

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SHEMINI/PARAH

MARCH 21-22, 2014

20 ADAR II 5774

Dedication by Stuart Benson in memory of his mother, Rhoda Benson, Rachel Bat Eliyahu z"l.
Her yahrzeit is this Erev Shabbat, 19 Adar 2. May her neshama have an Aliyah

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 6:51 p.m. Mincha at 6:50
SHABBAT 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 9:19AM
Welcome to Dr Chaim Abittan and family

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom
Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library
Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Kiddush – We have no sponsor
To sponsor please email us or speak with Ida

Pirkey Avot with Rav Aharon
Mincha at 6:15
Seuda Shelishi at 6:45
Arbit at 7:40
Shabbat Ends – 7:51 PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7:30 PM –

Rabbi Yenay is changing his time for Monday class with the clock change. Class will start at 7:30 with prayers before. People should come at 7 for service but at 7:30 for class.

Daily class with Rabbi Colish at 6:30AM

The Jan Eisenstein Youth Speaker Series presents, "Miracles & Fate on 78"

A survivor of the 9/11 attacks tells us his story of courage, danger, sacrifice and faith in the face of adversity.

Sunday, March 30th at 5:30 pm @ the BACH 210 Edwards Blvd. Long Beach, NY 11561

Includes hot pizza dinner and exciting raffles. This program is for pre-teens and teens and their parents.

FREE OF CHARGE ~ RSVP requested 516 897 2473 or beila@bachyouth.com.

Jeff Metviner is giving a defensive driving class on Sunday, April 6 from 10 AM to 4 PM. Flyer will follow.
Cost \$50.

If there is enough interest in doing a communal Seder, David (Rabbi) will stay with us on Pesach and conduct the Seders together with Rabbi Colish and Sam Shetrit. It was an amazing experience when we did it together year before last. Cost will be \$50 per night per adult and \$25 per night per child under 12. We will try to subsidize anyone who needs it. Its important that we know who may want to come from now. We will try to limit to the first 80 people for each night. Please let us know right away if you would like to join us for both nights or for Monday or Tuesday.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame. Mincha at 4PM through October 30th – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

"And it came to pass on the eighth day"

Rabbi Abittan often spoke to us about the significance of numbers. His two favorite to discuss were probably the number seven representing nature in its perfection and the number eight representing that which is beyond nature and in many ways the ultimate perfection.

We see the physical world was created in and the natural order of the week is seven days. We have seven colors of the rainbow and seven musical notes in the scale. We count seven years to the sabbatical year and seven sets of seven years to the yovel. We count seven weeks from the Exodus to the revelation whereby we perfect ourselves physically. The Menorah in the Mishkan had seven arms to illuminate the physical world.

Eight, on the other hand, is symbolic of an entity that is one step above the natural order, higher than nature and its limitations. The Greeks argued that man is born perfect, yet on the eighth day we circumcise as part of a logic-defying covenant with Hashem. The miracle of Hanukah represents the miraculous victory of the Maccabees over the physically stronger Greeks. The spirit over the body.

Here too, this eighth day in many ways represents that which is above nature.

Let us recount how we arrived at this eighth day.

About a year prior, following ten plagues including the death of the first born, the Israelites marched out of Egypt and slavery, led by Moses into the desert. A week later they arrived at the sea and saw the miraculous splitting and destruction of Pharaoh's army. Continuing into the wilderness they were protected by clouds, received water from a rock and manna from heaven. Eventually they reached Sinai and as one nation with one heart they witnessed the revelation. It was from such a spiritual high that forty

days later, thinking Moses would not return, they created the Golden Calf. Moses does return to find the people have succumbed to idolatrous revelry and breaks the tablets. He returns for forty days to plead on their behalf and another forty days to receive the second tablets. These he brings down on Yom Kippur. Six months have passed since the Exodus and Moses gathers the people for what will be the most successful charity drive in Jewish history. Supplies are gathered for the Tabernacle and the work begins. The effort is completed during the winter and at the end of Adar – about where we are now, Moses attempts to assemble the Mishkan.

The midrash tells us that each day for seven days, Moses tried to assemble the Mishkan, but it didn't work. (There are many of explanations about what did not work). When discussing it we always imagined what we would do if we bought a piece of expensive furniture that came in parts with detailed instructions and the parts seemed not to fit. We might try it twice, but then we would bring it back to the store complaining that something was wrong or missing. And most likely the guy in the store would show us that we were simply doing something backwards and everything really did fit. Now consider, G-d wrote the instructions for the Mishkan and gave all the specifications. Moses was unsuccessful Sunday so he tries again Monday. Monday too ends in failure so he tries again Tuesday. How many of us would keep trying seven times before returning to the store or to G-d and asking, "What's up"?

King Solomon writes: Though a righteous man falls seven times, he will get up, but the wicked will stumble into ruin. A Sadik is the one who does not give up. He tries again and again. Finally on the eighth day, almost a year after the Exodus, Moses is successful. Some suggest that all the physical parts fit together during those seven days. It was G-d's presence or the spiritual dimension that waited for the eighth day, for the day of the spirit to settle on the Mishkan. Apropos that this day coincided with the first day of the month of Nisan which reminds us of Nes, miracle or banner which flies above.

We have a limited way of looking at things on a physical level. Take a box for example, it has the six physical sides of north, south, east, west, top, and bottom and then we have the seventh side which is the inside. To be spiritual, we need to be able to consider an eight option. We need to think out of the box. We need to step out of the box or fly above the box. We need to be a Nes.

It seems that sometimes to get the spiritual side going, we need help. Verse 23 tells us that Moses and Aaron came, but instead of using the plural tense, it uses the singular tense, Vayabo, which would mean, "he came". Often the Rabbis explain that this is done when two people are unified. In this case there could have been some jealousy, there could have been hard feelings. With Aaron dressed in regalia, we could have had a replay of the story of Joseph and his many colored coat. Instead we have the two brothers coming as one. When we are unified, then the entire nation can witness the glory of Hashem.

