

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HUKAT - Haftarah: Shoftim 11:1-33
JUNE 26-27, 2015 10 TAMUZ 5775

Happy Birthday Mariyah

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Philip Yosef Jaroslawicz a'h, and our condolences to his daughter, our dear friend, Gittie Neufeld, Director Allegra Franco Teacher's College

Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday nights and all evening services this weekend
Minha & Arbit 7:00 PM -Candle Lighting 8:14PM

Shabbat

Class with Rav Aharon 8:00 AM – Latest Shema 8:17AM
Shahrit 8:30 AM, Torah 9:45 and Musaf at 10:30
Rabbi David is scheduled to give the derasha

Kiddush – Sponsored by Merle Fish in honor of the bar mitzvahs of her grandson

We can still use Kiddush Sponsors for these weeks
Shabbat July 18th - Shabbat September 12th

Additionally to avoid confusion in reserving Kiddush dates, we suggest you don't rely on simply telling someone. Please email us at SephardicCongregation@gmail.com, with details of date and type of Kiddush or even better, visit our website BenaiAsher.org And select sponsor a Kiddush and fill in the appropriate fields

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer
Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/
Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's afternoon program with the Bach at the Bach for June 5:00 PM
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 5:30

Class with Rav Aharon: 7:00 - Minha 7:30 PM - Seudat Shelishit 8:00 PM
Rabbi David is scheduled to give the class
Moses and the rock – a different perspective from one you heard before
Birkat HaMazon 8:50PM Arbit 8:55 PM – Shabbat Ends at 9:13

DAILY MINYAN – Sunday 8:00AM – followe by breakfast and class this Sunday
Monday , Thursday 6:55, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00AM
Sunday evening – Mincha and Arbit at 7:45 PM

LOOKING FORWARD:

The Fast of the 17th of Tamuz is pushed from Saturday July 4th to Sunday July 5th
The fast of Tisha Be'Av is pushed from Saturday July 25th to Sunday July 26th

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!**
212-289-2100 – Mincha– The most important
tefilah of the day –Give us 11 minutes and we'll
give you the World To Come!

Editors Notes

Thanks for the great feedback last week. We had so many comments on the proposed \$10 bill article as well as on the horse racing on Shabbat article. Keep the comments coming.

This week we have included two articles forwarded by Phil Rosen. The first is on Huma Abedin. She is Hillary's chief advisor and the wife of our own former representative and infamous former congressman Anthony Weiner. Although I can't imagine anyone being as bad as Valerie Jarrett, Mr. Obama's advisor, reading about Huma scares me. The second is by Ruthie Blum. Michael Oren's book is not even out yet and has caused quite a stir. Let us know what your thoughts are on both.

The portion of Hukat is filled with so many different story lines and concepts. We begin with the laws of the Red Heifer. Many Rabbis take this opportunity to discuss laws we don't understand. The discussion of the Red Heifer often is pushed off to Shabbat Parah, the week we read the special Haftara detailing these laws of purifying a person.

We also have the story of our brother Edom's refusal to allow us passage through their territory, the death of Aharon on Rosh Hodesh Av, the plague of snakes and the snake on a stick or the symbol of the AMA, the miracle at the rivers of Amon and finally the battle with the giants.

Most Rabbis delve this week into Miriam's death and Moses and the Rock. Shadal, Rabbi Luzzato writes, "Moshe Rabbenu only sinned one sin, but the commentators burdened upon him 13 sins and more, for each one invented of his own heart a new sin. For behold, Don Yitzchak Abarbanel brings 10 opinions and adds one from his own opinion, and the Rashbatz {rather than Rashban} in Magen Avot, page 75 adds another opinion, and Mendelsohn {Rabbi Moshe ben Mendel} adds another one. And perhaps there are several other opinions written, and I am not aware of them. And because of this, all my days I refrained from delving into an investigation in this matter, from the fear lest from my investigation would come out to me a new explanation, and it would turn out that I, too, add a new sin to Moshe Rabbenu"

In our class this week, we too will delve into the question beginning with a list of questions too.

1. Although the well was in the merit of Miriam, why did Hashem turn off the faucet?
2. Why were both Moses and Aaron needed to turn on the faucet?

3. If Hashem wanted Moses to only speak with the rock, why tell him to take the staff? Maybe a wrench would have been better?
4. Was he really meant to speak softly while carrying a big stick? Was the rock to respond out of fear at seeing the stick? Did the rock have eyes?
5. And if it is Moses sin we are talking about, why is Aaron also punished?
6. I don't know about you, but to me hitting a rock and having it provide water for three million people and perhaps a hundred million animals is certainly a huge miracle. Where is the lack if Kiddush Hashem?
7. And if it is in fact a mistake made by Moses, then why does he in his final speech blame the people for causing this mistake?

