

According to Rabbi Zelig Pliskin: "Just being aware that you frequently fail to keep your mind in the present can enable you to increase your ability to do so" (Gateway to Happiness). (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### Synchronization

"You know how complicated it is to be able to have all the muscles operate in synchronism with signals from your brain, signals that are just transmitted through the nervous system. You can't walk with your feet alone. You are walking with the brain even if you are not actively thinking. Every aspect of every motion is directed by Hashem."

With faith and gratitude in Hashem, we should arrive at the reality that every detail has been part of Hashem's Synchronization of events leading to a final result. (By Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael.)

### Long Time, No See

A number of years ago, in the city of Petach Tikvah, a recent *oleh*, immigrant, to the Holy Land, was called up to the Torah. He began to recite the *berachah*, blessing. Suddenly, he broke down in bitter weeping. He could not continue, and he had to sit down, whereupon he continued his uncontrolled sobbing for some time.

After the prayers were concluded, the man told his story: "Today is my birthday. I was born eighty-three years ago. The last time I had an *aliyah* to the Torah was on my *Bar Misvah*, seventy years ago. The event took place in Vilna, in the shul of the *gadol ha'dor*, pre-eminent leader of the generation, Harav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, z"l. After my *aliyah*, Rav Chaim Ozer called my father over and queried him concerning my school. My father responded that I went to the local gymnasium, a secular school.

"At that moment, Rav Chaim Ozer grabbed my father by the lapel of his suit and said, 'You should know, that if your son continues his education in a secular school and does not receive a Torah education, he will assimilate, and seventy years will pass before he will again be called up to the Torah.' Regrettably, my father ignored the Sage's warning, and exactly seventy years have gone by since my last *aliyah*. This is why I broke down." Interestingly, the street in Petach Tikvah on which the shul was located was Rechov Chaim Ozer. One does not ignore the admonition of a *saddik*. Hashem does not; we certainly should not either. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

*The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition*

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאַה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

## Congregation Magen Abraham

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SHABBAT HUKAT ✪ חַקַּת חֻקֵּי

Haftarah: Shoftim 11:1-33

**JULY 12-13, 2019 10 TAMUZ 5779**

Friday Shir Hashirim/Minhah: **6:30, 7:00, 7:30** Shaharit: **4:39, 6:30, 8:10, 8:45, 9:00**

Candlelighting: **8:08 pm**

Evening Shema after: **9:06 pm**

Morning Shema by: **8:23 am**

Minhah Gedolah: **1:30 pm**

Shabbat Classes: **6:35 pm**

Shabbat Minhah: **7:35 pm**

Shabbat Ends: **9:06 pm (R"Y 9:38 pm)**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area. Sunday Minhah: **7:05 pm**

This bulletin is dedicated by **Raymond & Michele Levy**  
in memory of **Yehuda ben Miriam** לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת יְהוּדָה בֶּן מִרְיָם

Weather permitting, *Bircat Halebanah* will be recited on Saturday night. If not, it may be said until Tuesday night, July 16.

### A Message from our Rabbi

”קח אֶת־הַמַּטֶּה וְהַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעֵדָה”

“Take the staff and gather together the assembly.” (*Bemidbar* 20:8)

There were two times that Hashem commanded Moshe *Rabenu* to extract water from the rock. The first time he was told to strike the rock and the second time he was commanded to speak. Why?

Rabbi Eli Scheller explains A person has two different methods to obtain what he desires. One is through strength, either through physical force or their voice or facial expressions. The more force exerted the quicker others will listen.

The second way is through wisdom, using creative ways to influence others. In this way man differs from animals, where wisdom can overcome strength.

When it comes to educating children, a person also has these two tools at his disposal. They can force their children to heed their commands, or they can use the better tool, speech and wisdom. When children are young force may be beneficial at times. However, after a child reaches a certain point of maturity, the desired result is more likely to be achieved using brain power rather than force.

The first time that the Jews received water from the rock Moshe had been told to strike it. He used strength to “produce” the water. However, after forty years in the

desert and as preparation for entering the land of Israel, the Jews needed to witness the more intelligent way of achieving a goal. King Solomon writes, "So I said, wisdom is better than might" (*Kohelet* 9:16).

Bottom line: "Strength deteriorates with age, wisdom improves."

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

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## Hard to Understand

זאת חקת התורה"

"This is the decree of the Torah." (*Bemidbar* 19:2)

*Rashi* explains that the word חק (*hok*) means decree, a law which the Torah requires us to accept without question because human minds are not capable of understanding it. We may ask, then, why does the Torah go out of its way to point out that this particular law is the decree of the Torah, suggesting that it is the Torah's only, or most important, decree? Many of the commandments fall into the category of decrees, which are beyond our comprehension. Such laws as *sha'atnez* and *kashrut* are above rational human analysis. If so, why is the law of *parah adumah* (the red cow) singled out to be called the decree of the Torah?