The rabbi would often advise that if we want to escape our own box, the prescription would be to help someone else escape their box. By helping others, we become worthy of escaping our own box. The time of year to free ourselves from our own boxes, our own restrictions, our own limitations, our own Egypt, is this coming month of Nisan and Pesach.

On Pesach we begin the Seder by inviting all of those who are hungry to come join us and eat. The problem is that the hotel, the caterer or whoever is in charge will rarely allow someone in off the street. I found out when we made a seder for close to one hundred people in Long Beach two years ago that there are many who would simply not have a seder without an invitation. There are so many Jews who would simply spend the night in front of the TV or go out to a diner. These include people living in financial and emotional boxes and its up to us to help them out.

Let me close by recounting two stories from two years ago and inviting you to participate with us at this Seder no matter where you'll be. We want to invite you to help someone else out of their box of limitations this year.

On the eve of Pesach, my kids and I were preparing to burn the bread. A woman working with the gardener on our lawn remarked to the gardener's son, "look they are going to burn the chometz". My kids stopped in their tracks. How did this older woman who looked like a hick from the sticks know what it meant to burn chametz. So we invited her to join us beyond the yard, on the beach by the fire pit. We thought that perhaps working in a Jewish neighborhood for so many years, she heard it said. We asked, "Do you remember burning the chometz as a child". And she recounted her grandparents and how she burned the chometz with her grandfather, but her father never wanted to. We asked about her Seders and again she recalled her grandparents and her mother and the memories, but she hadn't made

one since her mother died. My kids looked at me as if to say, OK who's inviting her? And so we hinted to Chantelle and she convinced her to come. The woman came dressed up and was so elegant. She recalled the passages and told us about her youth and fully participated. She left at 1:30 in the morning telling us it was a night she would always remember.

Then there was the fine gentleman whose wife had been ill for many years and was being taken care of by a nurse. A friend came to me and told me that this man would surely be sitting home alone. Instead we begged him to join us. He sat between my daughters and niece and recounted for them stories of his youth in Baghdad. He had such a wonderful night and told us it was done so beautifully, it reminded him of his own wedding. He too left at 1:30 with a big smile and was still talking about the night two weeks later.

There are countless people who need invitations. Reach out and invite them to your homes. And if you can't we'll invite them on your behalf to join us. With G-d's help, we'll have close to a hundred of them for each seder. If you can't invite them to your hotel, why not sponsor some who will be joining us. \$50 pays for one person for one night, \$1000 pays for ten for two nights. Send your donations to The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach, c/o David Bibi, 979 Third Ave, Suite 1705, NYC, NY 10022. You'll be glad you did it and when we recount the stories you'll feel great knowing you played a part.

Help someone escape the physical, create a Nes or miracle, show them the infinite in the number 8 – it even looks like the symbol for infinity - and may Hashem merit you to step out of your own box and whatever is holding you back this holiday.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

PS ... A couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of speaking about the pending draft legislation in Israel (which has now passed) and the response of so many people in hundreds of thousands marching in protest. Dialog is sorely lacking as is appreciation. Take a look at this incredible exchange by Steven Pruzansky. Let me know what you think.

In addition there is a great story about a Rabbi who found and returned 98,000. And a story about a Siyum on the Long Island Rail Road scheduled for a week from Monday. If I wasn't planning on being in Miami, I would have been on that train car.

**An Exchange
by Rabbi Steven Pruzansky**

Earlier this week, I was contacted by an old friend who now lives in Israel, part of the Chareidi world. He sent me his thoughts, and I responded, and the exchange is reproduced below, with minor editing. I have deleted the friend's name. -RSP

6 Adar II 5774, March 8, 2014

Dear Steven,

Ahead of the mass gathering of Torah true Jewry scheduled to take place tomorrow in Manhattan, I'm reaching out to you, our brothers in America, to share with you the sad truth: here, in the State of Israel, Torah Jewry is subject to religious persecution.

To classify Torah students as "criminals," subject to imprisonment, is only the latest and most absurd of anti-chareidi laws enacted recently by the government. In addition, they have drastically cut education and welfare budgets, aiming to choke our yeshivos and schools, and even our individual religious freedoms, so prized by Americans and citizens of democracies worldwide.

Under the deceptive mantra of 'sharing the burden' the government is responsible for a wave of unprecedented incitement against chareidim, thereby splitting the nation. It is no secret that the objective of conscripting Torah scholars is a thinly disguised attempt at social engineering.

Is it conceivable that a Jewish government in Israel is trying to prevent its citizens from living Torah-true lives in the tradition that their ancestors for generations were moser nefesh for?

As you prepare to gather to offer heartfelt tefillos tomorrow, please remember that the train of persecution of lomdei Torah has already left the station and that there is no doubt that it is more difficult to stop a train that is already moving than to prevent it from leaving. But we must not despair and have to try to raise the alert, and to make all possible efforts to change things, before the train picks up speed. Because the route this train is heading towards leads directly to the abyss.

We know that the heart of Torah-true American Jewry beats together with its brethren in Eretz Yisrael, and senses that the danger to Torah observance in the Holy Land is a danger to the entire Jewish world. We believe that you recognize that learning and living Torah in Eretz Yisrael in holiness and purity is the

basis for the existence of Torah true Yiddishkeit in Eretz Yisrael and in the Diaspora.

And therefore, grasp onto the craft of our fathers, and plead to Hashem that He protect and send salvation to all those who seek His yeshuos, so that shomrei Torah and lomdei Torah throughout will be able to continue to draw upon the eitz chaim, the tree of life, of the Torah world in Eretz Yisroel, that sustains us all.

