

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel and the fallen soldiers of the IDF. Praying for the safe return of all the hostages.

בס"ד

13 JULY 2024 | 7 TAMMUZ 5784

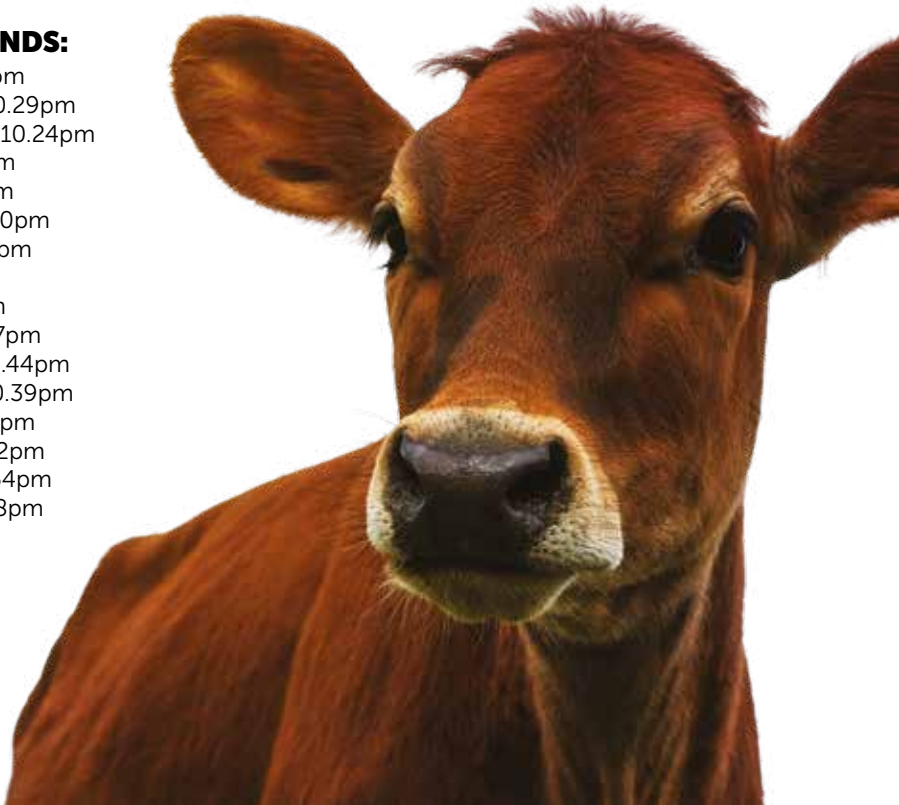
VOLUME 37 | #47

DAF HASHAVUA

חֻקָּת | CHUKAT

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 10.16pm
Birmingham 10.29pm
Bournemouth 10.24pm
Cardiff 10.34pm
Dublin 10.54pm
Edinburgh 11.10pm
Glasgow 11.16pm
Hull 10.44pm
Leeds 10.39pm
Liverpool 10.47pm
Manchester 10.44pm
Nottingham 10.39pm
Sheffield 10.45pm
Southend 10.12pm
Southport 10.54pm
Jerusalem 8.28pm



Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 19:1-17

God tells Moshe and Aharon to teach the nation the laws of the Red Heifer (*Parah Adumah*). The unblemished animal, which has never had a yoke upon it, is to be given to Elazar, Aharon's son, who must slaughter it outside the camp. It is then to be burned by a different Kohen, who must also throw some cedar wood, hyssop and crimson thread into the fire. Both he and Elazar will become ritually impure (*tameh*) through this preparatory process. In contrast, the ashes of the Heifer, when mixed with water, are used to purify someone who has become *tameh* through coming into contact with a corpse.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 19:18-20:6

After the ashes are mixed with water, a ritually pure person (*tahor*) sprinkles the mixture on the *tameh* person, using a bundle of hyssop. By doing so, the one who sprinkles becomes *tameh*. The Israelites come to the wilderness of Tzin, where Miriam, Moshe and Aharon's sister, dies. The people complain that they have no water and would have been better off staying in Egypt.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 20:7-13

God tells Moshe to take his staff and speak to a rock in front of the nation, after which water will emerge from the rock. However, Moshe strikes the rock twice (instead of speaking to it). Although the rock then produces abundant water, God tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not enter the Land.