Using these questions, look at the story again and see if you can come up with some answers. This Shabbat we'll be trying to do the same out here.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Time for Huma Abedin to Come Out of the Shadows

Posted By Joseph Klein On June 19, 2015 @ 12:08 am In Daily Mailer,FrontPage

Huma Abedin, Hillary Clinton's longtime confidante, is currently the vice chair of her 2016 presidential campaign. "I'm not sure Hillary could walk out the door without Huma," Clinton adviser Mandy Grunwald said back during the days of Hillary's first run for the presidency. Huma and Hillary are inseparable, including having been linked together on a private e-mail network while Ms. Clinton was Secretary of State and Ms. Abedin was her deputy chief of staff. If Hillary Clinton were to be elected president of the United States, Ms. Abedin will no doubt be right there with Hillary as her right hand person in the White House. And that may well be a major coup for the Muslim Brotherhood, whose strategic plan calls for destroying Western civilization from within and "sabotaging" its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers..."

In view of her background [2] that involves the Muslim Brotherhood, it is time for Huma Abedin to come out of the shadows and reveal exactly what she did and whom she communicated with while at the Clinton State Department.

Huma Abedin is the daughter of Saleha Mahmood Abedin, who has had ties to numerous Islamist organizations including the Muslim Brotherhood. During her youth, Huma lived with her family in Saudi Arabia, where they had re-located from Michigan and where she was exposed to the Wahhabi jihadist ideology, before returning to the United States at the age of 18.

In the late 1990's, while Huma Abedin was interning in the Bill Clinton White House and began her long association with Hillary Clinton, she served as an executive board member of George Washington University's Muslim Students Association, which had its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood.

Huma Abedin later worked at the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs (IMMA) as the assistant editor of its in-house publication, the Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs (JMMA). Her mother was the editor of JMMA, taking over from Huma's father after he had died. Huma's tenure as assistant editor overlapped with that of a wealthy Saudi individual with reported al Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood ties, Abdullah Omar Naseef, who had recruited her father to move to Saudi Arabia to lead the IMMA think tank. Although Huma severed her own ties with the Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs when she began her service in Hillary Clinton's State Department, Huma's brother and sister have remained involved with the journal. The Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs – an Abedin family project in which Huma Abedin was deeply involved – espouses the Islamic supremacist ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. As Andrew McCarthy noted, Huma Abedin herself “spent 12 years working at a journal intended to aid Islamic domination of the West.”

Nevertheless, Hillary relies on Huma Abedin and trusts her completely, which will give Ms. Abedin extraordinary influence in a Hillary Clinton administration.

“The picture that emerges from interviews and records suggests a situation where the lines were blurred between Ms. Abedin's work in the high echelons of one of the government's most sensitive executive departments and her role as a Clinton family insider,” according to a May 2013 report in the New York Times.

While serving as Hillary's deputy chief of staff at the State Department, Huma Abedin had access to the most highly sensitive government information, which included developments in Libya both before and after the tragic killing of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans that resulted from the Sept. 11, 2012 jihadist terror attack in Benghazi. Moreover, with Huma whispering in her ear as her key adviser on the Middle East, Hillary oversaw the Obama administration's pivot towards engaging with the

Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups in Egypt and Libya.

The Obama administration decided in 2011 to formally expand its engagement with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood group, after the Obama administration had so enthusiastically supported the ouster of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Hillary Clinton declared at the time that “we welcome...dialogue with those Muslim Brotherhood members who wish to talk with us.” The Obama administration then reportedly intervened behind the scenes to help the Muslim Brotherhood's choice for president, Mohammed Morsi, prevail in the presidential run-off election over his more secular army-backed rival.

Huma Abedin's mother Dr. Saleha Mahmood Abedin is a chairperson of the International Islamic Committee for Woman and Child, which had strongly advocated for Sharia laws to replace more secular laws in Egypt under the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood dominated government. As Nonie Darwish, the author of *The Devil We Don't Know: The Dark Side of Revolutions in the Middle East* and President of FormerMuslimsUnited.org noted in a Frontpage Magazine article entitled *Huma Abedin's Mother and an Islamist Agenda* [3], “Huma did not keep a distance from her mother's activities when she introduced Secretary Clinton to her activist mother. During Clinton's visit to Saudi Arabia, the US Secretary of State visited and spoke at the Islamic college of Dar El-Hekma together with Huma, where Dr. Saleha Abedin was a vice-dean and one of its founders.”

That visit took place in 2011, at the very time that the Obama administration was expanding its outreach to the Muslim Brotherhood and was embracing the “Arab Spring.”

When Morsi himself was forced out of power by another popular revolt in 2012, the Obama administration was displeased and suspended certain military aid to the successor regime for about 18 months.