Sincerely,
(Name deleted)
Your brother in Eretz Yisrael

RESPONSE

Dear -----:

It is great to hear from you and I hope you and the family are well, but I must part company with you on this issue, and I will not be participating in the rally today. In fact, I denounced it yesterday - even noted (based on a Midrash at the beginning of Vayikra) that there is such a concept of a "Talmid chacham she-ein bo da'at." Here is why:

Chareidim make a mistake in thinking that only the Lapid-led diehard seculars have a growing contempt for them. The dati-leumi community is also increasingly hostile, because they sense - to me, accurately - that the Chareidi community is causing hatred for Torah. It is impossible to explain to - take, for one example - my nephew, who learned in Hesder and completed his army service, why his Talmud Torah is somehow inferior to that of Chareidim. It is not. Perhaps his Talmud Torah is the same, but the Chareidi world's "Nosei b'ol im chaveiro" is completely absent. That deficiency in Ahavat Yisrael is glaring, noticed and the reason why the society at large no longer tolerates it.

It is unconscionable that there exists in the Chareidi world this idea that work and army service are beneath them, and that the rest of society which they hold in contempt must work and pay higher taxes in order to support them in order that they should sit and learn. I too would love to sit and learn, and have someone support me, but that is not the system that Hashem set up. Odd, indeed, that the Rambam's clear statement (Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:10-11) is ignored, if it is even taught. But when he speaks of "kavah me'or hadat," that is exactly what has happened, and solely because the Chareidi world has not fully embraced the Torah. That construct of the Chareidi world as practiced today is unprecedented in Jewish history.

The Chareidi lifestyle as currently constituted is unsustainable. Everyone knows it, even their gedolim know it - but many are afraid to speak the truth for fear of physical attacks or peer reproach. They are literally trapped in a different era, using the language of Czarist Russia, Antiochus and Purim to describe a government that is the biggest financial supporter of Torah in the world. That is not leadership. I fully endorse the notion of a Yissachar-Zevulun relationship for as long as the parties agree, but no Yissachar has the right to force someone else - the whole society? - to be a Zevulun. That is simply not part of the Torah system.

What is wrong with all Jews participating in national defense? Or, if for whatever reason Chareidim feel they cannot, what is wrong with even Chareidim doing national service - helping out in nursing homes, teaching Torah in deprived communities, even doing chesed work for a year or two? That is known as giving back to society. One can't only take; one must give as well. Certainly, as Rav Dessler emphasized repeatedly, giving - not taking - is the essence of the righteous person. When I learned in Israel, I thought it quite natural to participate in the national defense. I didn't necessarily enjoy - at the time - the loss of sleep because of overnight patrols, but I am happy I did it, and only benefited from it, even in terms of Talmud Torah. How can Zaka take time off from learning to pick up the pieces, r"l, after a terrorist attack? Why can't the same people work to thwart the terrorist attack in the first place?

Indeed, the army doesn't really need Chareidi service as much as the Chareidim - for halachic and moral reasons - need it for themselves. But army service is mainly a portal into the work force, and that is key. The rate of employment in the Israeli Chareidi community is simply too low. The work force participation rate of adult males in Bnei Brak, Betar Illit, Kiryat Sefer, etc., is scandalous. Perhaps that is the true "war on Torah," because the impression given that one cannot be a Torah Jew and a Talmid Chacham - and work and support one's family - is an outrageous canard. All the Tannaim and Amoraim worked for a living. The greatest of our people - Avraham, Moshe, Yehoshua, David, etc. - all went to war when necessary. The Torah exempts four classes of people from battle: the scholar is not one of the exemptions, for Jewish wars especially require the participation of Talmidei Chachamim.

I am inclined to agree with Rav Rakeffet of Yerushalayim: "someone who thinks that he will not be a Gaon if he serves for a short time in the military will not be a Gaon in any event." But it is

unconscionable to expect the rest of society to support a lifestyle that is alien to them, and frankly, alien to Torah. Why would a "secular" Jew be attracted to a "Torah" lifestyle that purports to demand estrangement from the general society, a cloistered abode, a rejection of general knowledge, an inability to function in the presence of women, a disdain for gainful employment and self-support, etc.? It doesn't seem very attractive, except for one who wants to escape from the world.

I don't believe that Chareidim should be imprisoned for refusal to serve, nor that it will ever happen. But, I note half in jest, what if it did? One can learn Torah full-time anywhere, even in prison. In fact, prison is ideal. Rav Meir Kahane hy"d wrote a 500-page sefer while he was in prison. Every Israeli prison has a fully-stocked Bet Midrash, there are regular minyanim, Magidei Shiurim come every day, the food is mehadrin, there are no women present, no distractions at all. There are regular furloughs for Yamim Tovim. The government can support them anywhere. It's just a change in venue. I don't underestimate the hardships of prison life, but the Israeli jail is not the Gulag to which Jews were sent for learning Torah.

That they don't proudly embrace the consequences of defiance means there is another factor at work: as you write, there are people who perceive the actions of the government as "social engineering" designed to "prevent Chareidim from living Torah-true lives." I don't believe that, and the extent to which the Chareidi world has alienated natural supporters and lovers of Torah should be worrisome to them. But anyone who does believe that should not insist that the government subsidize that lifestyle. I personally oppose incarceration or criminal penalties, but I also would grant no government benefits at all to people who refuse to perform any type of national service. The Chareidi educational system is also in disarray; I do not see why the government should support any school system that does not educate its students in a way that will enable them to function in society. Is that really a "Torah-true" life? I think not.

One last point, which goes to the heart of this: I have never heard of a Chareidi shul where the tefila for Tzahal is recited. Forget the tefila for the medina - but why wouldn't they say the tefila for Tzahal? I have asked this question many times to Chareidi acquaintances, and mostly been met with stunned silence and occasionally with a muffled "the Rebbe...the Rosh Yeshiva... has never told us to say it." It is simply inexplicable, a lack of derech erez, hakarat hatov, and common sense.

