

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HUKAT

Haftarah: Shoftim 11:1-33

JULY 1, 2017 7 TAMUZ 5777

DEDICATION: Please pray for a refuah shelema for Elisheva bat Esther

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FROM THE ARCHIVES**ARYANA AND STEVEN'S WEDDING 2013****Editors Notes – You Gotta Believe**

One of the Rabbis under the chupah turned to me and said, "I've seen you speak for twenty years at countless occasions under all sorts of pressure and I don't remember ever seeing you getting nervous... wow, you're human." Well I do get tense and standing out on the beach with six hundred people around us and the sun starting to set, I was downright anxious.

This week we read the portion of Chukat which begins with the laws of the Parah Adumah- the Red Heifer. King Solomon states that with all his wisdom, there were concepts relating to the laws of purification through the ashes of the red cow that were difficult for even him to fully comprehend. Based on this, the Rabbis describe Chukim as statutes of faith. We follow them simply because we were commanded to do so.

This theme of faith runs through the entire Perasha. Following the death of Miriam and the drying of the well, the people instead of coming to comfort Moses, have a crisis of faith and gather to complain. We have the incident of Moses "hitting of the rock" where G-d tells him, "because you didn't believe in Me".

Then although the people encounter the southern Cannanities and defeat them in battle, they complain again. G-d allows the poisonous snakes who typically fill the desert to attack the nation. Moses creates the "copper snake on a stick" which reminds them that G-d is in charge and they are miraculously healed. And finally we have the battles of Sichon and Og. Moses is concerned lest the merit of Og's assistance to Abraham protect him. Hashem must assure Moshe, who then leads the people into victorious battle against the giants.

Again and again, we see that one can do what they can to succeed in life. But after all is said and done, as Tug McGraw reminded us so well, "You gotta believe". We can get so far believing it is our own effort that's taking us somewhere, but at some point we need to admit; we're often kids driving the car at Nelly Bly Playland where we think that by pressing the gas and turning the wheel, we're doing something, but the car follows the track and it moves at the will of the operator.

So many of you asked, "So, what happened at the wedding". For those who didn't read last week's article, I noted that my daughter Aryana was marrying her fiancé Steven this past week. It was a mix of customs and communities. We had a plan, a little of this and a little of that, all following a rigid schedule. And we hoped the plan would follow course. But man plans and G-d laughs.

It was 8PM, I was standing at the beginning of the walkway out to the beach. I knew there were 400 chairs around the chupah and it looked like another 200 people were standing. Others were running by and sitting along the end of the cabanas. Still 150 more were waiting inside. It should have been 7PM. Now at 8PM the last few marchers needed to walk down the aisle and I wondered how to complete a wedding in 22 minutes. It wasn't just Shekiah that was the problem, it was literally sundown that worried me. The ceremony was set up further out on the beach and the only light was G-d's light. And when you start to get emotional, emotions don't quit. I had already cried when the groom came to veil the bride and I was asked to bless my daughter. My wife reminded me that the last time she saw me shed a tear was 25 years ago when my son Jonah was born as the sun rose outside the hospital room. I wondered how those accustomed to assigned tables would handle open seating which included dozens of sofas, benches and coffee tables. Would there be enough seats? Would there be enough food for people who weren't used to a buffet? What about the lines? Already we mishandled the food at the signing of the Ketubah, what next?

And as I looked at my daughter sitting there next to my wife waiting for our turn to march down and saw her calm, I remembered that one friend told me, there is no ketubah without a mistake and another told me I

should expect to give the devil his meal and be sure to send him on his way, I realized there wasn't much more that I could do. So I turned to Heaven and told G-d that He could take it from there.

And everything began to fall into place. The musicians led by Eitan Katz were phenomenal. Steven's father, Steven's brothers, my dear friends Dr. Rabbi Meyer Abittan and Dr. Rabbi Elie Abadie along with my son Moses serenaded the crowd. The sun seemed to stand still and even after it set in a breathtaking manor, her rays provided more than enough light. The wind died down. The ocean sang in the background and the beach setting couldn't have been nicer. People told me they felt they were transported to some island in paradise.

And when we returned to the ballroom, it couldn't have been nicer. My wife Chantelle is an artist with a penchant for detail and no detail was left out. Every table had a unique setting. There were nine buffets. Plenty of tables, chairs, sofas and benches filled the room and provided more than enough seats for everyone. Richie of the Sands outdid himself. People never saw the place so beautiful. My dearest friends Ruthie Hecht and her mom Barbara Esses took complete charge. Joey Zami had more than enough food and extra to spare and not only was it abundant, people raved at how delicious it was. The desert room was decorated with cakes and cookies, each painstakingly designed by Chantelle. And the dancing never stopped. When the band paused, Morris Fax stepped in and kept the crowd moving. And the people rejoiced in the bride and groom who rejoiced with the people. Even the photographer Hy Goldberg who has done thousands of weddings found this one unique.

