

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT CHUKAT

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT!

Enter a synagogue during the week and take a look around.

What are people's facial expressions? Tired, overworked, stressed?

When it comes to Shabbat morning however, it would seem that you are entering a different place with completely different people.

Everyone seems to be happy, excited and well rested.

Why is that?

Perhaps it's the long Friday night 'shluf' or the fact that a delicious Kidush is around the corner, but I would like to share with you an amazing thought.

First a fascinating story from June 2014.

Hundreds of Cinema goers in Hong Kong gathered for a short film.

During the interval, they were shown an advert from Volkswagen.

The advert shows a point-of-view account of a person getting into their car and setting off on a drive. The scenery is lush and there is classical music in the background.

The idea seems to be that this car is smooth and great to drive - very relaxing!

What the people didn't know was that the Cinema was equipped with a location-based broadcaster that could send a mass text to everyone in the room at once.

Shortly into this advert operators sent a simultaneous text to everyone in the Cinema. Imagine, everyone's phones pinged and beeped to receive the message.

There were hidden cameras catching people's reactions. The room was full of people looking into their phones, intrigued as to who was sending them a message.

Just at that split second, the advert turned sour - and a large crash is heard as the ad

comes to an end. The audience is taken completely by surprise and shocked faces appear around the room.

The message was piercingly clear, do not text whilst driving - the effects could be deadly.

We live in a society that is run on technology. It's difficult if not impossible to get by nowadays without mobile phones, emails, internet shopping, sat nav etc.

We have become very reliable on this, perhaps too reliable.

Yet there is a repercussion from such a connection; the more we connect, the more we really disconnect. The more we engage in our phones, the less time we have to speak directly to other people.

When we are at dinner with loved ones and our phones ping as a message is delivered, how many of us really concentrate on what our dinner partner is saying or are we too busy thinking "who is contacting me now, perhaps it's more important".

There are times at work where we receive a phone call, and trying to multi task so as not to waste time, we type away at the desk losing real concentration on the person to whom we are speaking.

Shabbat is different!

It's a time of blessing, a time when we rid ourselves of our technological connection in order to increase our communal and G-dly connection.

It is a time we disconnect in order to reconnect!

Perhaps that is why people seem so happy on Shabbat. We are actually getting to sit down and understand others without interruptions. We are able to concentrate on our prayer and Torah, learning much more without momentary distractions.

In this week's Parsha we are told: "This is the law (Torah), when a person dies in a tent..."

This weeks Parsha Sheet is kindly sponsored Lirfuat
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The TAL community wishes
Mazal Tov to Avi Fisher
son of Rabbi Danny & Yael Fisher,
on his upcoming Bar Mitsvah

Rabbi Fisher would like to invite you to the Bar Mitsvah Kiddush
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8TH TAMMUZ 5785

SHABBAT BEGINS:
21:06pm

SHABBAT ENDS:
22:24pm

DVAR TORAH
Disconnect to Reconnect
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

DVAR TORAH
Parshat Chukat
By Rabbi David Baadani

DVAR TORAH
Parshat Chukat
By Rabbi Danny Fisher

TEHILLIM FOR OUR TIMES
By Rabbi Benji Stone

KIDS ZONE
Quiz & Comic

This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

[Bamidbar 19:14]. There is a famous teaching of our Sages regarding this verse: "Torah does not become established within a person, unless he is prepared to die for the Torah" [Berachot 63b].

I'm confused?! Suicide is forbidden! How can a dead man study Torah?

The simple answer is that here our Rabbis are teaching us that in order to become accomplished in Torah learning, a person must make sacrifices for Torah. You must be willing to give up of your time and exert extra effort in Torah study.

There is a further explanation. Often when people sit down to study, they permit various factors to interrupt them such as a telephone call or the arrival of

visitors. There is no way however, of disturbing a dead person with a telephone call or the like. The Gemara is teaching us that a person who wants to succeed in his learning must consider himself "dead". He cannot permit anything whatsoever to interrupt him.

Imagine that Google, Wikipedia, Facebook and Waze are all in the room together having a discussion of who's the best.

Wikipedia says "I know everything". Google answers back "I have everything". Waze says "I know the way to anywhere!" Facebook says "I know everybody".

Just then there is an interruption and the internet comes in saying, "without me your all nothing!"

