

# ohr SHABBOS

## PARSHAS CHUKAS

By R' Aaron Kutanowski

The Torah Temimah (19, 2 s.v. Asher Tziva Hashem) cites the Gemara in Yoma, which derives that just like the Kohen must separate from his house for seven days before fulfilling the service of Yom Kippur, the Kohen who would burn the Parah Adumah was also required to separate from his home for seven days. Prishus (separation) was a requirement in fulfilling the Avodas Yom Kippur as well as Avodas Parah Adumah.

The Baal Haturim comments on the juxtaposition of the words "Zos Chukas Hatorah" and the Matnas Kehunah featured at the end of last week's Parsha. He infers that just as Torah was given to those who eat Mann, so too it was given to those who eat Terumah. Why was the Torah given only to those who eat Mann, or those who eat Terumah - the Kohanim? Chazal tell us that the Kohanim were consecrated to forgo materialism by focusing on the divine service of Hashem. Mann is the food of the angels (Yoma 75b), that which satiates the metaphysical beings. Both groups abstain from Olam Hazeh in their service of Hashem. This could explain why the Baal Haturim understands that these two distinct groups of people receive the Torah, while others do not: through their Prishus (abstinence), they gain the Torah.

But wasn't the Torah given to all Jews? What can the Baal Haturim mean by stating that the Torah was only given to those who eat Mann or Terumah?

The Baal Haturim could be referring to a concept the Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah ch. 3, 1) states more explicitly, namely that the Keser Torah - the crown of Torah - can only be acquired through constant study without distractions. True, the Torah is given to every Jew, but Hashem specifically places the crown of Torah only on those distinct individuals who achieve the status of complete Prishus from this world, their existence being equated with the pure service of Malochim and Kohanim, solely living in a world of spiritual pursuits.

Some say that the Parah Adumah symbolizes Purity. They explain that the Chumash states 'Zos Chukas Hatorah' to mean that through guarding the Torah one can become Tahor.

The Parah Adumah had to be completely red. Even two hairs of a different colour would disqualify it. It could not have even the slightest blemish. In fact, it could not even have had a yoke placed on it. Indeed, even if the Parah Adumah did not utilize this 'Ol', as long as it was simply placed on it, the Parah would be disqualified. The reason for this is because the Parah Adumah must have only one 'Ol' in its entire life, the one it was born with, the one we are all born with - the Ol Malchus Shomayim.

We may sometimes feel that we have many yokes (family responsibilities, communal responsibilities, financial/fiscal responsibilities, etc.) but we must try and take to heart one of the lessons of the Parah Adumah - that we only have one yoke, the Ol Malchus Shomayim. Our lives were given to us for only one reason, namely to cling to Hashem through the performance of Torah and Mitzvos, and to cultivate in ourselves and the world Taharah and Kedushah. Sometimes this even means we must separate ourselves from our other responsibilities so that we remember that we truly only have one yoke, the yoke of Heaven.

ללא עולה עליו - Only a person who never carried the yoke of heaven can consider himself faultless, without blemish. (Chozeh of Lublin)

## THE REST OF THE STORY:

By R' Yosef Dovid Rothbart

The fate of Og had already been determined many years before. Among the 32 kings who attended the celebration Avraham made to mark the weaning of Yitzchok, Og was present to see this miracle with his own eyes. He had earlier congratulated himself in anticipation of being the heir of the childless Avraham. Although Yishmael had already been born to Avraham, since he was the son of Hagar, a slave, Og did not consider him worthy of being the heir, and he planned to use his great strength to acquire all Avraham's wealth by force. When he found himself at the celebration to mark Yitzchok's weaning, those around him kept baiting him and exasperating him with comments such as, "Were you not the one who said that Avraham was like a barren mule who could not have offspring? Now that Yitzchok has been born, all your plans have evaporated!" However Og answered them, "This fact does not worry me, for Yitzchok is a frail infant whom I can destroy with my little finger. Moreover, since he was born when his father was one hundred years old, and his mother ninety, there is no doubt he is a sickly child and will not survive." Upon Og pronouncing these words, Hashem said to him, "You have expressed disdain for the gift I have given Avraham. So upon your life, I swear that I will yet show you tens of thousands of his progeny, and your end will be that you will fall into their hands."