In view of what the Obama administration had believed in 2011 were positive developments in Egypt that had led to the downfall of President Mubarak and his replacement with a “democratic” government dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, Hillary Clinton led the charge within the Obama administration to repeat such regime change in Libya. She urged action to overthrow the Gadhafi regime in Libya after the start of an “Arab Spring” uprising in that country. In August 2011, Jake Sullivan, another of Hillary's deputies, wrote in an internal email that “HRC has been a critical voice on Libya in administration deliberations, at NATO, and in contact group meetings—as well as the public face of the U.S. effort in Libya. She was instrumental in securing the

authorization, building the coalition, and tightening the noose around Qadhafi and his regime.” Hillary “dismissed the warnings offered by career military and intelligence officials,” according to a Washington Times article dated January 28, 2015 that described the contents of certain secret audio recordings reportedly recovered from Tripoli: Mrs. Clinton was headstrong to enter the Libyan crisis, ignoring the Pentagon’s warnings that no U.S. interests were at stake and regional stability could be threatened. Instead, she relied heavily on the assurances of the Libyan rebels and her own memory of Rwanda, where U.S. inaction may have led to the genocide of at least 500,000 people. Many of the rebels were jihadists who would later turn against the United States. Huma Abedin was in Hillary’s inner circle and thus in the loop on key e-mails regarding Libya, which she made sure to send to Hillary on a regular basis. One such e-mail dated March 27, 2011 dealt with the establishment of the Benghazi mission. It said that “We expect to get support in particular from the Turks who have a consulate in Benghazi.” Turkey’s Islamic government has been one of the Muslim Brotherhood’s most ardent supporters, hosting its leaders and their international meetings. Hillary had no plan for what would follow the regime change in Libya other than to persuade the transitional government to become, in Huma Abedin’s words, “inclusive” [4] in order to (as Abedin explained) to “nurture its legitimacy.” Whatever they may have believed regarding the positive role that the Muslim Brotherhood could play in such inclusiveness and nurturing of “legitimacy,” the result has been complete chaos, exploited by the Islamic State and other jihadists. It is imperative that Huma Abedin be immediately required to cooperate with congressional investigators and to respond to Freedom of Information requests by handing over all of the e-mails in her possession that she authored and received while serving in the State Department. This includes the time she worked as a paid consultant after she terminated her status as an employee. She should also turn over all logs, contact lists, calendars and other records that may shed light on her activities related to Egypt and Libya and communications with Muslim Brotherhood members, supporters and other Islamists. If she destroyed this material, following the example of her boss Hillary Clinton who wiped her private server clean, this will raise legitimate suspicion that she has something to hide about her activities and associations. If Hillary Clinton is elected president, Ms. Abedin will most likely be given a top-level job in the White House that will not require Senate confirmation. Asking Huma Abedin to provide at the earliest

possible time a full public accounting under oath of her activities, communications and contacts while at the State Department is not McCarthyism or Islamophobia, as some on the Left would charge. To the contrary, it is a reasonable exercise of due diligence. Only then will the American people have the information they deserve that may well be highly relevant to their concerns about the security of this nation, in advance of next year’s presidential election.

A questionable conclusion

Ruthie Blum on Michael Oren

Even before MK Michael Oren’s book “Ally” is officially released, it is already causing the kind of buzz that best-sellers are made of. And with good reason. The memoir of Oren’s term as Israeli ambassador to the United States -- a position he held from 2009-2013 -- provides a detailed account of the U.S. administration’s treatment of Israel. Though the tension that has existed between Washington and Jerusalem since Barack Obama became president is both an open secret and the focus of endless commentary on both sides of the political divide, its true extent is often obfuscated by insistence that the rift is greatly exaggerated. Or that it is merely due to the fact that Obama has a personal aversion to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Oren is now asserting that none of us even knows the half of it. Providing a glimpse into the contents of the book, Oren published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal on Tuesday called “How Obama abandoned Israel.” The piece blames the American president for purposely sabotaging the U.S.-Israel relationship. Coming from Oren, whose own view of Netanyahu is complicated, it was as plausible an indictment of Obama as it was harsh. Punishment was quick to follow. A few hours after the article appeared, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro phoned Netanyahu and asked him to dissociate himself from Oren’s assertions. When Netanyahu declined, Shapiro called Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon (the leader of the Kulanu party, of which Oren is a member) to make the same request. Kahlon complied. First he summoned Oren to his office and let him have it. Then he sent an official letter to Shapiro, assuring him that Oren’s position did not reflect his own, and expressing his “deep and sincere appreciation for President Obama’s efforts to stand by Israel and defend its interests.” Secretary of State John Kerry also attacked Oren, albeit through his spokesman, John Kirby. Kirby told reporters on Wednesday that Kerry called

Oren's article "absolutely inaccurate and false." And then Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan got into the act.

"Oren is wrong to accuse Obama of malicious intentions toward Israel," he said. "The president prevents harsh resolutions against Israel from being passed at the U.N., and actively tries to strengthen the security ties between the states. Saying that the president has abandoned Israel is disconnected [from reality]."

