

# Kehillah #26



## THE PERTINENT PARASHA

### The Sinfulness of Death

Rabbi Yeshoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

The Torah terms the *parah adumah*, the Red Heifer that serves to purify from the defilement of death, as a *chatas* (*Bamidbar* 19:17) - a sin offering.

**If Hashem is life, and His will is life, then why is there death in the world? The only answer to this question is human sin.**

This terminology is perplexing. Since when is dying sinful? Moreover, there is no sin in coming into contact with death. It can happen when passing under an innocent-looking tree (which also spreads its shade over a grave), by being in a hospital when somebody dies, or by attending

a funeral. Why, then, is the *parah* process deemed a *chatas*?

It seems that the answer is contingent on looking past the particular incident of ritual defilement. The Torah section of *parah adumah* begins with the words "This is the law of the Torah that Hashem commanded, saying" (19:1). Later (19:14), the Pasuk states again, "This is the Torah: If a man shall die in the tent." The expressions indicate that the *parah adumah* transcends the simple occurrence of *tumas meis*. Instead, it relates to the entire "law of the Torah."

How is this so?

The Mishnah teaches us that Hashem is the source of all purity: "Just as a *mikvah* purifies those who are impure, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies the nation of Israel" (*Yoma* 8:9). The purity latent in Hashem's presence is related to life. Hashem is life. He





## THE PERTINENT PARASHA



gives us life (*Bereishis* 2:7), He urges us to choose life (*Devarim* 30:19), and His deepest will is life (*Tehillim* 30:6).

If Hashem is life, and His will is life, then why is there death in the world? The only answer to this question is human sin. Death is not inherently sinful in the personal sense. As the Gemara concludes (*Niddah* 55a), death is possible without personal iniquity, without individual sin. However, in the grand scheme of things, death is virtually synonymous with sin. There is nothing in the world more sinful than death.

The presence of death in the world

**How can we follow a Torah of life in the knowledge that death will cut it short? How can we invest in connection, with Hashem and with others, when we know its transience?**

is a *chillul Hashem*. Hashem's will is life, and yet, there is death. This terrible conundrum is the source of *tumas meis*, and, according to Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, the source of all ritual defilements, all of which are somehow related to death. Contact with death thus renders us impure. The *parah adumah*, which is able

to restore purity, is a sin offering. Though a private offering, it is brought on behalf of us all. It atones for the sinfulness of the human condition itself.

Before sin made its mark, there was a tree that stood at the center of the Gan Eden, a tree of eternal life. The Tree of Life was a tree of connection to Hashem, the source of life. That tree remains among us in the form of the Torah: "It is a tree of life to all who hold fast to it" (*Mishlei* 3:18). The Torah continues to connect us to Hashem. It gives us eternal life.

And what of death? How can we follow a Torah of life in the knowledge that death will cut it short? How can we invest in connection, with Hashem and with others, when we know its transience? These are the questions latent in *tumas meis*, in the defilement of our encounter with death. The answer is the *parah adumah*. Somehow, in the impossible combination of water and ash, there is a way forward. By ways we cannot fathom, the "living waters" bring us back to our purity.

Death is part of our lives. Without a doubt, it is the hardest part. It leaves us with more questions than answers. The *parah adumah*, the "law of the Torah," somehow allows us to move on. It restores our faith in the Tree of Life.



## Praying from the Heart

Rabbi Yaacov Haber | Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

When we pray, we are supposed to visualize that we are standing directly in front of G-d. How can this be? G-d has no image. As soon as we have any visual association of G-d, we've already gone wrong. So what exactly are we meant to be doing?

Although we are unable to conceive of G-d cognitively when we pray, we pray with our heart. Our heart can conceive of G-d. The same is true in relationships. If we love someone with our heart, we're able to surpass the limitations of our mind.

Chazal often question why one particular parasha in the Torah is placed following another, apparently unrelated in content. Rashi, at the beginning of many sections, explains the connections. In that vein, we can ask why it is that Korach is juxtaposed with Chukat, since there seems to be no evident connection between Korach and the statutes of the Torah? I once heard a shiur by Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik in which he termed Korach as leading the 'the common sense rebellion.' He pointed out that the claims of Korach seem perfectly reasonable and logical. Korach claimed that if a garment requires only one thread of techeiles in each corner, then a

garment made entirely of techeiles should surely be exempt from this requirement. He also claimed that if a single mezuzah is all that is needed on a doorpost, then a house full of Torah scrolls must surely be exempt from adding this small extra piece of parchment.

It's difficult to fault this on logical grounds. Yet Korach was rebelling against G-d, Moshe, and the Torah. Where did he go wrong? The key is understanding relationships. A relationship is not based on

**A relationship must be based on the workings of the heart, not only the brain.**

intellectual comprehension alone. A relationship must be based on the workings of the heart, not only the brain. That's true for a friendship, a marriage, and our relationship with G-d.



## MEKOM AVODA

### Workplace Ethics & Halacha



## Negotiations in Halacha

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

Our parasha includes several examples of negotiations. Moshe attempts to negotiate passage through Edom to Israel with the king of Edom, and, even after Moshe gives up, the Israelites try again with a new offer (20 14:20). These negotiations end in a stalemate; no agreement is reached, and the people refrain from crossing Edom.