And the end of the wedding topped all. We set up a huge table and almost a hundred of us, washed and ate and told words of Torah and together blessed the couple. I was deeply grateful to all who helped and to Steven's parents and family for making this night so special.

When I got home early that morning, I said a prayer of thanks to Hashem. I compared the worry in the moments before 8PM with the calm that followed. I hope to remember especially in times of stress, that our job is to give our all; our job is to do our best, but we should never forget to have faith even when we don't understand and put our trust into Hashem. He's been there for us and He'll be there for us. Sometimes you just Gotta Believe!

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

Rav Kook on the Perasha The Death of a Tzaddik

As the Israelites neared the end of their forty-year trek in the wilderness, they lost two great leaders, Miriam and Aaron. While a tremendous loss for the nation, their passing had a hidden spiritual benefit.

The Torah informs us of Miriam's death immediately after enumerating the laws of the Parah Adumah, the red heifer whose ashes were used for purification. The Talmudic sages already wondered what connection there might be between Miriam's death and the Parah Adumah :

"Why is the death of Miriam juxtaposed to the laws of the Parah Adumah? This teaches that just as the Parah Adumah brings atonement, so too, the death of the righteous brings atonement." (Mo'ed Katan 28a)

While this connection between Miriam and the Parah Adumah is well-known, the continuation of the same Talmudic statement, concerning the death of Aaron, is less so.

"And why is the death of Aaron juxtaposed to [the mention of] the priestly clothes? This teaches that just as the priestly clothes bring atonement, so too, the death of the righteous brings atonement."

In what way does the death of tzaddikim atone for the people? And why does the Talmud infer this lesson from both the Parah Adumah and the priestly clothes?

Larger Than Life: The principal benefit that comes from the death of tzaddikim is the spiritual and moral awakening that takes place after they pass away. When a tzaddik is alive, his acts of kindness and generosity are not always public knowledge. True tzaddikim do not promote themselves. On the contrary, they often take great pains to conceal their virtues and charitable deeds. It is not uncommon that we become aware of their true greatness and nobility of spirit only after they are no longer with us. Only then do we hear reports of their selfless deeds and extraordinary sensitivity, and we are inspired to emulate their ways. In this way, the positive impact of the righteous as inspiring role models increases after their death.

While stories of their fine traits and good deeds stir us to follow in their path, certain aspects of great tzaddikim — extraordinary erudition and scholarship, for example — are beyond the capabilities of most people to emulate. In such matters, the best we can

do is to take upon ourselves to promote these qualities in our spiritual leadership, such as supporting the Torah study of young, promising scholars.

Two Forms of Emulation: In short, the death of tzaddikim inspires us to imitate their personal conduct — if possible, in our own actions, and if not, by ensuring that there will be others who will fill this spiritual void.

These two methods of emulation parallel the different forms of atonement through the Parah Adumah and the priestly clothes. Ritual purification using Parah Adumah ashes was only effective when they were sprinkled on the body of the impure person; no one else could be purified in his place. This is comparable to those aspects of the tzaddik that are accessible to, and incumbent upon, all to emulate.

The priestly garments, on the other hand, were only worn by the kohanim. It was through the service of these holy emissaries that the entire nation was forgiven. This is like those extraordinary traits of the tzaddik that are beyond the capabilities of most people. These qualities can be carried on only by a select few, with the support of the entire nation.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 263-265; adapted from Midbar Shur pp. 346-347)

Summary of the Perasha

In this week's parasha we transition into the 2nd half of Sefer Damidbar. The second half of the sefer largely discusses Benei Israel's path to entering Israel in the 40th year and the battles that occurred on the way. Amalek attacks Benei Israel after Aharon's death. Benei Israel then battles with Sihon and Og. Balak then tries to attack Benei Israel by hiring Bilaam to curse them. Benei Israel then attack Midyan. The sefer ends by recapping the journeys of Benei Israel throughout the 40yrs.