What a Kiddush Hashem it would be if the Charedi leadership announced today that, it still rejects conscription, but henceforth it will daven for Tzahal every week! That would go a long way to easing tensions, perhaps not with Yair Lapid and his cohorts but with the Dati-Leumi Torah community that you are rapidly losing.

I love all Torah Jews and I hate all distortions of Torah. The Chareidi Torah world has so much to offer, and I refuse to accept this prevailing notion that they need to be treated like handicapped children with special needs, that they are unable to live and interact with normal people. I reject that. I will treat them like precious Jews but like adults: those who are poreish min hatzibur should not be shocked or disheartened when the tzibur is in turn poreish from them. The Chareidi world, on some level, perceives itself as a self-contained community that can insulate itself from the greater society which it holds (at least in some aspects, understandably) in contempt. But then don't be surprised when that same society - which feels the contempt - then decides it no longer wishes to subsidize or indulge that community.

With friendship, all blessings and wishes for nachat v'chul tuv,

Steven Pruzansky

Your Brother in America

Honest Rabbi Returned \$98K — and Inspired Us By Anne Cohen The Forward

When Rabbi Noach Muroff needed a desk, he looked to Craigslist for a good deal. He got way more than he bargained for.

The desk, purchased for \$150 dollars, turned out to be hiding \$98,000 stuffed in a ShopRite plastic bag, that had fallen behind the file cabinet.

And Muroff gave it all back.

Muroff bought the desk last September, right before Rosh Hashanah. When it wouldn't fit through the door, he and his wife had to disassemble it. That's when they spotted a shopping bag full of a cash inheritance that the previous owner assumed had been lost somewhere in her home.

The ninth grade teacher at the Yeshiva New Haven Shul looked at his wife and, despite the fact that it was nearly midnight, dialed the original owner's number. The money was returned the next day. According to Muroff, he didn't sleep that night knowing that sum was in the house.

"Our jaws kind of just hit the floor. We were in total shock and disbelief. This kind of thing only happens

in the movies," Muroff said, laughing when telling me the story.

When Muroff's story went viral in November, I immediately made a note of it for our Most Inspiring Rabbis in America section. Someone has to nominate this guy, I thought. But no one did. So, on behalf of all those who expressed their awe and admiration for Muroff's honesty, I am nominating him as the rabbi who most inspires me.

In the months since Muroff's story made the headlines, the rabbi has received emails and phone calls from strangers telling him how much his story meant to them.

A father told him about his son who bought a camera on Amazon and received one worth three times what he had paid. He wrote the company a letter saying he was Jewish and was raised to be honest and would send back the camera. The son cited Muroff as his inspiration.

A man from Idaho wrote to him saying he had had this perception of Jews as greedy people and that Muroff's integrity had made him reconsider.

Without fail, Muroff is asked what went through his head when he decided to give up almost \$100,000. According to him, it was a decision that took less than a minute to make.

"Both my wife and I were raised as Orthodox Jews," he told me. "We feel strongly that honesty is always the way to go, we're commanded to do so in the Torah; and in addition to that, the idea of putting yourself in the other person's shoes: How would you feel if you were the one losing the money?"

"My father in a million years would never have touched the money."

Muroff received a gift of \$3,500 from the original owner (plus the \$150 he paid for the desk). But the words that came with it sum up his real value:

"Dear Noah, I cannot thank you enough for your honesty and integrity. I do not think there are too many people in this world that would have done what you did by calling me. I do like to believe that there are still good people left in this crazy world we live in. You certainly are one of them."

Historic Siyum to Be Held at 70 MPH Gavriel Sitrit -Matzav.com News center

On Monday, March 31, 2014 (29 Adar II 5774), history will be made, as a unique Daf Yomi shiur celebrates a rare milestone. The completion of Talmud Bavli for the third time. This upcoming siyum will not be held in a massive sports stadium attended by tens of thousands, but rather the event will take place in the same uncommon location that the shiur is delivered each day.

That morning will be the same as any other, as shiur members filter onto the LIRR train at Far Rockaway,

Inwood, Lawrence and Cedarhurst stations as they have done for the last twenty-two years. But as the train begins to pull out of Woodmere and Sholom Fried begins the final page in a 7 1/2 year cycle, they will be on the cusp of a remarkable accomplishment. This group has been riding the same Long Island Railroad train, with the same united purpose. To utilize the 45 minute ride into Penn Station NYC with a daily dose of learning. With miles and miles of track under their locomotive classroom, they are now on the horizon of completing the daf yomi cycle of Talmud Bavli for the third time.

Back in 1991, Rabbi Pesach Lerner, was approached by Aryeh Markovich while riding the LIRR one morning wanting to know if he would be willing to teach the Talmud on the 7:51 a.m. train from Far Rockaway to Manhattan. "I used to see a lot of people playing cards on the train," says Markovich, "I figured why don't we do something for people to utilize their time productively and learn something, too?" Rabbi Lerner agreed, and the rest is history. The first day Markovich went up and down the train platform handing out flyers to publicize their class-on-wheels. The next morning, nearly 30 people showed up for their mobile tutorial in the train's last car. It has been going strong ever since. Today, there are two morning Manhattan-bound trains that offer a daf yomi class. Students range from accountants, bankers, salesmen and even staff of the MTA itself. Railroad personnel are well aware of the class. Proud of the positive publicity it has generated, they do everything possible to help.

There certainly are challenges conducting a class in this environment. Eliezer Cohen, who has been learning with the group for more than 10 years and now serves as one of its senior magid shuir says "The daf discusses all aspects of life. Therefore there are issues that come up, from the mundane to the very powerful. The political issues of the day, sexual [topics] . . . sometimes there are issues that are hard to discuss on the train, but it gives vibrancy to the commute." Yossi Klein adds, "While most commuters grunt at the occasional delay on the rails, we relish in spending the extra few more minutes delving a little deeper in the daf."

