



Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades

**שבת פרשת חקת**

Shabbat Parashat Chukat

June 23, 2018 | Tammuz 10, 5778

*The Three Weeks begin tonight!*

# TORAH STUDY

**This Week: Shabbat Parashat Chukat  
B'midbar 19.1-22.1, pages 880-893**

**FIRST ALIYAH:** God “spoke to Moshe and Aharon” regarding the “Red Cow” ritual, meaning Aharon is still alive at this point (his death comes later in the parashah). So why is it Eleazar who must carry out the ritual, and not his father?

**FIFTH ALIYAH:** Verse 21.4 states that “the people grew restive” after Aharon’s death, and demanded to know why they were taken out of Egypt—40 years earlier. What is going on here?

*The haftarah, Shofetim 11.1-33, begins on Page 910.*

**Next Week: Shabbat Parashat Balak  
B'midbar 22.2-25.9, pages 894-908**

**THIRD ALIYAH:** God tells Bilam he may go with Balak’s second delegation, then blocks his way. Does God believe that Bilam set up the second delegation because he really wanted to go curse Israel?

**SEVENTH ALIYAH:** Verse 25.4 actually reads, “Take all the chiefs of the people and have them publicly impaled.” Our text says “take the ringleaders.” Is our text trying to cover up a grave injustice, or at least a horrible overreaction?

*The haftarah, Michah 5.6-6.8, begins on Page 915.*

*For haftarot, we follow S’fardi custom.*

## CHUKAT: THE CONSOLATIONS OF MORTALITY

Chukat is about mortality. In it, we read of the death of two of Israel’s three great leaders in the wilderness, Miriam and Aharon, and the sentence of death decreed against Moshe, the greatest of them all. These were devastating losses.

To counter that sense of loss and bereavement, the Torah employs one of Judaism’s great principles: The Holy One, blessed be He, creates the remedy before the disease. Before any of the deaths are mentioned, we read about the strange ritual of the Red Heifer, which purified people who had been in contact with death—the archetypal source of impurity.

That ritual, often deemed incomprehensible, is in fact deeply symbolic. It involves taking the most striking emblem of life—a heifer that is pure red, the color of blood, the source of life—and reducing it to ash. That is mortality, the fate of all that lives. We are, as Avraham said, “mere dust and ashes” (B’reishit 18.27)—and so we, as physical beings, may one day be reduced to dust. There are, though, two consolations.

The first is that we are not just physical beings. God made the first human “from the dust of the earth,” but He breathed into him the breath of life. There is within us mortals something immortal.

The second is that, even here on earth, something of us lives on. It did for Aharon in the form of his sons, who carry the name of the priesthood to this day. It did for Moshe in the form of his disciples, who studied and lived by his words as they do to this day. It did for Miriam in the lives of all those women who, by their courage, taught men the true meaning of faith.

For good or bad, our lives have an impact on other lives, and the ripples of our deeds spread ever outward across space and time. We are part of the undying river of life.

So we may be mortal, but that does not reduce our life to insignificance, as Tolstoy once thought it did (see his parable of the traveler hiding in a well, in his “Confessions,” and his short story, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich”) for we are part of something larger than ourselves, characters in a story that began early in the history of civilization, and that will last as long as humankind.

The Chasidic master Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischke said we should each have two pockets. In one should be a note saying: “I am but dust and ashes.” In the other should be a note saying: “For my sake was the world created.” Life lives in the tension between our physical smallness and our spiritual greatness, the brevity of life and the eternity of the faith by which we live. Defeat, despair and a sense of tragedy are always premature. Life is short, but when we lift our eyes to heaven, we walk tall.

*—Adapted from the writings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

## CBIOTP STANDARDS & PRACTICES

1. Men must keep their heads covered in the building and must wear a talit when appropriate. Women may choose to do either or both, but it is not mandatory.
2. Anyone accepting a Torah-related honor must wear a talit, regardless of gender.
3. Only one person at a time may take an aliyah.
4. No one should enter or leave the sanctuary during a K’dushah. One should not leave the sanctuary when the Torah scroll is being carried from or to the ark.
5. No conversations may be held in the hallway outside the sanctuary, or while standing in an aisle alongside a pew.
6. The use of recording equipment of any kind is forbidden on sacred days.
7. Also forbidden are cell phones, beepers and PDAs, except for physicians on call and emergency aid workers (please use vibrating option).
8. No smoking at any time in the building, or on synagogue grounds on Shabbatot and Yom Kippur.
9. No non-kosher food allowed in the building at any time.
10. No one may remove food or utensils from the shul on Shabbatot. An exception is made for food being brought to someone who is ailing and/or homebound.