Hukat - Para Aduma, Moshe hits the rock, Amalek, Sihon and Og (year 40 in the midbar)

- 1- Para Aduma - slaughtering, burning, saving the ashes, how one 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 journeys in the 40th yr, the miracle of the rivers of Arnon, Benei Israel gets water

7- Benei Israel battles and defeats Sihon and Og on the way to Israel

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Miriam died there and was buried there. There was no water for the people." (Bemidbar 20:1-2)

The Torah puts the death of Miriam next to the fact that the Israelites lacked water in the desert to teach us that the Jews received water from a well for forty years in the merit of Miriam. What did Miriam do to merit this great miracle? The Zohar says that Miriam's reward came from her standing at the side of the Nile River to ensure her baby brother, Moshe, who was placed in a basket in the river, was saved.

Miriam can be contrasted with another woman who lived at that time, Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh. Batya was actually the one who saved Moshe from the Nile. Then, she raised Moshe as her own son in the palace of Pharaoh. Batya also merited to name Moshe. Moshe had many names; the Torah uses the name that Batya gave him.

Rabbi Noah Weinberg zt"l asks: who did a greater act, Miriam, who waited by the water's edge, or Batya, who plucked Moshe from the water and raised him? Clearly, saving Moshe's life was a much greater act, with more far-reaching consequences, than merely standing by and waiting to see how he was going to be saved. Why, then, did Miriam's act merit a far superior reward?

The Torah is showing us that the intention defines the act. Batya saw a child and saved him. She had no inkling who this child was destined to become. All she knew was that she saved a Jewish child from being swept away by the river. That act turned her into Moshe's surrogate mother, and she merited naming him.

Miriam was not merely watching a Jewish child. She was a prophetess and she knew that Moshe was destined to be the redeemer who would take the Jewish People out of Egypt. She was waiting to see what would happen to the future leader of the Jewish People. Batya was acting on behalf of one child, but Miriam was acting to ensure the survival of the entire nation. Miriam's intention transformed her deed into a greater act than Batya's, and this is why the nation was supplied with water in her merit.

We need to examine the intent underlying our actions because our intent defines the action. This is especially relevant in the realm of prayer. When you pray, instead of praying only for yourself, broaden your vision and have in mind the entire Jewish People. Pray for everyone you know, for every Jew across the globe. Pray that Hashem give us understanding, return us to His Torah, and forgive us. When we have other people in mind and think about the whole Jewish People, it is a very different quality

of prayer. It is our intent that defines our prayers. We can limit our prayers to ourselves or we can use the same words with a more expansive intent and pray for all Jews. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“Then Israel sang” (Bemidbar 21:17)

The Jewish people sang a song of thanksgiving after they were saved from the Emori'im . Rashi tells us of a fascinating episode. The enemies of the Jews decided to ambush the Jewish people while they were crossing between two mountains, by throwing rocks on them from the two mountaintops. Hashem caused the mountains to come together miraculously and crush the enemy before the Jews ever came to that pass. The Jewish nation didn't even know of the miracle until afterwards when they saw the dead floating in the waters, and there they began to sing to Hashem.

We see from here that very often we are not even aware of the miracles Hashem does for us, as it says, “.” We sometimes complain when we miss a traffic light or miss the bus, not realizing that we may have just been the recipient of a great favor. Whenever we see the Hand of Hashem revealed to us, this should give us faith and encouragement for all other occurrences when the miracle is not readily apparent. Miracles are all around us, we just have to see them - “there is no one more blind than those who refuse to see!”
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR **Appreciate It While You Have It**

“The nation settled in Kadesh; Miriam died there and was buried there. The nation had no water...” (20:1-2).

Why did Beneh Yisrael suddenly run out of water when Miriam died? Rashi explains that as Beneh Yisrael traveled through the desert, a miraculous, mobile well accompanied them to ensure that they would have a constant, adequate water supply. This well was provided in the merit of Miriam, an exceptionally righteous woman and prophetess, and once she died, the well was taken away, leaving the people without water.

The question, however, remains, why didn't the well remain even after Miriam's death? Was her great merit insufficient to continue providing the nation with water even after she passed on?

The Keli Yakar (Rav Shelomo Efrayim Luntschitz of Prague, 1550-1619) offers a remarkable explanation. He notes that when the Torah reports the death of Miriam, it simply states that she died and was buried. No mention is made of eulogies or mourning, in

contrast to the Torah's accounts of the deaths of Aharon and Moshe, where it is explicitly mentioned that the nation wept for the loss of their leader. It seems, the Keli Yakar observes, that the people were not moved by Miriam's death, and did not properly eulogize or mourn for her. They failed to appreciate the fact that their constant water supply was directly and solely due to her. God therefore took away the well so that the people would appreciate what an exceptionally righteous person they lost. As they did not properly appreciate the miracle of the well and Miriam's greatness which provided it, it had to be taken away.