This certainly will be a siyum to remember, unlike ones in the past. Before the current cycle began, few had the technology at their fingertips that exist today. In the last few years the accessibility of data to assist ones learning-on-the-go has exploded with an Artscoll app, or a virtual shuir on an ipad. But there still is this class. Those who prefer to go thru shas in the same manner as it has been learnt for many years past - as a cohesive group. The daily participants have binded together and share in lifes high and lows - brisim, bar mitzvahs as well as levaya's and shiva calls.

To celebrate the occasion, on March 31, 2014 the siyum will be sponsored by original member of the shiur Elliot Krischer, Benjy Krischer and their families in memory of their dear parents who were niftar this past year. LIRR will reserve the full last car in anticipation of the celebration and full program is planned with the collation proudly sponsored by Gourmet Glatt. Former magidai shiur Rabbi Pesach Lerner, Rabbi Shmuel Bloom and representatives of of Agudath Israel will join as this moment of achievement comes to fruition: the greatest from the spirit of Lubliner Rov. Rabbi Meir Shapiro's vision of the Daf Yomi's potential, and the power of a continual procession of learning lives on strong as ever. Even in the East River tunnels of NYC on a packed commuter train.

Just think that you can also turn your morning commute into a productive period of learning that will shape the fabric of your daily entry into the business world. Anytime you join, seven years later you have completed Shas. Rosh Chodesh Nissan is a great time to take the step toward a new beginning as we start Mesechtas Beitzah. Join Sholom Fried, Yossie Klein, Eliezer Cohen and Rabbi Menachem Adler as they conduct their mobile class each morning.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st & 2nd Aliyot: The Parsha begins on Nissan 1, 2449. The seven-day inauguration of Aharon and his sons was completed and the ceremonies for the Mizbeach's consecration had begun. Over 40 offerings would be brought on that first day, each requiring the direct ministrations of Aharon. Aharon blessed the nation with the standard priestly blessing after which Moshe and Aharon blessed the nation with the special Bracha of Psalm 90.

3rd Aliya: The deaths of Nadav and Avihu are recorded at the very same time that fire descended from heaven to light the Mizbeach. Their cousins removed the bodies of Nadav and Avihu from the courtyard of the Mishkan. Moshe instructs Aharon and his two remaining sons, Elazar and Isamar, that they are forbidden to overtly mourn the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in the standard manner. It is from here that we are taught the standard practices of tearing Kriyah and of mourners not cutting their hair.

4th & 5th Aliyot: Moshe instructs Aharon and his sons to continue the service of the Mizbeach's consecration. The first recorded difference in Halachik rulings is recorded between Moshe and Aharon as it pertained to the eating of the Rosh Chodesh offering. (Note 16-20, Stone Edition ArtScroll pg. 595)

6th Aliya: The basic laws of Kosher and non-Kosher animals, fish, and fowl are recorded. Note that verses 11:4-7 is one of the established proofs for the divine authorship of the Torah.

7th Aliya: The basic laws of purity and impurity are recorded. It is important to clarify that the Torah does not associate "Tummah" impurity and "Taharah" purity with good and bad. The entire process involves the concept of life and death and the symbolic emphasis that the Torah places on serving G-d with optimism and vigor. So long as there is life there is the opportunity to grow in our relationship with G-d.

The question of "Why are we commanded to keep Kosher?" is answered in 11:44-47. The Torah clearly states that the reason to keep Kosher is to emulate G-d's sanctity. Sanctity "Kedusha" means being set apart and different. Just as G-d is apart from all things and divine in every way, so too are we to be set apart from all other nations and be different in the manner of our eating.

This week, in addition to the regular Parsha, we read the section known as Parah. The additional sections of Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, and Chodesh are read prior to Pesach for both commemorative and practical reasons. Shekalim, the first additional section, dealt with the 1/2 Shekel and the public sacrifices. The reading of the second section, Zachor, facilitated our fulfillment of the Mitzvah to remember the evil of Amalek. The two sections of Parah and Chodesh are directed toward our preparations for Pesach.

On Parshas Parah, we read the section found in the beginning of Parshas Chukas known as Parah. This section discusses the necessary steps that had to be followed to remove the impurity which caused by having had contact with a dead person. This process involved a seven day period during which the impure - Tameh person underwent a process involving the ashes of the Red Heifer. The process was facilitated by a Kohen, and had to take place in Yerushalayim.

The status of being Tameh restricted a person from entering into the Temple compound and / or participating in certain select activities. Although these restrictions are less applicable today because we do not have the Bais Hamikdash; nevertheless, it is incumbent upon all people, male and female, to keep these laws to the degree that they do apply.

In the time of the Bais Hamikdash it was required of every male adult to visit the Bais Hamikdash and offer a sacrifice a minimum of three times a year: Pesach, Shevout, and Succoth. However, it was even more important to be there on Erev Pesach to

sacrifice the Korban Pesach - Pascal Lamb. Anyone who happened to be Tameh, from having had contact with a dead body, would have to undergo the process of the Parah Adumah - the Red Heifer, to remove the status of Tameh and be allowed to bring his Pascal Lamb to the Bais Hamikdash.

The Talmud tells us that the furthest point in Israel from Yerushalayim was a two weeks travel. If so, a person who was Tameh living two weeks travel away would require a minimum of three weeks to arrive in Yerushalayim with sufficient time to go through the one week process of the Red Heifer and be able to offer his Korban Pesach. Therefore, Chazal ordained the reading of Parah on the week before the reading of Chodesh as a public reminder to those who are Tameh that they must immediately arrange to get to Yerushalayim so that they can purify themselves in time to bring the Korban Pesach.

Yechezkel 36:16

This week's Haftorah reflects the reading of Parshas Parah. Yechezkel, the prophet, berated the people for their defection away from G-d. Their behavior defiled Eretz Yisroel rendering them unfit to remain within her boundaries. Therefore, the Jews had to be exiled from their land and dispersed among the nations. The exile and the consequent suffering while in exile would serve as a process purification process for the nation. In essence, the exile would be a national Parah Adumah - Red Heifer.