Criticism isn't the only response Oren's outspokenness has been eliciting, however. On the contrary, his bravery in the face of the onslaught he surely anticipated is being rewarded, as well. Indeed, he is receiving many accolades for acknowledging that, whatever mistakes Netanyahu may have made, they are not at the root of Obama's kowtowing to the Muslim world, to the point of allowing Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. In an extensive interview with David Horowitz in *The Times of Israel* on Thursday, Oren explains the impetus for the book, which he calls a "cri de coeur for an alliance that should be in a much better place than it is," both reiterating his stance and softening it somewhat.

"There's a tendency to put this book in black and white terms, and it wasn't like that," he says. "I had excellent relationships with a lot of people in the administration. Many ... were dear friends of the State of Israel. Someone like Tom Nides, the deputy secretary of state, Jewish guy, very funny guy and I quote him in the book: After UNESCO recognizes a Palestinian state (in 2011), he calls me and he says, the way they do in Washington, you know, 'You don't want to f---ing defund UNESCO. They f---ing teach the f---ing Holocaust.' ... That's been quoted as an example of an anti-Israel bent for Tom Nides. It's not like that. That's the way they talk [in Washington]."

Still, Oren admits that the problem with Obama (whose election in 2008 he welcomed) is not his disagreements with Israel, but rather his worldview. No kidding. And kudos to Oren for spelling this out, no matter how clear it has been to so many of us from the get-go. But he deserves an equal amount of demerits for reaching the wrong conclusion from his own personal and historical depiction of events. Yes, in spite of everything, he says his "biggest fear is not the Obama administration," but rather "the future of the Democratic Party, with the progressive wing in the background. I think we have to do much more to reach out to that progressive wing."

Reach out to it? Is he joking? How about praying it is defeated in 2016?

He does not answer such questions, nor is he asked them. In fact, the word "Republican" does

not appear a single time in the interview.

What does appear is a reiteration of the need for Israel to engage in a two-state charade with the Palestinians, in spite of the fact that, in his own words, "We're talking about creating a state that has no institutions, no economy, a corrupt, unelected leadership, which is incapable of defending itself, even last summer when [Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud] Abbas was going to be overthrown. So how long is this state going to last? Really. No one is being realistic."

Nevertheless, he adds, "We should always say, 'We're at the table ready to negotiate,' even if Abbas is not here. We should limit where we build. We should go back to the Bush-Sharon formula. That would go a long way to lessening the chances for boycotts. It would help our friends in the Democratic Party tremendously."

Does he actually believe that BDS would be minimized by Israel's doing what it has been doing all along? And why do we need to help the Democratic Party?

Which brings us to the final question he is asked in the interview: "Assuming that Israel gets to the next presidency intact and given your dealings with Hillary Clinton, how effective might she be as president in healing this fracture? Is it fractured, broken, collapsed, in tatters?"

Oren replies: "Part of it was in tatters. Certainly. When you have people in the White House calling your prime minister what they call him, and the prime minister going and giving a speech without informing the president, that's not a very healthy situation."

"I had a lot of hours working with Hillary. She's an incredibly formidable intellect, physically robust. She's of that generation that still has that warm place in her heart [for Israel]. Her formational experience with Israel was the Six-Day War and not, say, the First Intifada. But we'd still have to move toward her. We'd have to meet her halfway. If she were president -- and this is all highly hypothetical -- and we retained the status quo [on the Palestinians], we would still be in a very difficult situation."

So there we have it. Oren holds the Obama administration responsible for the mess we're in. But it is now our job to help usher another Democrat into the White House.

No thanks, Mr. Oren.

Ruthie Blum is the web editor of Voice of Israel talk radio (voiceofisrael.com).

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading

- 1- Para Aduma - slaughtering, burning, saving the ashes, how ones becomes tameh
- 2- Para Aduma- the sprinkling, laws of the tameh. Miriam dies and the water stops coming.
- 3- Moshe hits the rock
- 4- Benei Israel asks to pass through the land of edom on the way to Israel and edom refuses
- 5- Aharon dies, Amalek attacks, Benei Israel complains. Hashem sends a plague of snakes
- 6- Benei Israel's journies in the 40th yr, the miracle in the rivers of arnon, Benei Israel gets water
- 7- Benei Israel battles and defeats Sihon and Og on the way to Israel

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Therefore the rulers would say, 'Let us go to Heshbon.'" (Bemidbar 21:27)

The Talmud (Baba Batra 75b) homiletically comments on this passage, that a person who wishes to rule over his inclination must make a personal accounting, a heshbon, of his deeds.

Harav Ovadiah Yosef zt"l tells a true story of Mr. Polity who was the gabbai (treasurer) of the Yeshivah Porat Yosef. Before he moved to Israel he lived in Turkey. He had a factory that produced men's clothing. One day a high ranking soldier from the Turkish army entered the factory to purchase tens of thousands of uniforms for the army. However, it was very close to Minhah and so Mr. Polity asked the customer to wait a half hour so that he could go to shul, pray Minhah, and come back.

