit our singularity. We should not adopt the ways of the gentile nations around us in terms of immodest dress and vulgar language, for to whatever degree these areas are compromised, we risk abandoning our special and holy status.

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Halachic Corner

Brachos are very important because when one recites a brachah he shows that he believes that there is a God in the world and that everything belongs to Him. When we say a brachah before eating, we acknowledge that one must ask permission from Hashem to eat any food. Chazal tell us (see Brachos 35a) that a person who derives pleasure from anything without a brachah is similar to a person who steals from Hashem. The table where we eat is also holy, as Chazal tell us that as long as the Beis HaMikdash existed the Altar atoned for Klal Yisrael. Now that we no longer have the Beis HaMikdash, one's table atones for him. (Chagiga 27a) Therefore, a person should say a little Torah or Mizmorim about food while at the table in order to bring a holiness into the eating. In the Torah, Hashem gave a mitzvah to bless Him with Birkas HaMazon after we eat—"יִהְיֶה לְךָ לְאִמָּוֹת אֱלוֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל "And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied and you shall bless." In this pasuk we have the key to understanding the foundation of blessings. According to many Rishonim, this is the only place in the Torah where Hashem commanded us to bless His name. Therefore, one should recite the Birkas HaMazon with concentration. By reciting a brachah over a food one also shows that when one eats, he is not going after his desires but is eating only in order to be strong to serve Hashem.

In the time of the Gemara, one person said the entire benching and everyone else listened. In our times we do not have the concentration to listen to the entire benching. Therefore, each person says the Birkas HaMazon for himself. If possible, one should finish the brachah in time to answer Amen to the brachah that is said by the leader. At least the first brachah should be said aloud by the leader. Everyone else should say it quietly and answer Amen. The same should be done with the other blessings. (M.B. 183:28)

Questions for Thought and Study

1. How do we know that the הקיפו הרו יִרְדֵּנָה (red cow) was an atonement for the sin of the קָרָא הָנוֹקֵד (Golden Calf)? See Ba’al HaTurim 19:2
2. How do we know that the הקיפו הרו service can be performed by any Kohen? See Ohr HaChaim 19:3
3. What was special about the rock that Moshe hit that the term דַּלְתָּח (“the rock” - indicating the specific article) was used? See Ramban 20:8
4. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that Aharon was about to die on the border of Edom? What is the significance of this location? See Ohr HaChaim 20:24
5. What land did Bnei Yisrael lose due to the incident of the rock? See Malbim 20:14
6. Why did Moshe make a serpent specifically of copper to heal Bnei Yisrael? See Rashi and Ramban 21:9

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• By Hebrew Theological College’s Gourmet Torah at Shallots Bistro will take place this Thursday, July 18, 12:35-1:15. Rabbi Joshua Zisook will speak on “Balak: A Lesson for L’shma”. Complimentary appetizers as well as a discounted menu available for shuir participants. Men and women invited to attend. For more info: Rabbi Joshua Zisook at 847-982-2500 or jzisook@htc.edu.
• How should we teach the Holocaust to our children? Blitstein Institute for Women of HTC, the Associated Talmud Torahs of Chicago, the IL Holocaust Museum, & Yad Vashem International School of Holocaust Studies invite you to an important 3-day symposium. This exciting program for local educators will take place from Sunday, Aug. 4, at 7:00 PM, at the IL Holocaust Museum, through Tuesday, Aug. 6. Fascinating speakers will enlighten you to the importance & pedagogy of teaching the Holocaust to the next generation.
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Save the date: Refuah 311, and our corporate sponsor Abbott, proudly present our popular Health & Safety Family Fair. Join us Sunday, July 28, 1-4 PM, at Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 Touhy for this free community event, fun for the entire family! Inflatables, emergency vehicles, arts & crafts, raffles & prizes, medical screenings, games & more. For more info on the event or volunteering: Jenny Landsman Jlandsman@TheChicagoCenter.org or 773-761-4005 x105.