Central to the theme of the Haftorah is the fact that Hashem ultimately redeems the nation, "for His own sake." While in exile the Jews are able to spread the word of G-d and teach His existence to the other nations. However, exile will also take its toll on the Jews. The Jews interaction with other nations will result in furthering the very defection which caused G-d to first punish the nation.

Among the mysteries of the Parah Adumah is the fact that the Kohen who administers the ashes becomes impure while the recipient of the ashes becomes pure. In essence this is the experience of the Jew in exile. The Jews have brought knowledge and understanding of G-d to the nations wherein which they were exiled, while at the same time suffering terrible persecution and assimilation through their association with the non-Jewish world. The nations have become pure while the Jews have become impure.

In the end G-d will redeem the nation and gather them in from the four- corners of the earth, "for His own sake." The time will come when the purpose of

the Jew in exile will have been fulfilled. Then, there will be no further reason for the Jew to remain among the other nations and G-d will renew His covenant with the Bnai Yisroel and return them to Eretz Yisroel.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“And they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them.” (Vayikra 10:1)

In our perashah we learn about the importance of honoring and respecting our Sages. On the opening day of the new Mishkan, the two sons of Aharon Hakohen were put to death by Heaven. Rashi explains “that they died because they rendered a halachah decision in the presence of their teacher, Moshe.”

The Ben Ish Hai asks: How can our Sages say the reason they died was because they rendered a decision in front of their Rabbi, if the Sages themselves enumerated other sins and the verse quoted above states a different reason, that they brought a foreign fire? He explains there is no contradiction. Even though there were other sins, if Nadab and Abihu had not dishonored Moshe, his merit would have saved them from being punished. However, after they blemished his honor, his merit was no longer able to protect them. Thus they were punished for the other sins as well. Therefore, it is considered as if they died because of the disrespect to Moshe Rabenu.

A true story is told by Rabbi Yechiel Spero which brings home the point. Rabbi Leibish Mintz was a brilliant Rabbi. He was appointed as the Rav of a city in Poland. One day a rumor spread that the Rabbi, who had a wealth of general knowledge, had at one time studied in non-Jewish schools. There were some people who were uncomfortable with this information and began to distance themselves from the Rabbi. They went to other Rabbis for their questions, but left him with the job of dealing with government officials when necessary; since he knew how to “speak their language,” he would be useful in that regard.

There was an incident when an epidemic broke out in town and the government forbade any large gatherings, to avoid the spread of disease. Some members wanted to make a big wedding and have many people. The Rav backed the government and forbade the large wedding.

That Rosh Hashanah as the congregation prepared themselves to hear the Shofar, the Rav stepped up to the tebah to be the makri (in Ashkenaz tradition, this is the one who calls out the sounds of the shofar for the blower to follow). However, one of the members stood in his way and would not move. “For our shofar blowing we need a makri who doesn’t

speak Latin like you!” The Rav was stunned. He continued, “When we need someone to call out the sounds for a gentile god we will call you, but for Hashem we need a loyal Jew!” The Rav scolded the man and then the man slapped the Rabbi in the face! A riot ensued, the police were called, and they had to escort the Rabbi out with police protection. A few days later, he left the town in utter shame and embarrassment. The name of the town was Oswiecim, Poland, or as we know it, Auschwitz.

Perhaps we are convinced that we would never, ever slap a Rav across the face. But there are countless stories of individuals who have made disparaging remarks against big Rabbis. The more honor to the Rabbis, the more blessing there is. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“And do not defile your souls with any vermin which crawls on the earth, for I am Hashem Who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (Vayikra 11:44-45)

Normally, when the Torah reminds us that Hashem freed us from Egyptian servitude, it uses the term “hamosee - Who brought you out.” Here, however, the Torah says “hama’aleh - Who brought you up,” to teach us that abstaining from forbidden foods, and especially from the forbidden species of vermin, has an uplifting effect on a Jew.

The Sages (Yoma 39a) gave a homiletic interpretation of the previous verse “oc o,nybu - and you will be defiled by them [if you eat them].” The defilement referred to is that the heart would be blocked, as it were, resulting in insensitivity to spiritual concerns.

On the other hand, someone who is careful about what he eats will have an open heart and find it easier to develop a benevolent outlook toward his fellow man. This is the “bringing up” that Hashem spoke of in our verse, an elevation of the spirit from the pride, selfishness and cruelty that characterized the Egyptian mentality. May we be privileged to carefully watch what we eat so that our souls are elevated to get closer to Hashem. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Humility and Acceptance

The Torah in Parashat Shemini tells the tragic story of the death of Aharon’s sons Nadab and Abihu on the day of the Mishkan’s inauguration. We read that Aharon reacted to this painful loss with silence: “Va’yidom Aharon.” He did not complain, express anger or question G-d’s judgment, even in the face of this tragedy, the most painful loss a parent could ever suffer.

The Gemara points to Aharon's reaction as one of three classic examples of people who accepted Hashem's judgment. The other two, the Gemara comments, were Abraham Abinu, who said about himself, "Anochi Afar Va'efer" ("I am but dust and ashes"), and David Ha'melech, who said, "Anochi Tola'at Ve'lo Ish" ("I am just a worm, not a man").

We might ask how these other two instances – Abraham and David – exemplify the quality of accepting G-d's judgment. Certainly, Abraham and David's proclamations were remarkable expressions of humility, recognizing their insignificance in relation to the Almighty. But how do these expressions of humility relate to the theme of accepting G-d's judgments, as expressed by Aharon?