However, the officer refused to wait, so he went right away to another clothing factory and purchased the uniforms. When Mr. Polity returned from shul he made a calculation and figured out that he lost thirty thousand gold coins on this lost opportunity. But, he rejoiced and thanked Hashem that he was able to stand up to this test despite this great loss.

Shortly after that, the officer realized that the uniforms he had purchased were not the quality needed for the army and so he returned to Mr. Polity and bought uniforms from him, and Mr. Polity made double the profit than he would have made on the first deal. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"This is the Torah, if a person dies in a tent..." (Bemidbar 19:14)

The sages state that the Torah only lasts with those who die over it. This seems very puzzling, since the Torah is for the living, as it states (Vayikra 18:5), "And you shall live with them (the commandments)."

The Hafess Hayim gave the following analogy. A successful merchant was so busy taking care of customers who came to his store that he had no time for Torah study. He noticed one day that his hair was turning gray, and he realized that he was getting older. He knew that the day he would leave this world was getting closer. He therefore decided that he would go each morning to the synagogue to pray with a minyan and to study Torah for a couple of hours. When he came late to the store, his wife was frantic. People would have come to the store if he were there and they were losing customers. He calmly told his wife, "What would I do if the Angel of Death came to me and told me that my time in this world was up? Could I tell him that I can't go yet since I'll miss out on customers? If I were already dead I would not be able to come to the store. Therefore, each day, let us imagine for a couple of hours that I have already died. This way I am able to study Torah each day."

This, said the Hafess Hayim, is what the sages are advising us. You might be very busy and feel that you do not have any time to study Torah, but if you will just view yourself as if you were already dead, you will find the time to study Torah which gives life to those who study it. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

NO REASON

"This is the hok/statute/decreed of the Torah." (Bemidbar 19:2)

The term hok is used to describe a misvah which, for all intents and purposes, seems inexplicable. While Hashem certainly has a rationale for this misvah, our little finite minds have difficulty understanding that which is infinite. We are instructed to serve Hashem out of love and awe - not because it makes sense, it seems the right thing to do, or we understand it. We serve Hashem because He is the Almighty, and, on Har Sinai we accepted to be His People, with a resounding declaration of Naase v'Nishma, "We will do and we will listen," thereby affirming our commitment to Hashem being based on doing - not on listening and understanding. The hok then becomes the key to all observances. We serve because He is King. He makes decrees, and we accept them. There is no rhyme or reason - just obedience. This is Judaism.

The concept of hok goes beyond the scope of misvot. There are hukim in life, episodes which, at the time, do not make sense: illnesses; financial challenges; and such, which are beyond our ability to understand and accept. These episodes of inexplicability should be treated the same way we perform misvot which are hukim. They are Hashem's decree. He owes us no explanation. We take it as it comes, and smile.

This is the yesod, foundation, of Parah Adumah. Hashem seems to be conveying to us the following message: "Rabbotai - you are not going to understand all of My ways. Parah Adumah appears to you as a senseless, contradictory misvah. This is the way I want it to be, and this is what I want you to follow."

Perusing our national history, our people have suffered many tragic and grievous events. These experiences run counter to our vision and understanding of a loving and kind G-d. How could He allow these terrible things to happen? Sadly, there are some who employ their inability to understand as a vehicle for reneging their commitment, to rebel and deny Hashem. Apparently, their ancestors who experienced the tragedies, who were the victims, did not seem to think so. They maintained their belief in Hashem, and, with pride and dignity, sacrificed their lives to glorify His Name. They are the true survivors. Their descendants, who arrogantly deny Hashem and impugn the integrity of their ancestors, are the actual victims. The parents live on, while the children have chosen to exchange eternal life for temporary gratification. (Peninim on the Torah)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

**Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
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The Mystery of the Jewish People**

Parashat Hukat begins with the Misva of "Para Aduma," the red heifer whose ashes were used to make the waters through which people would be purified after becoming Tameh (ritually impure). The Torah refers to this Misva as "Hukat Ha'Torah" – the "statute" of the Torah. Para Aduma is the quintessential "Hok," or law whose reasoning eludes us. We have no way of explaining why specifically waters made from the ashes of this particular cow makes somebody pure, or why the Kohen who sprinkles the water becomes Tameh. The Sages teach us that even King Shelomo, the wisest of all men, waved the white flag, so-to-speak, when he tried to find the underlying reason for this Misva.

We find in the Midrash an astounding statement concerning the Para Aduma. The Midrash writes, "Para – Elu Yisrael" ("A heifer – this refers to the Jewish people"). Why does the Midrash compare Am Yisrael to a cow? In what way are we like the Para Aduma?