One answer is that the *parah adumah* is a metaphor for the Torah itself. Water mixed with the ashes of a totally red cow has the power to cleanse someone from the form of *tumah* (ritual impurity) caused by contact with a dead person. This is a supra-rational decree, and we will never be able to understand how or why it works.

So also, the Torah has the power to cleanse its followers from many types of impurity, and if one pursues it diligently and with proper intentions, it will transform him into a pure and sincere person. Just as we do not, and cannot, understand the workings of *parah adumah*, we do not understand how Torah study and observance has this purifying effect on individuals.

The *parah adumah* purifies a person who is spiritually unclean in a miraculous and almost mystical fashion. We see no apparent connection between the sprinkling of the ashes upon a person and the spiritual transformation that ensues. In the same manner, the study of Torah effects an equally astounding transformation in a person without any external clue as to what is happening or why.

Another answer is that the laws concerning the *parah adumah* are paradoxical. On the one hand, when the mixture is sprinkled, the defiled person becomes cleansed. On the other hand, those who are involved in the preparation of the *parah adumah* become defiled.

The people appointed to prepare the *parah adumah* may rationally argue, "Why should we become defiled for the sake of those who were not careful to avoid contact with a corpse?"

Through the statute of *parah adumah* the Torah is teaching that a Jew must help another Jew even if it requires sacrifice. This is "*Hukat HaTorah* - a basic principal of Torah" and though we may not easily comprehend it, we must practice it in our daily lives. (*Kol Dodi* on the Torah and *Vedibarta Bam*)

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## Snake in the Grass

”עֲשֵׂה לְךָ שָׂרָף וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל־גֵּזֶם וְהָיָה כְּלִהְנֹשׁוֹף וְרָאָה אֹתוֹ וְחָי”

"Make for yourself a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole; and it shall be that anyone who was bitten will look at it and live" (*Bemidbar* 21:8)

The narrative stimulates a number of questions: Why did Moshe *Rabenu* fashion the serpent of copper? Why not of another substance, such as clay or wood? Is there a relationship between the word *nahash*, serpent, and the word *nehoshet*, copper? Why was the serpent placed upon a pole? How is one who is bitten by a serpent cured simply by gazing at the serpent? Rav Avigdor Miller z"l addresses these questions in his commentary on this *parashah*. The serpent is a symbol of the *yesser hara*, evil inclination. The *yesser hara's* strength lies in its ability to be elusive, to conceal itself from its victims. Thus, the first serpent, the *nahash* that played a leading role in the sin of Adam *Harishon*, presented itself as a friendly advisor. Hashem chose the *nahash* as the symbol for all forms of persuasion, using its guile to manipulate man into succumbing to temptation. Every serpent should serve as a reminder of this concealed force. The ability to ensnare defines the essential character of the *nahash*.

The serpent travels on its stomach, hiding in the grass, so that it can strike without warning, when it is least expected. Because of its unique nature, the serpent is copper-colored, a color that easily blends in with most environments. This allows the snake a greater opportunity to remain concealed, especially upon the earth or in the grass.

Moshe understood the hidden peril of the serpent. He, therefore, chose to fashion a serpent of copper. Even the name *nahash* alluded to the serpent's resemblance to *nehoshet*, copper, pointing to the difficulty man has in recognizing the danger of the *nahash*. Thus, Hashem commanded Moshe to place this copper serpent upon a pole, so that everyone would see it and be reminded of its existence. This way, people would be warned to avoid the fatal temptation of its misleading advice.

The complainers were punished in order to provide a lesson to be cognizant of the effects of the subtle persuasion of the serpent. When the people looked at the copper serpent, they were reminded of the existence of the evil inclination. They would avoid the tragic consequences that its bite could catalyze. The way to be healed of the snake bite/*yesser hara*, is to be aware of its existence at all times. The serpent seeks to remain incognito, to hide from its victims. It enters the minds and hearts of men, poisoning their concepts and philosophies. They may think that they are thinking straight, but alas, they are only succumbing to the effects of the serpent's guile. Healing comes through awareness. Whoever notices the serpent survives. It is as true today as it was then. When we open our eyes to the efforts of the serpents, we will realize that its subtlety leads us astray: to follow the trends of the times; to defer to every challenge to the Torah way of life; to view modernity as a savior and reject the past. When we recognize the tempting nature of the snake, we are able to avoid the entrapping deception of the *yesser hara*. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

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## Where Are You?

A Rabbi once asked his student, "Where have you been all day?"

The student answered proudly, "I spent the whole day learning in the study hall!"

"I was not referring to your body," the Rabbi elaborated. "I was referring to your mind. Where were you all day?"

We often spend time in the past, brooding over some error we have made. Other times we live in the future, worrying about something that has not yet occurred and might never happen. The point the Rabbi was trying to teach his student is that people have the ability to choose where they spend their time: in the here-and-now, or someplace else. The secret to happiness is to enjoy the present. Maximize the "now" by not letting things that have already happened bother you. Also, don't be overly concerned about tomorrow.