Early bird deadline coming up for Bais Yaakov High School of Chicago's “Success in Yerushalayim” Raffle! Free tickets with every purchase by July 15th! First Prize: 7 round-trip airfares to Eretz Yisroel, 11 days luxurious accommodations & $1,000; or take $12,000 cash! Second Prize: 6 round-trip airfares to anywhere in the continental United States! Add the $50 Chai option to be able to win an additional $18,000! Drawing n’September 16th. Call 872-241-4540 or www.succosraffle.com.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn will be speaking at Congregation Yehuda Moshe August 2nd & 3rd for the Bernie Cohen Memorial Scholar in Residence Weekend. Friday 8:15 PM “Becoming a Person of Bracha”; Shabbat 10:45 AM “Your Siddur, Your Life”; 12:30 PM “Bringing the Best in Yourself”; 5:00 PM “Chizuk, Compliments & Constructive Character”; 8 PM “Keeping Private in a Public Life: Social Media”. View the full Shabbat schedule & register for meals at www.yehudamoshe.com or call 847-673-5870.

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By Ida Crown Jewish Academy will be offering Sports Clinics in baseball, fencing, girls and boys basketball and cross country at our Ida Crown coaches and players for 8-15 year olds in grades 3-8. Sports Clinics will be held on August 19, 20, and 21. Come find out what it’s like to be an Ida Crown Ace! All kids welcome! For more information and to register, visit our website at www.ica.org or call 773-973-1450.

Reserve the date: Nachy Shabat, Nesanel Davis and Josh Rosen invite you to join them for Chicago’s Night: “Continuing the Legacy”, Monday, July 29th - The 10th Annual Event for Peylim / Lev L’achim. Co-Chairmen: Mendy Berger, Shuvie Davis, Shimon Fink, and Benzie Friedman.

“How did we let Zionism become a dirty word...claiming Zionism in the AZM elections” with Herut’s Karma Feinstein-Cohen. Please join AFSI (Americans For a Safe Israel) Mon., July 22, 7:30 PM at Young Israel of Chicago, 2706 Touhy. Karma Feinstein-Cohen is Executive Dir. of World Herut & a Member of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency & of the presidium of the Zionist General Council of World Zionist Organization. Articles by Ms. Feinstein-Cohen have appeared in many Jewish publications.
The Wi-Fi Chevra recommends that you start your day with a Good Morgan! Good Morgan Café! Located in the Wi-Fi Building on McCormick Blvd., Good Morgan offers a delicious array of breakfast and lunch specials daily. Try their delicious Belgian waffles or omelet specials! Don’t miss their famous fried whitefish sandwich and other tasty sandwiches and wraps. Open daily 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

By Liora Gurt wishing hatzlacha to Ralph Wigs, back in Chicago, on the Major Wig Event, this Sunday, July 14th, four hours only, 7:00 to 11:00 PM, to be held at Sturt Kosher Catering Simcha Hall in Chicago. All wigs imported from Italy. Free cut by experienced shaitel macher. Discounted prices. Also showing their 2020 VIP Collection of natural virgin hair not processed.

Thank you to all of our friends and family who helped make the Yachad dinner so special and successful. Your attendance, ads, contributions and warm wishes were very meaningful to us. Thank you for supporting Yachad. - Stan & Mashie Gertz and Ira & Debra Clair.

By Roberta Lavi in loving memory of her mother, Jeanne Klaas, מרים ליבר, on the occasion of her yahrtzeit on 16 Tammuz. May her memory be for a blessing. (Adas Bnai Israel)

By Herb, Evelyn, Larry, and Friedman, and their families, in loving memory of our mother and grandmother, Mildred T. Friedman, מרי, on the occasion of her 18th yahrtzeit on 15 Tammuz.

In loving memory of our Poppa, Milton Saltzman, יירוס, on the occasion of his 25th yahrtzeit on 16 Tammuz. Your memory lives on in your great-grandchildren, who follow in your footsteps of Yiddishkeit. - By the Buckman, Drapkin, Gerson, Weinstein, Gottleib, Saltzman, Yoffe, Steiner, and Rosby families.