Think it's all over??

Then there is a blackout.

This time Electricity opens its mouth and

says "Now who is talking!"

During the week we think we are our own bosses, we get carried away into the imaginary internet and mobile world. On Shabbat we are able to lose that and reconnect to our real selves. We are reminded that it is Hashem that is in charge! He created the world in six days and rested on the Seventh. We have been blessed with this special day accordingly and are able to reconnect to Him.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we tried that during the week?

It's difficult but perhaps for one Shiur or lesson a week, we can really turn off the phone and concentrate. Let us uphold the words of the Gemara; for it is only if a person is prepared to die and act dead to the outside world that he will be able to succeed in real Torah advancement.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT CHUKAT

Parashat Chukat marks a significant shift in the Israelites' journey through the wilderness. With the deaths of Miriam and Aharon, the nation loses two towering figures of leadership. Their absence is felt deeply – the well of water dries up, the protective Clouds of Glory disappear, and the people are left in a state of grief and uncertainty. They grumble, rebel, and fall into despair. It is a moment of profound vulnerability, almost a sense of national orphanhood. And yet, the journey continues. Surprisingly, even amidst this instability, the Israelites go on to win crucial battles

against the mighty kings Sichon and Og. How is it that, in a moment of spiritual weakness, they still find success? The answer lies in a deeper understanding of divine compassion and enduring presence.

The Alshech HaKadosh, commenting on the verse from Tehillim (146:9), "And the way of the wicked He turns astray," offers a powerful insight. Even when the Jewish people are surrounded by wickedness or lack spiritual leadership, Hashem does not abandon them. He guards the vulnerable – the orphan, the stranger – and lovingly redirects those who have gone astray. The verse is not just about punishment; it's about divine guidance. Even the path of the wicked is gently bent back toward goodness.

This theme is echoed in the teachings of Chazal, who explain that the Exodus from

Egypt was not merited by the people's righteousness, but by the very presence of the Shechinah among them. So too, throughout the wilderness and in every generation, redemption is not solely a reward for worthiness – it is an expression of divine commitment.

Parashat Chukat is often read during the summer, a season when spiritual focus can wane and routine is disrupted. The message of this parashah – and the comfort offered by the Alshech – is particularly resonant: Even when we feel distant, spiritually adrift, or undeserving, Hashem is still with us. He is guiding our steps, clearing our path, and gently turning us back toward home.

We may feel alone, but we are never truly abandoned. The journey through the wilderness continues – and so does the promise of redemption.



RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

PARSHAT CHUKAT

The Posuk in this week's Parsha ,Chukas,

states: "זאת התורה אדם כי ימות באהל" ("This is the teaching: when a man dies in a tent"). Chazal explain in Gemorah Berachos that the Torah can only be fully acquired if one "kills himself" for it. This

concept raises a question posed by the Chafetz Chaim: how can this be reconciled with the Torah's instruction that we must live by the Torah and not die by it? The Chafetz Chaim explains that to truly

acquire Torah, one must immerse himself in it to such an extent that he is unaffected by any distractions. This dedication does not imply physical death, but rather a complete and total focus on Torah study, to the point where all worldly distractions are "killed" in the sense that they no longer affect the person. This level of commitment and humility ensures that the Torah becomes a living and integral part of one's being. From this concept, of being fully immersed in Torah study which is likened to "killing oneself" we can understand the

the Gemarah in Tomid which brings a dialogue between Alexander the Great and the Chachomim. It contains within it profound advice on how to live one's life. One of the questions Alexander posed was, "What should one do in order to live?" The Chachomim responded that he should "kill himself." This perplexing answer is clarified by the Meforshim to mean that one should lower himself, i.e., be humble. Through humility, a person can merit a long life. Conversely, when asked, "What should one do in order to die?" the answer was to "live." This

implies that if a person becomes accustomed to arrogance (Bal Gaiva), his peers will cast an evil eye (Eyin Horah) upon him, and c'v, he might die before his time. Historical accounts suggest that Alexander the Great did not heed this advice, as many historians believe he died from excessive wine consumption just before his 30th birthday. We should be zoche to live our life to the fullest iy'H
Mazel Tov to my son Avi, on his Bar Mitzvah!
Have a wonderful Shabbos!