Besides this reason, there was a second offence for which he was punished. After Lot, the nephew of Avraham, was captured, Og came to Chevron to inform Avraham of Lot's situation. However, he did not do so out of pure motives. He reasoned that Avraham was a courageous person who would go out to war in order to save his nephew and would no doubt be killed by the four kings. Because of this, it was decreed that Og himself would be killed.

(based on yalkut Me'am Loez)

## HALACHA

BY R'ELI KOHANANOO

### *Hilchos K'riyas HaTorah (part 3)*

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C.139, 4) writes that a person who is called to the Torah for an Aliyah must open the Sefer while reciting the first bracha and close it before reciting the bracha which is said after the reading of the Torah. The Mishnah Berura (ibid, 17) explains that the first bracha is recited while the Torah is open for it is improper to cause the Tzibur to wait for the Ba'al Koreh to open the Sefer before beginning to read. However, after the reading, because the Sefer will be closed anyway between the Aliyos, the bracha is recited while the Sefer is closed. The Shulchan Aruch (ibid) adds that prior to one receiving the Aliyah he must locate the portion that will be read during his Aliyah since he is reciting a bracha on that portion. The Rema (ibid) writes that after finding the place, the person should look to the side while reciting the bracha. The reason is that there is a concern that people might think that the brachos are written in the Torah. The Mishnah Berura (ibid, 19) quotes the Taz, who argues that there is an even greater concern caused by a person following the Rema's opinion, namely that it might look as if the one reciting the bracha is making a bracha on something other than the Torah. Therefore the Mishnah Berura concludes that it's best to close one's eyes during the recitation of the bracha.

The Shulchan Aruch (ibid, 6) rules that while saying Barchu and the brachos one should make sure to say them out loud. He then quotes some opinions as saying that if this was not done, the bracha should be repeated out loud. The Poskim bring two reasons for this. Firstly, the Tzibur must answer Amen to the bracha, which is only possible if they hear the bracha. Secondly, if ten men can't hear the bracha being said the person called to the Torah is reciting "Devarim Sh'beKedusha" without a Minyan, which is forbidden. (The Mishna Berura adds that this Halacha applies to Kaddish as well. Therefore, a person should say it so that everyone can hear.) The Biur Halacha (s.v, V'haBrachos) cites a Machlokes regarding whether the opinion requiring the bracha to be recited a second time if it was recited too quietly to be heard applies only to the recitation of Barchu or also to the bracha. Practically, the Biur Halacha writes that even though the brachos were instituted for Kavod HaTorah, which would be absent if the Tzibur can't hear the brachos, thus supporting a Svara to obligate the repeating of the brachos, the rule of "Safek Brachos L'Hakel" should apply. Under this rule, we are lenient when reciting extra brachos so as not to come to say Hashem's name in vain.

*...a few moments before your arrival, a young man showed me the writings of Rav Shalom Sharabi, a noted Kabbalist...*

## ANSWERS

Last week's riddle: Which Mitzvah should not be performed for Kabbalistic reasons during Sefiras HaOmer or next year?

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv once related an incident that occurred during the Shemittah cycle of 2001. In the area of Ezras Torah, a neighbourhood in Yerushalayim, there lived an elderly woman who was close to 100 years old. She was visited by her grandson, who was a learned individual. While he was there, he noticed that on her property there was a nest with eggs in it. He asked his grandmother if he could have permission to perform the much sought after Mitzvah of sending away the mother bird before retrieving the eggs. To his surprise, his grandmother refused. "What is the issue?" the shocked grandson asked. She explained that it was a Shemittah year and she was unsure if it was the right thing to do during the Shemittah year. Her learned grandson laughingly exclaimed that although it is prohibited to work on one's field or orchards, certainly there is no problem to perform the Mitzvah of sending away the mother bird. But his grandmother was adamant; until they asked the rav, the Mitzvah could not be performed. The grandson went to the rav of the

community, Rav Simcha Bunim Waldenberg, the son of the Tzitz Eliezer, to ask him the question. The rav's excitement was obvious as he responded. "Just a few moments before your arrival, a young man showed me the writings of Rav Shalom Sharabi, a noted Kabbalist, which say that to do the Mitzvah of sending away the mother bird during Shemittah can be harmful."