## MAZAL TOV CORNER

[If we don't know about it, we can't print it;  
if we can't print it, we can't wish it.]

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sunday	Marcelle Kosson
Tuesday	Elana Chalom
Thursday	Lou Israel, David Warner

This week's Shabbat Booklet  
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### MITZVAH MEMO

Do you have enough food to eat?  
Too many people in our community do not.  
Bring non-perishable food items to the shul.

## THE IMAHOT:

Following is the text adopted by the Ritual Committee  
for use by the Prayer Leader in reciting the Amidah, and  
those wishing to insert the Matriarchs in their Amidot:

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֵמוֹתֵנוּ, אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבֹרָהּ וְשָׂרָה, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְרַבֵּקָה, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, רַחֵם  
וְלֵאמֹר. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן, גּוֹמֵל  
חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַפֶּלַל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וְיַמְבִּיא  
גּוֹאֵל לְבָנָי בְּנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׂמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.

Recite this only between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur:

זָכְרָנוּ לְחַיִּים, מְלֶךְ חַפֵּץ בְּחַיִּים, וְכִתְבָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים,  
לְמַעַן אֵלֹהִים חַיִּים.

מְלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱדֹנָי, מְגֵן אֲבֹרָהּ  
וְעִזְרַת שָׂרָה.

Присоединяйтесь к нам дл  
освящение и обед

This week's kiddush & luncheon sponsor:

### THE KIDDUSH CLUB

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## SH'MA MATTERS

### THE BLESSINGS BEFORE THE SH'MA: TO RESPOND OR NOT?

Whenever a blessing is recited, we offer two responses. After “Baruch Ata Adonai” (Blessed are You, Lord), we say “Baruch Hu, u’varuch Sh’mo” (blessed is He and blessed is His Name). At the end of the b’rachah, we say “Amen.”

But should any response be given to the blessings between Bar’chu and the Sh’ma?

It is not a frivolous question. These are blessings preparatory to reciting the Sh’ma, putting them in the same category as, say, the Motzi. We may not speak after the Motzi until we have eaten bread; may we “speak” until after the Sh’ma?

The S’fardi halachic authority, Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, Judaism’s definitive law code, says no. Rabbi Moses Isserles, in his equally authoritative gloss, “the Mapa,” rules that Ashkenazim should respond.

Chasidic rulings follow Rabbi Karo, meaning chasidim do not respond with “Baruch Hu, u’varuch Sh’mo” and “Amen.”

Either way is acceptable here, although our rabbi’s tradition is to offer no response.

### A MEDITATION BEFORE THE SH'MA

*Before reciting the Sh’ma, keep this in mind:*

**I hereby accept upon myself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.**



The Red Heifer ritual is a powerful statement that the Holy is to be found in life, not death. Anyone who had been in contact with a dead body needed purification before entering the Mishkan or the Beit Hamikdash (the Holy Temple). Priests had to obey stricter rules—the High Priest even more so.

This made biblical Judaism highly distinctive. It contains no cult of worship of dead ancestors, or seeking to make contact with their spirits. It was probably to avoid the tomb of Moshe becoming a holy site that the Torah says, “to this day no one knows where his grave is. (D’varim 34.6). God and the holy are to be found in life. Death defiles.

The point is—and that is what recent neuroscience has made eminently clear—this cannot be achieved by reason alone. Freud was right to suggest that the death instinct is powerful, irrational, and largely unconscious, yet under certain conditions it can be utterly devastating in what it leads people to do.

The Hebrew term *chok* comes from the verb meaning, “to engrave.” Just as a statute is carved into stone, so a behavioral habit is carved in depth into our unconscious mind, and alters our instinctual responses. The result is a personality trained to see death and holiness as two utterly opposed states—just as meat (death) and milk (life) are.

Chukim are Judaism’s way of training us in emotional intelligence, above all a conditioning in associating holiness with life, and defilement with death. It is fascinating to see how this has been vindicated by modern neuroscience.

Rationality, vitally important in its own right, is only half the story of why we are as we are. We will need to shape and control the other half if we are successfully to conquer the instinct to aggression, violence and death that lurks not far beneath the surface of the conscious mind.

—Adapted from the writings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

## Of Miriam, Moshe, the rock, and grief

It is a scene that still has the power to shock and disturb. The people complain. There is no water. It is an old complaint, and a predictable one. That is what happens in a desert wilderness. Moshe should have been able to handle it in his stride. He has been through far tougher challenges in his time. Yet, suddenly, he explodes into vituperative anger:

“Listen now, you rebels, shall we bring you water out of this rock?” Then Moshe raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. (Num. 20: 10-11)

It was such egregious behavior, so much of an overreaction, that the commentators had difficulty in deciding which aspect was worst. Some said, it was hitting the rock instead of speaking to it as God had instructed. Some said, it was the use of the word “we.” Moshe knew God would send water: it had nothing to do with Aharon or himself. Others, most famously Maimonides, the Rambam, said it was the anger evident in the words “Listen now, you rebels.”