By Howard, Sue, Benji, Shoshana, Yitz, Noam Akiba, and Azriel Goldman, Kim & Joel Goldman, and all the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in the United States and Israel, in memory of our dear “Poppa”, Rabbi Yehuda Dovid Goldman, מרי, on the occasion of his 26th yahrtzeit on 10 Tammuz - July 13, 2019. His wisdom and loving-kindness were known by all who knew him. (Anshe Motele, Highland Park, IL, and Beit Shemesh, Israel)

13 Tammuz is the 12th yahrtzeit of Magda Singer - רמי, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, whose gentle, loving spirit, dignity and grace uplifted all who knew her. May her memory continue to inspire us. May her memory be for a blessing. With love, Anna Goldman, Lillian (Fred) Sadok, Harvey (Cathy) Singer, Ben (Chani) Goldstein, Rifka (Scott) English, Ariel Sadok, and the “kinderlach”.

By Rita Geller Bloom, Helen Geller, and Jerry & Judy Geller, in commemoration of the 30th yahrtzeit on 16 Tammuz. (KJBS, Adas Yeshurun, KINS)

By Herb, Evelyn, Larry, and Friedman, and their families, in loving memory of our dear husband, father and zaidel, Don Kirshner, רבי שלם, on the occasion of his 3rd yahrtzeit on 11th of Tammuz - ראב לוי, He is truly missed and forever in our hearts. May his neshama have an aliyah. - Eleanor Kirshner, Mayer & Shani Kirshner, Sherry & Harry Friedman, Tobi & Andrew Herenstein, Susan & Jeremy Sheldon, and families.

By Rabbi Dr. Jerold Isenberg, Moshe, Devora, Mimi, Eliyahu and Yitzchak Isenberg, and Rabbi Yehuda, Chani, Eliana, Akiva, Yocheved, Ezra and Kayla Isenberg, in commemoration of the 10th yahrtzeit on 14 Tammuz of their beloved wife, mother, and grandmother, Miriam Yocheved Isenberg, מרי. ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Likutei Peshatim is endowed by Les & Ethel Sutker in loving memory of Max and Mary Sutker and Louis and Lilian Klein, מרים. May their memory be for a blessing.

Answers:
1. The words " infertility" are numerically equal (341) to 14 ל"ע ("this is because of the sin of the Calf").
2. The Torah says (19:3) " infertility" ("And you shall give it to Elazar"). The word " infertility" ("it") is superfluous and indicates that only this is ית民意, that was prepared in the desert, should be given to Elazar. Any other red cow in the future can be given to any Kohen.
3. According to one explanation, Moshe was commanded to speak specifically in front of the rock to show that it was Hashem (through Moshe) who caused the miracle. Another explanation is that this rock was a rock that had already provided water as part of the well of Miriam. After Miriam died, this specific rock no longer provided water. A third explanation is that this rock had a single specific rock of profeminence that was outside the camp but not a rock that travelled with them.
4. Hashem was indicating that Aharon was going to die because of Bnei Yisrael’s sin. (The word " infertility" can also be translated as “because.”) Bnei Yisrael were told not to pass through Edom, so they should not have asked. Because of this, Aharon died sooner than expected. Another explanation is that the last exile will be from Edom. Aharon died here so that he will rise with Moshe to save us from Edom.
5. There were ten nations in Canaan. Bnei Yisrael only conquered seven of them due to the sin of the rock. In the future, the other three nations (Keini, Knizi, and Kadmoni) will be taken from Edom (who will come and them temporarily) when the ultimate redemption comes.
6. Rashi says that he understood it from the Hebrew word for snake (ל"ף) that is similar to the Hebrew word for copper (ל"ף). Ramban questions this because the term " infertility" ("fiery serpent") was actually used. Ramban says that Moshe understood that it should be from copper due to the essential name (ל"ף) of the snake.

Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Samber, Managing Editor
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