The answer, perhaps, is that the existence of the Jewish people, like the Para Aduma, is a "Hok," a law that defies all logic and cannot be explained according to human reasoning. Logically, Am Yisrael should have disappeared centuries ago. As a tiny

nation that that has endured more persecution than any other, and which has been scattered about throughout the world, wandering from place to place, there is no logical reason for it to have survived. Our continued existence is a "Hok," a reality that is no less mystifying and incomprehensible as the Para Aduma.

In a famous essay, celebrated author Mark Twain observed the astonishing miracle of Jewish survival:

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star-dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers.

He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

Rabbenu Bahya Ben Pakuda, one of the Spanish Rishonim (Medieval Sages), wrote in his Hobot Halebabot that if one wants to experience miracles like the miracles of the Exodus, all he really needs to do is contemplate the miracle of Jewish survival. There is no greater miracle than the Jewish nation's continued existence after centuries of persecution, pogroms, Inquisitions and Holocausts.

This is not to say, however, that we can just sit back proudly and confidently and bask in our triumphs. To the contrary, we must remember that every station along the difficult road of Jewish exile was just that – only a station. As comfortable and confident as the

Jews felt in Spain, in Germany, and in other places, they were eventually forced to leave. In fact, this pattern began much earlier in our history, in the time of our patriarch Yaakov. He married Laban's daughters, tended to his sheep and became very successful. Everything was fine and good, until one day he heard Laban's sons, his brothers-in-law, complaining that Yaakov stole all their wealth. Yaakov had no choice but to flee.

If this sounds familiar, that's because this has repeated itself many times throughout the last two millennia. The Jews settle down, work well with the native population, accumulate wealth, and feel very comfortable where they are. But then, eventually, the people around them take notice, feel envious, and begin to resent the Jews, leading to persecution and yet another exile.

As grateful as we are for all the opportunities America has given us, we cannot feel too comfortable here. If we are successful, we must not flaunt it. The last thing we need is to catch the attention of the people around us. True, our existence and survival is a "Hok," an extraordinary miracle. But we bear the responsibility to handle this miracle with care, not to allow our feelings of pride to lead us to outward displays of triumphalism and overconfidence. We must instead carry ourselves humbly and quietly, and do all we can to ensure that we continue to be welcome on these shores, rather than ignite jealousy and resentment.

Rabbi Wein WEIGHING VALUES

Almost all of us agree that values, especially those that represent the ideas of democracy and freedom and also our own national self-interest and personal preservation, are vital and necessary for ourselves and the public good. When viewed in isolation, it is easy to be an ardent supporter of any one individual value that fits this criterion of benefit and probity. The problem always arises when apparently contradictory values conflict with each other. Then the question arises as to which value has priority and should be followed at the expense of the other.

The current debate that Israeli society is engaged in regarding the government's funding of dramas, that that are sympathetic to Palestinian terrorism and murder of Israelis is a case in point. We all agree that freedom of speech and expression, the ability to speak one's mind publicly or privately without fear of prosecution or punishment is a necessary spoke in the wheel of how a democratic society functions.

Yet, we also are mindful of the value that Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes articulated in his famous phrase that "no one has the right to falsely shout 'fire' in a crowded theater." Thus, all values must somehow be seen as being relative one to another and not absolute and sacrosanct in all circumstances.

There are those in Israeli society, and probably in every other society as well, that value one particular value – such as artistic freedom of expression – over all other values. To a certain extent this resembles the famous example of one drilling a hole under one's seat in a boat, irrespective of what this will do to the boat and its other passengers.

It is this lack of perspective and the unwillingness to balance one's own cherished value in relation to other values and sensitivities that lies at the heart of the current discussion and dispute.

If we examine the way that halachic conclusions are arrived at, we will see that the basic pattern is to attempt to reconcile conflicting values and in most cases to determine which value has priority in the instance under discussion. In fact, all legal systems are based on this requirement to decide between conflicting values or somehow to attempt to reconcile them.

This is certainly true when dealing with private property rights that somehow conflict with the public good or impinge upon the property rights of others. It is also true regarding spiritual values. Probably the simplest and most famous example of this is that the value of human life, even when in doubt, overrules the value of observance of the Sabbath laws.

There are numerous other such examples, which abound throughout the Torah literature of the ages. One can safely say that the values of the individual at one time or another will always conflict with some of the values of public good and safety and of the well-being of others. Because of this, one should always be wary of advancing one's own deeply held value, no matter how sacred and holy it may seem, over the values of others and the public good. This is one of the reasons why the great rabbis of the Mishnah warned the wise and scholarly, the elite, to be careful in their statements and pronouncements. There are consequences to words uttered and dramas produced. Unfortunately, we do not operate in a vacuum or a bubble. And, good judgment and self-restraint are certainly necessary in all avenues of life and expression.