The Keli Yakar's insight teaches us the importance of appreciating everything we have while we have it. If we take everything we have for granted, then God is compelled to take it away, Heaven forbid, so we can appreciate just how valuable it is.

Unfortunately, we take so many things for granted in our lives. People do not generally appreciate their vision until, God forbid, they or someone they know suffers vision loss. We do not appreciate our health until, God forbid, we or someone we know takes ill. We do not appreciate our children until we meet a childless couple.

Each morning, we are required to recite a series of Berachot thanking Hashem for things that may appear simple and trivial. First and foremost, we recite “Elokai Neshama” to thank God for restoring our soul, for enabling us to wake up in the morning. We recite the Beracha of “Poke'ah Ivrim” to thank Him for our eyesight, “Malbish Arumim” to thank Him for our clothing, “Zokef Kefufim” to thank Him for allowing us to stand up straight, and “She'asa Li Kol Sorki” to thank Him for our shoes. We receive all these gifts, and so many more, each and every day, and our Sages who composed the liturgy wanted to ensure that we thank God for each one of them.

These blessings, like most of our blessings, are not fully appreciated until they are taken away from us. I once saw somebody I know running out of a burning building in a bathrobe; he was at the gym when a fire erupted, and he had no time to put on his clothes. This is when I appreciated the Beracha of “Malbish Arumim.” When we hear of somebody who wrenched his back during the night, we appreciate the Beracha of “Zokef Kefufim.” The Beracha of “She'asa Li Kol Sorki” came into focus for me after a bizarre experience I had once when I traveled to Mexico City to deliver a lecture in a large synagogue there. The hotel in which I stayed offered a free shoeshine service, whereby guests leave their shoes outside their room at night and then have it returned shined

early the next morning. So, I left my shoes outside the room, and when I opened my door the next morning to go to the synagogue for Shaharit and my lecture...they were not there. I went down to the lobby to meet the people who had come to take me to the synagogue, and they saw me there without any shoes. This is when I appreciated the Beracha of "She'asa Li Kol Sorki," that even the shoes on our feet should never be taken for granted.

Rav Avigdor Miller (1908-2001) would occasionally put his head in a sink full of water for several moments, until he needed to come out of the water for air. He explained that he wanted to feel grateful for the air we breathe at every moment of our lives. In order to truly feel appreciative, he deprived himself of air for several moments, during which time he was able to appreciate how precious the air is. Part of the reason why it's so difficult for us to appreciate our blessings in life is because we're so busy complaining about our "problems." These "problems" are things like traffic jams, a flat tire, a head cold, a misbehaving child, or a broken piece of furniture. When our emotional energy is expended on worrying about these "problems," we are not able to feel happy and grateful for our blessings – that we have a spouse, children, a roof over our heads, a source of livelihood, friends, clothing to wear, and so on.

One Rabbi recommended that we each compile a list of ten blessings in our life and keep this piece of paper with us when we pray the daily Amida. When we reach the Modim section, in which we thank God "for Your wonders and favors that are given at all times," we should look at the list so we can be grateful for the particular blessings in our lives. This will help us experience true gratitude, and appreciate what we have while we have it, so that the Almighty will continue showering us with these blessings and not, Heaven forbid, take them away from us.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
POLITICS AS RELIGION**

One of the interesting societal phenomena of our time, both in Jewish and general society, is the elevation of political beliefs and ideas to the level of faith and religion itself. For most of American Jewry, values of the progressive Left have become an ersatz Judaism, treasured and followed and reflected in the pronouncements and stance of much of what passes

today as Reform and Conservative mainstream Jewish thought. All sorts of social issues that are not likely to aid in the survival of the Jewish population as Jews, have become the new rituals in these circles.

Political issues such as healthcare, economic growth, gender equality and the like dominate the Jewish discussion. Jewish education, traditional observance of Jewish life in the home and the family, even support for the State of Israel are no longer dominant themes in Jewish social media and even in synagogue circles.

The elevation of political issues and opinions to the status of religious beliefs is almost complete in American Jewish society. The platform of the liberal Left has pretty much become the new Bible of much of American Jewry. There may be great merit to many of these social programs but they are all political in nature, subject to change and revision and certainly not matters of fast held religious beliefs, such as monotheism and the preservation of Jewish tradition. Political ideas change with time and circumstance whereas basic religious beliefs remain constant and eternal.