One explanation is that humility is, indeed, a prerequisite to acceptance. An arrogant person can only accept that which he can understand. If one feels highly about his own intellect and feels confident in his ability to understand everything, he will naturally reject anything he cannot understand. After all, he can comprehend anything that is comprehensible, and thus by definition, something that he cannot understand must not be correct. A humble person, by contrast, recognizes his limits and acknowledges that there is much he will be unable to understand. And thus he can accept and live with the incomprehensible. Realizing that there are always things he never understands, that G-d's wisdom is infinitely greater than his, that in comparison to G-d he is no more than "dust," "ashes" or a "worm," he can calmly accept what G-d does without complaint or questions. The one thing he clearly understands is that there are things he will never understand.

How do we attain the level of "Va'yidom Aharon," the ability to remain calm and composed even during life's trying moments? The answer is in Abraham and David's declarations about their own lowliness. By recognizing just how limited our capabilities are, we can train ourselves to trust G-d's decisions, however incomprehensible they may be, and accept that everything He does is just.

Rabbi Wein

I received a great deal of comment about my last week's article on the mental and social regression of a large section of Israeli society. Most of the comments were neither complimentary nor critical but were rather requests for more specifics about the need for change in the mindset of much of Orthodox Jewry here in Israel and in the Diaspora as well.

Still under the influence of Purim and therefore perhaps a little too foolhardy, I will attempt to explain

my position more specifically in this article. I think that we can all agree that the two main events in the Jewish world of the past century were the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. These two cataclysmic events changed the present Jewish society radically if not even permanently. Yet much of Orthodoxy inexplicably ignores these two events as though they never happened.

They occupy no space or time in many Orthodox schools and days of commemoration of these events are absent on school calendars. Instead there is a mindset that hunkers back to an idyllic Eastern European world of fantasy that is portrayed falsely in fictional stories, hagiographic biographies and omissions of uncomfortable facts and doctored photographs – to a world that never was

An entire talented and vital society is doomed to live in the imagined past and disregard present realities. And if the view of the present is unfortunately shaped by historical and social disconnect and denial then certainly the longer and equally vitally important view of the future will be distorted and skewed. Sooner or later, reality must sink in and when it does the pain, anger and frustration over past distortions and failures will become very difficult to bear.

The great struggle of most of Orthodoxy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries against Zionism influenced all Orthodox thought and behavior. As late as 1937, with German Jewry already prostrate before Hitler's madness and Germany already threatening Poland, the mainstream Orthodox rabbinate in Poland publicly objected to the formation of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel on the grounds that the heads of that state would undoubtedly be secular if not even anti-religious.

They were correct in that assessment but, since the Holocaust was then an unimaginable event in their worldview, they continued in their opposition to Jews leaving Poland to settle either in the United States or in Israel. Because of this past mindset, the Holocaust is more unsettling – theologically, at least – to Orthodoxy, then perhaps to any other group in the Jewish world.

Much of Orthodoxy chooses to ignore the issue or to contrive very lame excuses and causes for this catastrophe. In my opinion, there is no human answer to the event itself but the event cannot be ignored. One of the consequences of confronting it is naturally an admission that great and holy men can be wrong in their assessment of current events and future occurrences. Much of Orthodoxy is so

hagiographic about its present and past leaders that it cannot bring itself to admit that. As such, the past cannot truly help to assess the present. A false past is almost as dangerous as having no past at all.

Dealing with the State of Israel is an even more vexing issue for much of Orthodoxy. The creation of the Jewish state, mainly by secular and nonobservant Jews, and by political and military means was not part of the traditional Jewish view of how the Land of Israel would again fall under Jewish rule.

Since it occurred in the “wrong” way and was being led by the “wrong” people it again shook the mindset of much of Orthodoxy. One of the great and holy leaders of Orthodox society in Israel stated in 1950 that the state could not last more than fifteen years. Well, it is obvious that in that assessment he was mistaken. But again it is too painful to admit that he was mistaken and therefore the whole attitude of much of the Orthodox world is one of denial of the present fact that the state exists, prospers and is the largest supporter of Torah and Jewish traditional religious lifestyle in the world.

It is again too painful to admit that our past mindset regarding the State of Israel is no longer relevant. As long as large sections of Orthodoxy continue to live in an imaginary past and denies the realities of the present, such issues as army or national service, core curriculums of essential general knowledge for all religious schools, entering the workforce and decreasing the debilitating poverty and dysfunction of so many families, will never be able to be addressed properly.

The solutions are difficult and they cannot be dictated or legislated no matter how popular such steps may appear to be. But the change of mindset to the present must certainly and eventually occur. The Jewish people have always been up to this task and I am confident that we will be able to do so now as well.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

It should have been a day of joy. The Israelites had completed the mishkan, the sanctuary. For seven days Moses had made preparations for its consecration.[1] Now on the eighth day – the first of Nisan,[2] one year to the day since the Israelites had received their first command two weeks prior to the exodus – the service of the sanctuary was about to begin. The sages say that it was in heaven the most joyous day since creation.[3]

But tragedy struck. The two elder sons of Aaron “offered a strange fire, that had not been

commanded” (Lev. 10: 1) and the fire from heaven that should have consumed the sacrifices consumed them as well. They died. Aaron’s joy turned to mourning. Vayidom Aharon, “And Aaron was silent (10: 3). The man who had been Moses’ spokesman could not longer speak. Words turned to ash in his mouth.

There is much in this episode that is hard to understand, much that has to do with the concept of holiness and the powerful energies it released that, like nuclear power today, could be deadly dangerous if not properly used. But there is also a more human story about two approaches to leadership that still resonates with us today.

First there is the story about Aaron. We read about how Moses told him to begin his role as high priest. “Moses [then] said to Aaron, ‘Approach the altar, and prepare your sin offering and burnt offering, thus atoning for you and the people. Then prepare the people’s offering to atone for them, as God has commanded’” (Lev. 9: 7).