Point to Consider: *Why was Aharon also punished if he did not strike the rock? (20:12)*

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 20:14-21

Moshe sends messengers to the king of Edom, asking him to allow the Israelites to travel from Kadesh through his land. Despite Moshe's assurances that they will not take any of his

resources, Edom refuses and comes out to threaten the Israelites militarily. The Israelites turn away.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 20:22-21:9

The nation travels from Kadesh to Mount Hor. Upon God's command, Moshe, Aharon and Elazar ascend Mount Hor. Elazar dons Aharon's special *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) garments, after which Aharon dies. The nation mourns Aharon's death for 30 days. Israel is attacked by the Canaanites and defeats them. After the nation travels on, the people again become thirsty for water. After complaining, many people are killed by a plague of serpents. Moshe prays for those who have been bitten but have not yet died. God tells him to fashion a copper snake, which miraculously heals anyone who looks at it.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 22:10-20

The nation comes to the border of Moab, where they find a well. They compose a song about the well.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 21:21-22:1

After denying the Israelites the right to pass through his land, the king of Sichon wages war against them. The Israelites defeat him, before defeating Og, the mighty king of Bashan, who had also attacked them.

Point to Consider: *Why did God have to tell Moshe not to fear Og? (see Rashi to 21:34)*

HAFTARAH

From the Book of Shofetim (Judges), the haftarah relates the promotion of Yiftach HaGiladi (Jephthah the Gileadite) to a leadership position. Yiftach tries in vain to negotiate peace with the king of Ammon, reminding him of the military victories described in this week's sidra. Yiftach leads the battle against Ammon and secures a resounding victory.

United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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Editor-in-Chief: Rabbi Baruch Davis
Editorial and Production Team:

Rabbi Daniel Sturgess
Rabbi Michael Laitner
Rebbetzen Nechama Davis
Joanna Rose
Laurie Maurer
Richard Herman
Tatiana Krupinina

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Just for You



**RABBI DANIEL
STURGES**

St Albans United
Synagogue

The first mitzvah in *Parashat Chukat*, the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer), is the quintessential example of a *chok*, a mitzvah for which we do not know the reason¹. Why would God give us such mitzvot? Are mitzvot not much more meaningful when we understand them and can perform them with enthusiasm?

Perhaps we can find an answer to this question by looking at one of the most common issues in marriage:

Rachel feels that her husband, David, never shows her any affection or makes her feel loved. David does not understand how she can say that. He works hard to provide for the family, he brings her flowers every Friday, he bought her expensive jewellery for their anniversary...

David also feels unappreciated and unloved. Rachel's jaw drops as she hears this. "I do everything for you! And I got you tickets for that football match for your birthday!"

From witnessing countless marriages like this one, marriage therapist Gary Chapman realised that people express and feel love

in different ways. He then devised the now-famous concept of 'love languages'. The basic principle being that if I say, "I love you" in a language you do not know, then you do not feel loved, despite my good intentions.²

Rachel thought she was showing love by providing David with home-cooked meals and thoughtful gifts. But David did not feel loved. They discovered that when she complimented him and told him how much she appreciated him he felt loved. David thought that gifts were the way to his wife's heart, but for Rachel, they were just 'things'; it was him helping around the house that made her feel loved.

Rabbi Yakov Danishefsky in his book *Attached*³ suggests that 'love languages' exist in our relationship with God too. There are many different types of mitzvot, and each of us connects with some more than others. For some people, Pesach is an inspiring festival of

If I find prayer, Shabbat or keeping kosher difficult, then my doing so despite this fact, is an expression of my love for God.

faith and redemption, for others it feels more like a festival of slavery and deprivation! For some, prayer is an opportunity to commune with their Creator, peacefully blocking out the distractions of the world, for others it is a meaningless chore to be ticked off the to-do list.

Coming back to Rachel and David, it can be difficult for David to appreciate that loading the dishwasher can be received as love by Rachel, for him it is simply a mundane chore. But there is an opportunity here for him to reframe... The fact that Rachel feels loved when he does this, means that he can do it with the mindset that he is doing it just for her - it can be an even stronger expression of love because it shows how much he cares about making her feel loved.