Within the Jewish religious world this tendency also exists, to elevate beliefs, which are basically political in nature. The struggle of parts of the Orthodox world against the Zionist movement, in the century that has passed, has proven to be unsuccessful. And, in the opinion of many, it is both unwise and very costly. Yet that opposition, and it is bitter and continuing, is very much alive in our time and in the religious Jewish community, especially in pockets of Jewish life in the United States.

The recent gathering of thousands of religious Jews in Brooklyn at the Barclay Center illustrates how difficult it is for this anti-Israel attitude, which is against all Jewish self interest and human logic, to disappear. It has been raised to a matter of religious belief and no longer just political opinion and policy.

It is quite easy in religious circles to raise any issue or opinion to the level of being religious belief and even Jewish law. However, this is a very dangerous and misleading tendency, to obscure true Jewish law and basic Jewish values with an overlay of political beliefs and shifting values.

Enlisting in the IDF is a political issue. There is much to be said in favor of exempting portions of the yeshiva population from this duty. Elevating it into one of religious belief only serves to further divide the Jewish people and becomes counterproductive to the

very population that raised and leads the struggle regarding this issue.

Expanding and building new settlements in Judea and Samaria is, in my opinion, basically an apolitical and diplomatic issue. For many it has been raised to the level of being a matter of faith. There have been negative consequences both in the past and present for such a misjudgment and misrepresentation of the issue.

Once something becomes a matter of religious faith the sense of reality and logic dealing with the issue begins to wane. There is no argument, no matter how cogent and logical, that can overcome belief and faith. The world has been witness to this for thousands of years and perhaps no nation, as much as the Jewish people, is able to bear testimony to the accuracy of this statement.

The dangers, both short and long term, of treating this matter as a religious issue should be obvious to all. Yet faith based views of this issue persists throughout Israeli society. It is very hard to undo matters that are viewed by portions of the population as religious beliefs.

To repeat, there is no telling argument that can win the day against belief and faith. Nevertheless, leaders from all sections of the Jewish religious world would do well to carefully assess whether the struggles that we mount regarding certain issues are truly matters of religion or are really political in nature. That caution would go a long way in minimizing disputes and divisions within our community.

CHUKAT

The unraveling of the destiny of the generation of Jews that left Egypt reaches its climax in the Torah reading of this week. All of the leaders of the people will not bring them to the promised land of Israel. This is true not only of the leaders of the individual tribes in the desert but even Moshe and Aharon are doomed not to witness the conquest and settlement of the Land of Israel.

The will of Heaven in this area, as in almost all other areas of life and history, remains inscrutable to us ordinary humans. We do not comprehend the punishment of Moshe and its apparent severity. Commentators to the Torah have labored along and hard over the centuries to attempt to explain this mystery but it must be admitted, that in spite of their brilliant insights, the mystery still remains.

We are left, as always, amazed and in awe at the judgment of Heaven. We are bound to accept that judgment even if it is beyond our realm of comprehension. Moshe will make numerous attempts to mitigate this decision but Heaven will not waiver in its enforcement.

This week's Torah reading generally deals with laws and commandments that are beyond comprehension, such as the ritual involving the red heifer. The punishment meted out to Moshe also fits into this category of laws and commandments from Heaven that are beyond human understanding. So there is this thread of mystery that combines to make up the contents of the Torah reading of this week.

Aside from delving into the mysterious ways that Heaven deals with our world and with us as individuals, the main task that lies before us is how to continue and strengthen ourselves physically and spiritually no matter what the results of Heaven's judgment are.

Over the past century enormous events have overtaken the Jewish people. All of these events remain mysterious to us. Why did the Holocaust take place? Why did our generation merit the creation of a Jewish state in our ancient homeland of the Land of Israel? How has Torah study ascended to such a lofty level both in spirit and numbers in a generation of assimilation and intermarriage?

All of these questions go to the heart of Jewish existence and society in our time. And to a great extent, they are all questions for which no real answers have ever been provided. But what is clear is that instead of delving intellectually into these issues, we should rather face their consequences and attempt to positively affect opportunities and situations. Complaints and finger pointing over past mistakes will not really help us in our current struggles and challenges.

To a great extent, these attempts at hindsight and rational explanations of what is essentially beyond our understanding are futile and counterproductive. Our task is to build the future and not necessarily to try and explain the inexplicable. We are judged by what we do and accomplish and not by what we attempt to understand or explain. That is really the essential message of the Torah reading of this week.

**Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks
Rav Avigdor Miller
Was not posted as of printing time**