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 9 - למנצח על-מות לבן

DETECTING THE GOOD IN OUR LIVES - PART 2

Appreciation of the good we receive in our lives is very much the theme of this chapter.

For example, King David declares further; "I will tell of all your wonders" (ibid). What is the significance of the word "all"? Broadly speaking we can experience Divine providence in one of three ways;

1. Unnatural events

Imagine you are being chased down the road by a group of thugs. You seriously believe your time has come. Suddenly, you hear a grumbling sound from behind and you turn round to see the ground open up and swallow up the bandits in full stride.

Experiencing an open miracle such as this, even the most hardened character will surely offer effusive praise to Hashem.

2. Remarkable Chain of Natural Events

On a recent aeroplane journey I sat next to an accomplished Jew from Chicago; a commercial real estate lawyer, talmid chochom and philanthropist. He told me that he met hundreds of potential marriage partners in his twenties all of which led to nothing. Aged thirty he told his mother "I can't do this anymore! I need a break from the shidduch market. I'm going away for a few weeks!" He went abroad to stay with his brother in pursuit of peace and a clear mind. At the first

shabbat meal, another couple were invited, friends of his sister in law. After shabbat, the friend mentioned that she knew someone who might be a very good match for the single young man she had met that shabbat. In the words of the young man himself, now almost seventy, "I met with the lady who was suggested as a suitable match and she is still my wife today".

What were the odds of this desperate young man attending the same shabbat meal as another couple who would happen to know the person who would become his life partner - and at a time when he was at his lowest ebb?

One who experiences a remarkable chain of events such as this will likely recognize the hand of Hashem and offer heartfelt thanks in return.

3. Ordinary Natural Events

It is so difficult to see the hand of Hashem in ordinary everyday experiences. Taking a walk in the park is relaxing and enjoyable. The trees form part of the backdrop, completing the pretty picture. But do we notice how the leaves are arranged so that no leaf blocks the sunlight from reaching the leaf below it? Do we notice the neat and yet complex layout of the veins on each leaf delivering essential nutrients to the intended recipient (Rabbi A Miller)? Do we think about how the leaves absorb harmful carbon dioxide and then release oxygen so that we can breathe?

No we do not. Why? Because we have become accustomed to seeing trees day in, day out with the understandable result that we consider them to be nothing special.

It is no small task to educate ourselves to be inspired by the miracles around us. But this was King David's mission statement. "I will tell of all your wonders" (ibid.) - not just the wonders which are evident when open miracles or extraordinary events occur, but also the wonders which are hidden behind everyday life experiences.

The idea of cultivating our awareness of Hashem's presence in the world relates not just to our own experiences but also to His role in the progression of world affairs.

Occasionally we sit and watch our enemies succeeding in their goal of threatening and (heaven forbid) harming us and we are hard pressed to feel the warmth of Hashem's guidance. "Where was G-d?" people ask. But in recent times - such as the post October 7th conflict - we have heard numerous accounts of vivid experience of divine intervention even at the darkest moments. We have also seen the emergence of a thirst for Hashem and religious observance arising amongst those who were previously estranged. We see therefore that the presence of Hashem can be felt, not just during a "golden era" of peace and prosperity, but even during a period when, on the face of it, Hashem has chosen to treat us harshly. Whilst it may be true that Hashem is very much there during times of darkness, we pray that we experience Hashem's clear and open kindness very soon, in the form of the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash (temple) and coming of Moshiach so that "...In the gates of the daughter of Zion I will rejoice in your redemption" (ibid. 15)



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Chukat

The laws of the Parah Adumah, the Red Heifer, are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. Hashem commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a designated rock so that water will

flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of Hashem's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. The Jewish People resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they do not travel the most direct route to Eretz

Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him for 30 days. Sichon, the Amorite, attacks Bnei Yisrael when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, Bnei Yisrael conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. "Take a perfect Para Aduma (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" temima mean in this context?
2. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a Para Aduma?
3. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
4. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the Para Aduma; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
5. Why was the mitzvah of the Para Aduma entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?

A

1. 19:2 - Perfectly red.
2. 19:2 - Two.
3. 19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.
4. 19:21 - a) Remains tahor; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts tumah; c) He and his clothing contract tumah.
5. 19:22 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the Golden Calf.

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