Perhaps we can view *chukim* in the same way. We may not feel such meaning in doing mitzvot we do not understand, but this itself makes the act more meaningful; I am doing this only because You want me to, God.

Rabbi Danishefsky suggests that we can use any mitzvah that we struggle to connect with in this way. If I find prayer, Shabbat or keeping kosher difficult, then my doing so despite this fact, is an expression of my love for God. This can upgrade our spiritual lives in a significant way.

¹ See, for example, Rashi to Vayikra 18:4, who explains that *mishpatim* are mitzvot that have the sense of being just, while *chukim* are "decrees of the King".

² Gary Chapman identified five primary 'love languages': words of affirmation, acts of service, quality time, gifts and physical affection.

³ p. 57, Mosaica Press, 2023

Watch Where You're Going!



**RABBI ZVI
COHEN**

Kingsbury United
Synagogue

Go back twenty years and a young Rabbi Cohen is sitting in a hall, attending a first aid course. A few minutes in and the trainer moves a board aside to reveal a full-size skeleton. My antennae went up as a *Kohen* cannot be in the same room as a dead body. Luckily, I quickly discovered that this chap was plastic and returned to my seat in relief!

As *Kohanim*, the laws of *Tumah* (spiritual impurity) are something we think about daily. It affects which museums we visit, which roads we drive down and, in the case of a Rabbi Cohen, where we stand to officiate at a funeral.

What is it about contact and proximity with the dead that, as shown in our parasha, impacted on the lives of every Jewish person wishing to enter the *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple) or eat *Korbanot* (offerings) and has an impact on *Kohanim* to this very day?

As humans we are the paradigm hybrid, a holy soul from heaven and a physical body from earth. We are constantly fighting a battle: will we follow our soul and be drawn heavenwards, living lives of sanctity as described in the Torah,

or will we be dragged downwards to the physicality of this world and behaviours that we are meant to avoid? Once the soul has departed and just the body remains, there is a mitzvah for the nearest and dearest to honour the body that enabled the soul to exist in this world. But for those that serve in the *Beit Hamikdash* or wish to enter it, this symbol of the base physicality of this world should be avoided (*Sefer HaChinuch* 263).

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) takes this a step further. One of the fundamentals of Jewish belief is that we have free will, but death seems to contradict this. *“Every dead human body represents the mortality of human beings, and there is a real danger that this reality may lead one to think that this physical lack of freedom... also extends to the physical nature of a person.”*

The laws of *Tumah* and *Taharah* (purity) are to remind us that

when it comes to morality we are in control, we are the *“immortal masters of our mortal bodies”*.

This is also the lesson of the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer). We take a cow, representing a strong uncontrolled life force, and hand it over to a *Kohen*, who represents sanctity. Its ashes are mixed with cedar, hyssop and sheep's wool dyed red with worm extract - examples of the highest and lowest of plant and animal life. Every aspect of our lives can be used in the service of God. The ashes were applied on day three and seven of the purification ritual. In Creation, day three had the first physical creation - plants, and day seven, Shabbat - the day of the spiritual.

Our lives are not scripted; we can choose. These laws remind us to choose wisely, to choose lives of sanctity, as each one of us, *Kohen* or not, is a member of the *“Kingdom of Kohanim* and a Holy Nation”! (Shemot 19:6).

As humans we are the paradigm hybrid, a holy soul from heaven and a physical body from earth. We are constantly fighting a battle: will we follow our soul and be drawn heavenwards, living lives of sanctity as described in the Torah, or will we be dragged downwards to the physicality of this world and behaviours that we are meant to avoid?

Melvyn Hartog z"l on his Sheloshim



**RABBI
BARUCH DAVIS**

Daf Hashavua
Editor-in-Chief

Melvyn, beloved Head of the United Synagogue Burial Society for 23 years, would have found these words from our sidra most apt: *"Zot haTorah, adam ki yamut..."*, "this is the Torah of when a person dies". Melvyn would have said: "this is the way God made the world; people die. It's a given. Now we need to give *kavod* (honour) to them and their families".