What made this trial different? Why did Moshe momentarily lose control? Why then? Why there?

It was because his sister Miriam had just died. Moshe was in mourning for his eldest sibling. It is hard to lose a parent, but in some ways it is even harder to lose a brother or sister. They are your generation. You feel the angel of death come suddenly close. You face your own mortality.

Miriam, however, was more than a sister to Moshe. She was the one, while still a six-year-old child, to follow the course of the wicker basket holding her baby brother as it drifted down the Nile. She had the courage and ingenuity to approach Pharaoh’s daughter and suggest that she employ a Hebrew nurse for the child, thus ensuring that Moshe would grow up knowing his family, his people, and his identity.

Moshe surely knew what he owed his elder sister. She had accompanied him throughout his mission. She led the women in song at the Red Sea.

So it was not simply the Israelites’ demand for water that led Moshe to lose control of his emotions, but rather his own deep grief over the loss of his sister, who had watched over him as a child, guided his development, supported him throughout the years, and helped him carry the burden of leadership by her role as leader of the women.

It is a moment that reminds us of words from the Book of Judges said by Israel’s chief of staff, Barak, to its judge-and-leader D’vorah: “If you go with me, I will go; but if you do not go with me, I cannot go” (Shof’tim 4). The relationship between Barak and D’vorah was much less close than that between Moshe and Miriam, yet Barak acknowledged his dependence on a wise and courageous woman. Can Moshe have felt less?

Bereavement leaves us deeply vulnerable. In the midst of loss we can find it hard to control our emotions. We make mistakes. We act rashly. We suffer from a momentary lack of judgment. These are common symptoms even for us ordinary humans. In Moshe’s case, however, there was an additional factor. He was a prophet, and grief can occlude or eclipse the prophetic spirit. Moshe, the greatest of all the prophets, remained in touch with God. It was God, after all, who told him to “speak to the rock.” But somehow the message did not penetrate his consciousness fully. That was the effect of grief.

So the details are, in truth, secondary to the human drama played out that day. The story of Moshe and the rock is ultimately less about Moshe and a rock than about a great Jewish woman, Miriam, appreciated fully only when she was no longer there.

—Adapted from the writings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

**INSTALLATION OF OUR NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES:  
SHABBAT MORNING, JUNE 30, DURING SERVICES.**

# May He who blessed | מי שברך

*May He who blessed our ancestors bless and heal all those whose names are listed here, those whose names will be called out, and those whose names we do not know because either we are unaware of their illness or they are. We pray He mercifully quickly restore them to health and vigor. May He grant physical and spiritual well-being to all who are ill.* אמן

Sydelle Klein	Rivkah bat Rut	Susan Yorke
Bonnie Pritzker Appelbaum	Rut bat Hadassah	Alter ben Hassia
Deenah bat Sarah Leah	Shimona bat Flora	Avraham Akivah bat Chanah Sarah
Rut bat Esther	Sura Osnat bat Alta Chayah	Avraham Yitzhak ben Masha
Miriam Zelda bat Gittel D'vorah	Tzipporah bat Yaffa	Aharon Hakohen ben Oodel
Miriam Rachel bat Chanah	Yosphe Perel bat Michlah	Chaim ben Golda
Harav Mordechai Volff ben Liba Miryam	Matel bat Frimah	Ezra ben Luli
Michael Bybelezer	Michelle Blatteis	Gil Nechemiah ben Yisraela
M'nachem Mendel ben Chaya Dina	Diane Fowler	Mordechai Yitzchak ben Tirtzach
Simchah bat Zelda	Marj Goldstein	Harav R'fael Eliyahu ben Esther Malkah
Adina bat Freidel	Ruth Hammer	Harav Shimon Shlomo ben Taube v'Avraham
Baila bat D'vorah	Goldy Hess	Yisrael Yitzhak ben Shayndel
Chavah bat Sarah	Fay Johnson	Yitzchak ben Tzivia
Chayah bat Flora	Micki Kuttler	Yonatan ben Malka
Devora Yocheved bat Yehudit	Katie Kim	Yosef ben Flora
Esther bat D'vorah	Elaine Laikin	Zalman Avraham ben Golda
HaRav Ilana Chaya bat Rachel Esther	Mira Levy	Larry Carlin
Masha bat Etil	Robin Levy	Harry Ikenson
Masha bat Rochel	Karen Lipsy	Shannon Johnson
Matel bat Frimah	Kathleen McCarty	Itzik Khmishman
Mindel bat D'vorah	Gail Schenker	Adam Messing
Ninette bat Aziza	Linda State	Gabriel Neri
Pinyuh bat Surah	Mary Thompson	Jeff Nicol
Ruchel Leah bat Malkah	Michelle Lazar	Steve Saikin
Rita bat Flora	Norma Sugerman	Fred Sheim
Rifkah bat Chanah	Julia Yorke	Mark Alan Tunick