The sages sensed a nuance in the words, “Approach the altar,” as if Aaron was standing at a distance from it, reluctant to come near. They said: “Initially Aaron was ashamed to come close. Moses said to him, ‘Do not be ashamed. This is what you have been chosen to do.’”[4]

Why was Aaron ashamed? Tradition gave two explanations, both brought by Nahmanides in his commentary to the Torah. The first is that Aaron was simply overwhelmed by trepidation at coming so close to the Divine presence. The rabbis likened it to the bride of a king, nervous at entering the bridal chamber for the first time.

The second is that Aaron, seeing the “horns” of the altar, was reminded of the Golden Calf, his great sin. How could he, who had played a key role in that terrible event, now take on the role of atoning for the people’s sins? That surely demanded an innocence he no longer had. Moses had to remind him that it was precisely to atone for sins that the altar had been made, and the fact that he had been chosen by God to be high priest was an unequivocal sign that he had been forgiven.

There is perhaps a third explanation, albeit less spiritual. Until now Aaron had been in all respects second to Moses. Yes, he had been at his side throughout, helping him speak and lead. But there is vast psychological difference between being second-in-command, and being a leader in your own right. We probably all know of examples of people who

quite readily serve in an assisting capacity but who are terrified at the prospect of leading on their own.

Whichever explanation is true – and perhaps they all are – Aaron was reticent at taking on his new role, and Moses had to give him confidence. “This is what you have been chosen for.”

The other story is the tragic one, of Aaron’s two sons, Nadav and Avihu, who “offered a strange fire, that had not been commanded.” The sages offered several readings of this episode, all based on close reading of the several places in the Torah where their death is referred to. Some said they had been drinking alcohol.[5] Others said that they were arrogant, holding themselves up above the community. This was the reason they had never married.[6]

Some say that they were guilty of giving a halakhic ruling about the use of man-made fire, instead of asking their teacher Moses whether it was permitted.[7] Others say they were restless in the presence of Moses and Aaron. They said, when will these two old men die and we can lead the congregation?[8]

However we read the episode, it seems clear that they were all too eager to exercise leadership. Carried away by their enthusiasm to play a part in the inauguration, they did something they had not been commanded to do. After all, had Moses not done something entirely on his own initiative, namely breaking the tablets when he came down the mountain and saw the golden calf? If he could act spontaneously, why not they?

They forgot the difference between a priest and a prophet. A prophet lives and acts in time – in this moment that is unlike any other. A priest acts and lives in eternity, by following a set of rules that never change. Everything about “the holy,” the realm of the priest, is precisely scripted in advance. The holy is the place where God, not man, decides.

Nadav and Avihu failed fully to understand that there are different kinds of leadership and they are not interchangeable. What is appropriate to one may be radically inappropriate to another. A judge is not a politician. A king is not a prime minister. A religious leader is not a celebrity seeking popularity. Confuse these roles and not only will you fail. You will also damage the very office you were chosen to hold.

The real contrast here, though, is the difference between Aaron and his two sons. They were, it seems, opposites. Aaron was over-cautious and had

to be persuaded by Moses even to begin. Nadav and Avihu were not cautious enough. So keen were they to put their own stamp on the role of priesthood that their impetuosity was their downfall.

These are, perennially, the two challenges leaders must overcome. The first is the reluctance to lead. Why me? Why should I get involved? Why should I undertake the responsibility and all that comes with it – the stress, the hard work, and the criticisms leaders always have to face? Besides which, there are other people better qualified and more suited than I am.

Even the greatest were reluctant to lead. Moses at the burning bush found reason after reason to show that he was not the man for the job. Isaiah and Jeremiah both felt inadequate. Summoned to lead, Jonah ran away. The challenge really is daunting. But when you feel as if you are being called to a task, if you know that the mission is necessary and important, then there is nothing you can do but say, Hineni, “Here I am.” In the words of a famous book title, you have to “feel the fear and do it anyway.”[9]

The other challenge is the opposite. There are some people who simply see themselves as leaders. They are convinced that they can do it better. We recall the famous remark of Israel’s first president, Chaim Weizmann, that he was head of a nation of a million presidents.

From a distance it seems so easy. Isn’t it obvious that the leader should do X, not Y? Homo sapiens contains many back seat drivers who know better than those whose hands are on the steering wheel. Put them in a position of leadership and they can do great damage. Never having sat in the driver’s seat, they have no idea of how many considerations have to be taken into account, how many voices of opposition have to be overcome, how difficult it is at one and the same time to cope with the pressures of events while not losing sight of long term ideals and objectives. The late John F Kennedy said that the worst shock on being elected president was that “when we got to the White House we discovered that things were as bad as we said they were.” Nothing prepares you for the pressures of leadership when the stakes are high.

Overenthusiastic, overconfident leaders can do great harm. Before they became leaders they understood events through their own perspective. What they did not understand is that leadership involves relating to many perspectives, many interest groups and points of view. That does not mean that you try to satisfy everyone. Those who do so end up satisfying no one. But you have to consult and persuade. Sometimes

you need to honour precedent and the traditions of a particular institution. You have to know exactly when to behave as your predecessors did, and when not to. These call for considered judgement, not wild enthusiasm in the heat of the moment.

Nadav and Avihu were surely great people. The trouble was that they believed they were great people. They were not like their father Aaron who had to be persuaded to come close to the altar because of his sense of inadequacy. The one thing Nadav and Avihu lacked was a sense of their own inadequacy.[10]

To do anything great we have to be aware of these two temptations. One is the fear of greatness: who am I? The other is being convinced of your greatness: who are they? I can do it better. We can do great things if (a) the task matters more than the person, (b) we are willing to do our best without thinking ourselves superior to others, and (c) we are willing to take advice, the thing Nadav and Avihu failed to do.

People do not become leaders because they are great. They become great because they are willing to serve as leaders. It does not matter that we think ourselves inadequate. So did Moses. So did Aaron. What matters is the willingness, when challenge calls, to say, Hineni, "Here I am."

Footnotes in email version

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