The Talmudic sage Ben Azai asked, "Who is the person who is honoured?" and answered, "He who shows honour to others" (Pirkei Avot 4:1). Melvyn gave great honour and respect to everyone with whom he came into contact, and was, in turn, much loved and respected. He and his team enhanced the professionalism of the Burial Society, showing great care for the bereaved and their families, and *kavod hamet*, respect for the dead. To his eternal credit, under Melvyn's leadership, non-invasive postmortem scans became much more accessible, and reduced delays to burials became a much greater priority.

Melvyn admired the discreet work of the voluntary *chevra kaddisha*, and we always looked forward to his speeches at the *chevra kaddisha* dinners, serious messages laced

with humour. With his trademark smile, Melvyn exemplified the words of the Talmudic sage, Shamai, "receive everyone with a cheerful countenance" (Pirkei Avot 1:15) - even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Melvyn expected high standards of professionalism and courtesy from his office staff, cemetery workers and the rabbanim. "Dress smartly", he would say, "turn up at least 20 minutes before the funeral to show respect to the departed and their families". It was because of Melvyn that, in bad weather, I would turn up at funerals wearing smart shoes, change into boots for the grounds, then back into shoes to conclude the service!

Melvyn, in turn, was held in the highest regard, as we saw at his *levaya*, with the presence of a large crowd led by the Chief Rabbi, Dayan Binstock and most United Synagogue rabbanim.

For Melvyn, his position as Head of Burial was not a job, it was a vocation, a calling. Even on holiday he would take calls. "It's a privilege", he would say. During his short illness he became confined to a wheelchair, but this did not stop him from attending the grounds to guide the proceedings. Even close to the end, confined to bed, when a good friend visited him, he still took a work call.

At the *levaya*, Rabbi Rafi Goodwin, Chigwell and Hainault Synagogue, shared Melvyn's words to him in his last days: "I am surrounded by love, and you can't ask for anything more



Melvyn Hartog z"l

than that".

Melvyn departed this life in the way he lived, with messages to us all, which he had asked his daughters to read out at his *levaya*:

I want to thank all the people from the United Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi, Dayanim and Rabbonim for their support; it's been an absolute pleasure to work for the organisation for 23 years. Now that I have gone, here's my last opportunity to say to my friends and family I will miss you all. To my beautiful granddaughters: you have been shining stars and I ask one thing from you – never argue and if you do, make it up quickly. The most important thing in life is family.

Melvyn then thanked his devoted wife Marilyn, his daughters Laura and Deborah and his sister Vivienne and brother Barry. May they all be comforted for their loss. May **we** all be comforted for **our** loss. *Yehi zichro baruch*, may his memory be for a blessing.

In loving memory of Moshe Aharon ben Zelig z"l

The Rosetta Stone



BARNABY NEMKO

United Synagogue
Director of Community
Life

Parashat Chukat opens with a concept that gives the Torah portion its name: "This is the statute of [*chukat*] the Torah" (Bemidbar 19:2). Rabbi Sacks z"l tells us that the root *ch-k-k* means "engraved," as if on tablets of stone, and this therefore suggests a sense of permanence. *Chukim*, statutes, constitute a specific category of biblical law. Traditionally they refer to the commands that seem to have no obvious reason, for example the prohibition against wearing clothes of mixed wool and linen (*shatnez*). The concept of a *chok* tells us not to reject what we do not yet comprehend, so perhaps this is an appropriate starting point to consider the translating of the Rosetta Stone, discovered 225 years ago, around the time of Parashat Chukat, on 15th July 1799, a key breakthrough for understanding world history.

The Rosetta Stone is a granodiorite thick rock and contains two languages, ancient Egyptian and Greek using three scripts: hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek. The Stone itself is around 110 cm high and is a fragment of igneous rock weighing approximately 760 kilograms. Upon the Stone is a written decree celebrating the anniversary of Pharaoh Ptolemy V's coronation (c. 196 BCE) and

subsequent tax exemptions, and the writing appears across three partitioned sections of the Stone. The aim of the Egyptian rulers was to enable all officials across the Egyptian empire to read from the same decree. The Rosetta Stone is therefore one of the most remarkable archaeological discoveries as, although ancient Greek was already known, the Stone had the potential to help scholars decode the languages of the Egyptians, both hieroglyphics and demotics for the first time and thus open up the possibility of the study of ancient Egyptian society



and culture. This would obviously include translating ancient scrolls and papyrus with evidence of the Jewish slavery and Exodus from Egypt and the history of Ancient Israel.