## We pray for their safe return...

May He who blessed our ancestors bless, preserve, and protect the captive and missing soldiers of Tzahal—Ron Arad, Zecharia Baumel, Guy Chever, Zvi Feldman, Yekutiel Katz, and Zeev Rotshik—as well as those U.S. and allied soldiers, and the civilians working with them and around them, still missing in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all other areas of conflict, past and present.

And may He bless the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and Tzahal, and those who serve the United States and Israel in foreign lands in whatever capacity, official or unofficial, members of our community or related to members, and their colleagues and companions. Guide them in peace and return them speedily to their families alive and unharmed. אמן

## Are we in your will? Shouldn't we be?

When people prepare their wills, they usually look to leave a mark beyond the confines of their families. Thus it is that general gifts are left to hospitals, and other charitable organizations. All too often ignored, however, is the synagogue, even though its role in our lives often begins at birth, and continues even beyond death. We come here on Yom Kippur and other days, after all, to say Yizkor, the prayer in memory of our loved ones. Our Virtual Memorial Plaques remind everyone of who our loved ones were, and why we recall them. All of us join in saying the Kaddish on their yahrzeits.

Considering this, it is so unfortunate that, in our final act, we ignore the one institution in Jewish life that is so much a part of us. The synagogue is here for us because those who came before us understood its importance and prepared for its preservation. By remembering it in our wills, we will do our part to assure that the synagogue will be there for future generations, as well.

Think about it. We have always been here for anyone who needed us in the past. Do not those who need us in the future have the same right to our help? Of course they do. Do not delay! Act today! Help secure the future of your communal home.

## Yahrzeits for Today Through Next Friday

זכרונום לברכה — May their memories be for a blessing!

- 23 Louis Silverstein\*, *Barnett Silverstein's father*  
Arthur Nydick\*  
Nathaniel Konigsberg\*  
Herman Rosenwasser\*
- 24 Alfons Felder, *father of Anne Bing*  
Rosalind Emerson, *Nancy Sutta Berns' grandmother*
- 25 Esther Messer, *mother of Rose Lenson*  
Herman Louis Ratner\*  
Max Goldberg \*  
Benjamin Ginsburg\*  
Mollie Tuchman\*
- 26 Edith Ullmann  
Elaine Aziza Bakhsh, *Linda Bakhsh's mother*  
Sarah Swyer\*  
Esther Breakstone\*  
Ida Silverstein\*
- 27 Harry Maltz, *Alan Maltz's father*  
Ida Balk\*  
Rafel Goodman\*
- 27 Kopel Weintraub\*  
Frieda Gold\*  
Anna Kron, *mother-in-law of Janet Kron*
- 28 Heinz-Bernd Grawi\*, *Ellen Grawi's husband*  
Tobias Blank\*  
Dr. Harold J. Megibow\*  
Joseph Laefsky\*  
Norma Morgenthal\*  
Louis Mandell\*  
J. George Fredman\*  
Samuel Pozner\*  
Libby Levinson\*  
Samuel Tuchman\*
- 29 Fannie Rosefelt, *Dorothy Rose's sister*  
Samuel Travis\*  
David Moses Weintraub\*  
Alana Lipp Brodie, *sister of Douglas Lipp*  
Jill Mittman, *sister of Scott Mittman*

\* A plaque in this person's name is on our memorial board; yahrzeits are observed beginning sundown the night before.

### Is there a yahrzeit we should know about?

#### Kaddish list

Robert Cohen	Judith Lorbeer
Nancy Friedlander	Qingshui Ma
Evyatar Shabbetai Gidasey	Marcia Weis Meyers
Raul Green	David Rosenthal
Jay Greenspan	Lenore Levine Sachs
Susan Jane Greenberg	Marvin Sakin
Lisa Beth Hughes	Evan Schimpf
Harvey Jaffe	Bila Silberman
Karol Lang	Leah Solomon
Arline Levine	Abe Tauber
	Regina Tauber
	Randolph Tolk



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**November 4, 2018**  
Join us to honor  
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for a lifetime of achievement

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**Shabbat ends tonight with havdalah at 9:17 p.m. DST**