When he would say over this story, Rav Elyashiv would be most affected by the simple faith of this woman and her total trust in the Rabbanim which prevented her grandchild from doing a Mitzvah which, at least Kabbalistically, was harmful.

In fact, the Sefer *קן ציפור* cites Rav Shalom Sharabi, who writes that a person should not do this Mitzvah either during the period between Rosh Hashana and Shemini Atzeres, or during the 49 days of Sefirah. Practically, Rav Yitzhak Zilberstein tells those who ask him whether they should perform the Mitzvah of sending away the mother bird during these times, that they should perform the Mitzvah. What Rav Sharabi wrote only applies to people who live their entire life according to Kabbala. However, everyone else should follow the Shulchan Aruch. Indeed Rav Chaim Kanievsky is quoted by the Sefer *שלה תשלה* as saying that a person who does not live his life according to Kabbala may perform these Mitzvos during these times even L'chatchila.

Rav Yaakov Hillel, one of the most prominent Kabbalists alive today, writes that because none of the Rishonim or Acharonim mentions the concern of Rav Shalom Sharabi, his warning need only be heeded by a person who performs the Mitzvah with the proper intentions: לשם תיקון המצוה בשורשה בעולמות העליונים, as well as לתקן אברי נפשו וגופו. However, for everyone else, there is no specific time when the Mitzvah of sending away the mother bird cannot be fulfilled.

### *Shabbos table discussions*

- A person is supposed to give Tzedaka before davening (O.C. 92, 10). If a person does not have any money with him, could he fulfill this Halacha by pledging to give Tzedaka?
- At your friend's behest, you went to buy him a lottery ticket. Before you had a chance to give it to him you found out that it was a winning ticket. Are you allowed to keep it?

# Shabbos STORY

By R' Yossi Bergman

In the previous week Zrodny left Rome to get married, while his friend Valentin remained in Rome to further his studies and convert to Judaism...

Valentin left Rome soon after Zrodny returned home, and went to Paris. Upon arrival, he wrote the last letter to his parents, telling them of his safe arrival. After spending a few days in the glittering French capital, he quietly left Paris and made his way to Amsterdam. There he went straight to the Rabbi and, in the privacy of his study, Valentin introduced himself. The Rabbi had already received word from his colleague in Vilna about a young Polish nobleman who intended to visit him.

"So, you are the young man about whom my colleague wrote to me," the Rabbi said.

The Rabbi questioned him closely at great length to test his sincerity and determination. When he was finally convinced that the young Polish nobleman was unshakable in his resolve, he agreed to prepare him for the conversion. Valentin assured the Rabbi that he would observe every law, regulation and custom with all his heart and with the greatest joy, for this was his greatest desire in the world. A Mohel was brought in and Valentin underwent Bris Milah. When he was fully recovered, he immersed in a Mikvah and became a full-fledged Jew.

The dream had now become a reality; he was a newborn Jew, named Avrohom ben Avrohom - after Avrohom Avinu, the father of all Gerei-Tzedek.

Avrohom, the Ger-Tzedek of Vilna, was filled with an inner happiness he had not known before. He immersed himself completely in the study of Torah and was most meticulous in the observance of the Mitzvos. He spent every minute in Torah study, feeling that he had to make up for all those wasted years of his youth.

The disappearance of the young Count Valentin Potozki was a tremendous shock to his parents. It would have probably been an even greater blow to them had they known that their beloved only son and heir had become an ardent Jew. Even in Amsterdam, no one beside the Rabbi and Beis-Din knew that the young Ger, Avrohom ben Avrohom, had belonged to the highest Polish aristocracy.