The Stone was discovered by French Napoleonic soldiers a couple of miles from the Egyptian port city of Rosetta

(modern day Rashid) and was subsequently dubbed the Rosetta Stone. Its importance was realised immediately by French archaeologists, but the Stone would ultimately be transported as spoils to the British Museum in 1802 under the terms of the Capitulation of Alexandria that saw British victory over the French, and Egypt placed firmly within the British sphere of influence. It has been in the British Museum ever since, and is one of the most visited and popular objects in the museum.

The Rosetta Stone was then translated in parts over a period of several years. The first complete translation of the Greek text was published in 1803. However, another two decades were required to interpret and translate the real meaning of the text. Two scholars, Thomas Young, an English physicist who deciphered much of the hieroglyphs on the Stone, and the Frenchman Jean-Francois Champollion who, in 1814, identified the phonetic characters of the Stone, are often credited with this achievement.

Although we can search for reasons for *chukim*, Rabbi Sacks tells us that we must also understand that reason itself has limitations. The human mind must learn humility and that not everything can be understood at once. It took centuries for scholars to finally make the breakthrough to create a meaningful Egyptology, and now we can more fully understand ancient Egypt, which played such an important part in our own foundational stone/story.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT CHUKAT

12-13 JULY | 7 TAMMUZ

The Power of Words



**HANNAH
GERSON**

Social Responsibility
Manager, US Chesed

Many years ago, in a school assembly, our teacher asked us, "What is the strongest and most powerful muscle in the body?" Some of the older boys started flexing and people shouted out the obvious choices, "biceps", "triceps" and "quads". But what does power actually mean? How does one measure it? By strength? Maybe. By force? Possibly. Or perhaps, by its impact? The teacher's rather unexpected answer to this question was - our tongue. Why? Because the tongue forms words and words are amongst the most powerful things we have. A rousing speech can inspire a nation. A hurtful

comment can reduce somebody to tears. I am not implying that a punch to the head is not going to hurt, but your words have the power to stop the aggressor and make them lower their fists.

Our teacher then asked for two volunteers. She gave the first student a banana and asked him to remove it from its peel. She gave the second student a tube of toothpaste and asked her to squeeze all the paste out. Both students did their tasks quickly, but she then asked the students to put the banana back in its peel and the toothpaste back into its tube. My peers stared in bewilderment at her; was this a trick question? "We can't", they admitted and of course they were right.

The same is true with words; once words have been said, we cannot take them back. Positively or negatively, words will have an

impact, and once said, and more importantly, once heard, we cannot un-hear them. We can apologise, yes, but the impact remains, often a very powerful impact.

In this week's Torah portion, Chukat, God instructed Moshe (Moses) to speak to a rock, to use the power of his words to bring forth water. But instead, Moshe struck the rock, leading to his exclusion from entering the Promised Land. In fact, Moshe even used his speech negatively: "Listen here rebels, shall we bring forth water for you from this rock!" (Bemidbar 20:10). Moshe missed the opportunity to use the power of speech positively to miraculously provide water for the people, and in doing so, to create a *Kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of God's Name. Let's learn from Moshe, and from the banana and the toothpaste, to be thoughtful and careful not to cause harm with our words and to take every opportunity to use their great power for the good.

Chukat Wordsearch

Find the words in the puzzle.

Words can go in any direction.

Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

Generous

Humble

Chukat

Kindness

Empathy

Laws

Happiness

Peace

Helping

Rock

Honesty

Shabbat

H	C	R	S	O	T	S	S	S	K
Z	A	W	O	A	Y	U	H	S	G
E	A	P	K	C	F	O	A	E	H
L	L	U	P	U	K	R	B	N	E
E	H	B	Y	I	Q	E	B	D	L
C	F	Y	M	Q	N	N	A	N	P
K	Q	G	J	U	S	E	T	I	I
P	E	A	C	E	H	G	S	K	N
E	M	P	A	T	H	Y	H	S	G
R	K	Y	T	S	E	N	O	H	S



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

CHUKAT: WATER YOU COMPLAINING ABOUT?

The next week...