I do not know where absolute justice and wisdom lie in the current controversy over this allocation of

government funds to support the arts. As is usual in Israel, and perhaps everywhere else in the world as well, the issue has become extremely politicized. This leads to statements that are foolish, if not even vicious, which itself is a violation of a primary value of Judaism to speak softly and kindly.

The self-preservation of the Jewish state and of Torah within it, are, in my humble opinion, the supreme values that should govern our outlook and behavior today. It may very well be that prioritizing these values will necessarily impinge and infringe on other values.

But that is the way life deals with us, always offering choices but rarely making clear to us the ultimate consequences of the option that will in fact be chosen. In any event, we should certainly lower the tone of the debate and attempt to come to a realistic reconciliation of these and other seemingly conflicting values. We will all have gained from such a modicum of courtesy and self-restraint.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Anger Management

There are some, say the Talmud, who acquire their world in an hour and others who lose it in an hour. No example of the latter is more arresting and bewildering than the famous episode in this week's parsha. The people have asked for water. God tells Moses to take a staff and speak to the rock and water will appear. This then follows:

He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?' Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in Me enough to honour Me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.'

"Is this the Torah and this its reward?" we are tempted to say. What was Moses' sin that it merited such punishment? In previous years I have expressed my view that Moses did not sin, nor was he punished. It was simply that each generation needs its own leaders. Moses was the right, indeed the only, leader capable of taking the Israelites out of Egypt. It needed another kind of leader and a different style of leadership, to take the next generation into the Promised Land.

This year, though, looking at the ethics of the Bible, it seems more appropriate to look at a different explanation, the one given by Maimonides in Shemoneh Perakim, the "Eight Chapters" that form the preface to his commentary to the Mishnah, tractate Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers.

In the course of these chapters Maimonides sets out a surprisingly contemporary account of Judaism as a training in "emotional intelligence." [1] Healthy emotions are essential to a good and happy life, but temperament is not something we choose. Some people just happen to be more patient or calm or generous-spirited or optimistic than others. Emotions were at one stage called the "passions," a word that comes from the same root as "passive," implying that they are feelings that happen to us rather reactions we chose to have. Despite this, Maimonides believed that with sufficient training, we could overcome our destructive emotions and reconfigure our affective life.

In general, Maimonides, like Aristotle, believed that emotional intelligence consists in striking a balance between excess and deficiency, too much and too little. Too much fear makes me a coward, too little makes me rash and foolhardy, taking unnecessary risks. The middle way is courage. There are, however, two exceptions, says Maimonides: pride and anger. Even a little pride (some sages suggested "an eighth of an eighth") is too much. Likewise even a little anger is wrong.

That, says Maimonides, is why Moses was punished: because he lost his temper with the people when he said, "Listen, you rebels." To be sure, there were other occasions on which he lost his temper – or at least looked as if he had. His reaction to the sin of the Golden Calf, which included smashing the tablets, was hardly eirenic or relaxed. But that case was different. The Israelites had committed a sin. God himself was threatening to destroy the people. Moses had to act decisively and with sufficient force to restore order to a people wildly out of control.

Here, though, the people had not sinned. They were thirsty. They needed water. God was not angry with them. Moses' intemperate reaction was therefore wrong, says Maimonides. To be sure, anger is something to which we are all prone. But Moses was a leader, and a leader must be a role model. That is why Moses was punished so heavily for a failure that might have been more lightly punished in someone less exalted.

In addition, says Maimonides, by losing his temper Moses failed to respect the people and might have

demoralized them. Knowing that Moses was God's emissary, the people might have concluded that if Moses was angry with them, so too was God. Yet they had done no more than ask for water. Giving the people the impression that God was angry with them was a failure to sanctify God's name. Thus one moment's anger was sufficient to deprive Moses of the reward surely most precious to him, of seeing the culmination of his work by leading the people across the Jordan into the Promised Land.

The sages were outspoken in their critique of anger. They would thoroughly have approved of the modern concept of anger management. They did not like anger at all, and reserved some of their sharpest language to describe it.

"The life of those who can't control their anger is not a life," they said (Pesachim 113b). Resh Lakish said, "When a person becomes angry, if he is a sage his wisdom departs from him; if he is a prophet his prophecy departs from him" (Pesachim 66b). Maimonides said that when someone becomes angry it is as if he has become an idolater (Hilkhos Deot 2: 3).

What is dangerous about anger is that it causes us to lose control. It activates the most primitive part of the human brain that bypasses the neural circuitry we use when we reflect and choose on rational grounds. While in its grip we lose the ability to step back and judge the possible consequences of our actions. The result is that in a moment of irascibility we can do or say things we may regret for the rest of our lives.

For that reason, rules Maimonides (Hilkhos Deot 2: 3), there is no "middle way" when it comes to anger. Instead we must avoid it under any circumstance. We must go to the opposite extreme. Even when anger is justified, we must avoid it. There may be times when it is necessary to look as if we are angry. That is what Moses did when he saw the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf, and broke the tablets of stone. Yet even then, says Maimonides, inwardly you should be calm.