Back home in Vilna, Valentin's trusted friend Zrodny was the only one who knew the secret of Valentin's disappearance, and he faithfully kept it to himself.

Though of more humble descent, Zrodny had been well received into the circle of Polish nobility through his marriage. Anyone else in his position would have been a very happy Polish nobleman. He had respect, a wife and newborn son, and the luxuries of aristocratic life. Yet, deep in his heart he was troubled for he still greatly desired to become a Jew.

As time went on, it was becoming ever more difficult to cut his ties with his wife and family. All the attractions of aristocratic life could not distract him from the uppermost thought in his mind - to join his friend as a fellow-Jew. He was beginning to run out of excuses to explain why

he seldom participated in the hunting parties and other frivolities of his peers, and even when he did, he never seemed to have his heart in them. His wife sensed that something was troubling him and asked that he explain what it was. But he could not be sure how she would react if he told the truth and therefore he said nothing.

Finally Zrodny decided on a plan of action. He confided in his wife that the aristocratic life bored him; he was not cut out for it. The years he had spent at the Catholic seminary preparing him for the priesthood had made him aware of the higher values in life. He wanted to get away from his present surroundings, and would like to move to Koenigsberg, where, he felt, the maritime climate would also be beneficial to his health. Since her parents owned an estate near that city, they would tell her parents that they wished to go there for reasons of health.

Zrodny's wife readily agreed, hoping that the change would do her husband a lot of good. Actually, she had been deeply influenced by her husband's seriousness and fine qualities of character, and the change of life style would suit her fine.

When Zrodny told his in-laws about his plan, they were saddened, but they raised no serious objections. On the contrary, they promised to do everything to help them settle in Koenigsberg and wished them all the happiness in the world.

Thus, Zrodny was able to accomplish the first phase of his plan more easily than he had anticipated. The next step would be more difficult, and Zrodny carefully worked to prepare his wife for the inevitable shock.

To be continued...

## RIDDLE

By R' Naftali Spiegel

When can someone be Mafkir something and still retain ownership?

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Please include your name.

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**Answer to last week's riddle:** See column titled Answers on the inside column.

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## Did you know...

A non-Jew once challenged Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai regarding the Parah Adumah? He told Rav Yochanan ben Zakai, "All those things you do in connection with the Parah Adumah (Red Cow) seem to me like witchcraft. You take a cow and burn it; then you take its ashes and place them in water, and after sprinkling them a number of times upon someone who touched a dead body, you declare that he is clean. Does that make sense?!"

"Has your body ever been invaded by an evil spirit," asked Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai.

"No."

"But have you ever seen anyone who was so affected?"

"Yes."

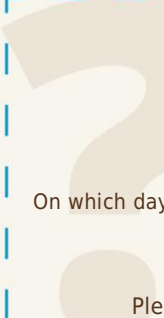
"And what medical treatment was this man given?"

"An aromatic root was placed under the man, and when water was sprinkled upon him, the spirit fled."

"Then let your ears listen to what your mouth speaks," Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said. "The very same thing applies to the Parah Adumah. The condition of someone who touches a dead body is the same condition that affects a person afflicted with an evil spirit."

This explanation found favour in the eyes of the non-Jew. However after he left, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's student turned to him, and said, "That is what you told him, but what explanation would you have given to us?" He replied, "This commandment contains in it a great secret. Therefore do not even try to understand it, for it is a law decreed by Hashem which we are not permitted to understand."

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## riddle

By R' Naftali Spiegel

On which day of the week was the Parah Adumah burnt?

Please send your answers to [editor@ohrshabbos.com](mailto:editor@ohrshabbos.com).  
Please include your name and age.  
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**Answer to last week's riddle:** The three Pesukim in a row that have 72 letters can be found in Shemos Perek Pesukim 19-21. (עי רד"ה אני סוכה. מזה, 8)

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