The Orchot Tzadikim (15th century) notes that anger destroys personal relationships. Short-tempered people scare others, who therefore avoid coming close to them. Anger drives out the positive emotions – forgiveness, compassion, empathy and sensitivity. The result is that irascible people end up lonely, shunned and disappointed. Bad tempered people achieve nothing but their bad temper (Kiddushin 40b). They lose all else.

The classic role model of patience in the face of

provocation was Hillel. The Talmud (Shabbat 31a) says that two people once made a wager with each other, saying, "He who makes Hillel angry shall receive four hundred zuz." One said, "I will go and provoke him." It was Erev Shabbat and Hillel was washing his hair. The man stood by the door of his house and called, "Is Hillel here, is Hillel here?" Hillel robed himself and came out, saying, "My son, what do you seek?" "I have a question to ask," he said. "Ask, my son," replied Hillel. He said, "Why are the heads of the Babylonians round?" "My son, you ask a good question," said Hillel. "The reason is that they have no skilled midwives."

The man left, paused, then returned, crying out, "Is Hillel here? Is Hillel here?" Again, Hillel robed and came out, saying, "My son, what do you seek?" "I have another question." "Ask, my son." "Why are the eyes of the Palmyreans bleared?" Hillel replied, "My son, you ask a good question. The reason is that they live in sandy places."

He left, waited, then came back a third time, calling, "Is Hillel here? Is Hillel here?" Again, Hillel robed and came out, saying, "My son, what do you seek?" "I have another question." "Ask, my son." "Why are the feet of Africans wide?" "My son, you ask a good question. The reason is that they live in watery marshes."

"I have many questions to ask," said the man, "but I am worried that you might become angry." Hillel then robed himself and sat and said, "Ask all the questions you have to ask." "Are you the Hillel who is called the nasi [leader, prince] of Israel?" "Yes," said Hillel. "In that case, said the man, may there not be many like you in Israel." "Why so, my son?" he asked. "Because I have just lost four hundred zuz because of you!" "Be careful of your moods," said Hillel. "You may lose four hundred zuz and yet another four hundred zuz through Hillel, yet Hillel will not lose his temper."

It was this quality of patience under provocation that was one of the factors, according to the Talmud (Eruvin 13b), that led the sages to rule according to the school of Hillel rather than that of Shammai.

The best way of defeating anger is to pause, stop, reflect, refrain, count to ten, and breathe deeply. If necessary, leave the room, go for a walk, meditate, or vent your toxic feelings alone. It is said that about one of the Rebbes of Lubavitch that whenever he felt angry, he would take down the Shulchan Arukh to see whether anger was permitted under the circumstances. By the time he had finished studying, his anger had disappeared.

The verdict of Judaism is simple: Either we defeat anger or anger will defeat us.

[1] The term was introduced by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, subsequently popularized by Daniel Goleman.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL
 "This is the statute of the Torah". (19:2)

The subject of Parah Adumah (the red heifer) is based on the fact of the Tum'ah of a dead body. This is the most severe form of uncleanness and is called "the father of the fathers of Tum'ah". One explanation for this severity of the uncleanness of the dead is as follows: The Chovot Halevavot (Yichud Hamaaseh 5) declares that the first and most prevalent doubt concerning the principles of Torah is the doubt in the truth of Life after death (Olam Haba).

We can readily perceive the reason for the persistence of such a doubt, in the fact of death itself. When confronted by such catastrophic phenomenon as death actually is, it requires strength of character and of intelligence to overcome the powerful impression caused by the death of a person. In order to reinforce the confidence in the Existence after death, it is imperative that we have as little contact with the dead as possible, and also that the dead be buried immediately. To encourage these principles, the extreme restrictions of Tum'ah of the dead are especially effective.

Death is the greatest falsehood in the Universe, for the fact of death causes men to weaken in their belief of the most important truth of the universe (after the belief in Hashem) which is the belief of Life after death.

"This world is but a vestibule before the World to come. Prepare yourself in the vestibule in order to enter the banquet hall" (Abot 4:16). Because of this effect of Death upon the minds of men, it is the worst form of Tum'ah.

"When a man dies" (19:4) Death is the greatest falsehood. When Hitler murdered 6 million innocents, and then he saw that he was losing the war and would face retribution, he thereupon swallowed a perfumed poison and thus painlessly left the world thinking he escaped the great punishment that awaited him. Thus the phenomenon of death is an enormous deception which conceals the True fate of the evil man in the Afterlife from men's eyes. Such enormous deception requires a very great label to identify it.

The phenomenon of death can contaminate the mind with the materialistic attitude that death is the end. If life ends so completely, it loses its value. For why strive for excellence and virtue if it all ends in the grave? And therefore Hashem declares here that no Tum'ah is as severe as the uncleanness of death.

Quoted from "Journey Into Greatness" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

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