Subsequently, the people try to negotiate a similar deal with Sichon, the king of the Amorites. (21-23). However, in this case, the negotiations seem to backfire. Sichon is not satisfied merely to forbid passage to the Israelites. Rather,

**A negotiator may sometimes simplify and embellish events when they have no substantive bearing on the deal being discussed**

now that he knows their plans, he is provoked to attack them. And in this week's haftara, Yiftach engages in a renewed negotiation with the king of Bnei Amon (*Shoftim* 11).

The Torah describes quite a few

negotiations in remarkable detail: Avraham and Efron haggling over Me'arat HaMachpela (*Bereshit* 23); Avraham's servant negotiating for the hand of Rivka (*Bereshit* 24); Yaakov closing deals for Lavan's daughters and his flock; and of course Moshe's very prolonged and trying efforts to negotiate the exodus of the Israelites with Pharaoh's consent.

These narratives serve as a lasting example of Torah principles for conducting negotiations. For example, Avraham tells Efron that he wants the cave for a burial place; the Zohar (*Chayei Sarah*, I 129a) points out that he does not disclose that he also wants it because of its unique history and sanctity. We see that a negotiator does not have to disclose the full extent and reason for his desire for a deal.

As Eliezer recaps his encounter with Rivka to Lavan, he makes slight changes in the narrative. We learn from this that a negotiator may sometimes simplify and embellish events when they have no substantive bearing on the deal being discussed.

The Malbim (21:21) writes that





Moshe's generous offer to Sichon was a subterfuge - *tachbulos hamilchama*. "Since [Sichon] realized that [Israel] wanted to enter his territory with full strength, he didn't wait for them to come. Rather, he went out to engage them."

Our tradition certainly affirms the importance of strategic thinking. *Mishlei* (14:14) teaches, "Without intrigue, a nation falls." This verse has been adopted as the motto of Israel's foreign intelligence service, the Mossad. However, subterfuge in this context doesn't mean perfidy - bargaining in bad faith. The commentators make it clear that Moshe's offer was sincere, and if Sichon had agreed to it, Moshe would have scrupulously adhered to it. (See Ramban)

Bargaining in bad faith is an option of last resort, legitimate only when the other side is also not properly committed and when the threat is great. As the commentators explain, this was the case with Shechem and Chamor's offer to Yaakov's sons in Bereshit 33. We see that Yehoshua was determined to keep his agreement with the Givonim, even though it was obtained through deceit. (*Yehoshua* 9)

This means that a person may

bargain for one thing even if his main objective is something quite besides the deal in question. The consistent underlying principle in all these examples is that negotiations should always be conducted in good faith, with a desire and a willingness to enter into a mutually beneficial

**Negotiations should always be conducted in good faith, with a desire and a willingness to enter into a mutually beneficial agreement and abide by it.**

agreement and abide by it.

The Sifri (*Naso* 42) learns from Moshe's initiative the great importance of peace - *shalom*. "How great is peace, and how hateful discord! For even in a time of war, peace is needed. As it is written, "When you approach a city to make war on it, call them [first] to peace." (*Devarim* 20:10) [And] "I sent messengers from the Kadmus desert to Sichon the king of Cheshbon, words of peace." (*Devarim* 2:26)

This reminds us that while the conduct of negotiations - how we go about achieving our goals - is indeed important, more important is to know the true good for which we strive.





## PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

### How to Negotiate Change in Others

Rabbi Tzvi Broker | Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

One of the most important workplace leadership skills is the ability to motivate others. The Kedushas Levi in Chukas teaches a principle of how to influence others effectively through an understanding of Moshe's sin of hitting the rock to draw water. The commentators struggle with understanding the nature of the sin. The Kedushas Levi brings the classically understood dispute between Rashi's opinion - that Moshe sinned by hitting the rock instead of speaking to it - and Ramban's opinion - that Moshe sinned by referring to the Jewish people as rebels instead of speaking to them more softly.

The Kedushas Levi's brilliant approach explains that these two opinions are not truly in disagreement. Rather, the Ramban's explanation that Moshe spoke to the Jews in a harsh way resulted in Rashi's explanation that he was required to hit the rock instead of speaking to it.

The Kedushas Levi explains that when the Jewish People were experiencing a weak moment and complaining about the lack of water, Moshe had a choice of how to respond. His first approach was to deliver harsh words of rebuke with the intention of inspiring change. His second approach was to build up the Jewish people by focusing on their positive attributes while noting

that their current behavior was not aligned with their innate greatness.

If Moshe built them up with this positive approach, then physical reality - the rock - would have reacted in a way that reflected the Jewish People's innate greatness and provided water merely by being spoken to. However, Moshe's words highlighted the Jewish People's flaws - nature would not bend to provide water with speech alone. It would only do so when being hit. The Kedushas Levi learns from here an important principle for how we can reflect and react to others' behaviors. Our choice to focus on the positive can build people and create a positive change in reality.

The same principle can be applied to interactions in the workplace. When faced with an employee's poor performance, we can respond with harsh words of rebuke and criticism, letting him know that his behavior is unacceptable and we expect changes. Or we can highlight the person's positive attributes and innate greatness while communicating that his current behavior is not aligned with his true potential. This week's parasha teaches us that the latter approach is the key to inspiring and empowering others to make the positive changes.



### Rav Yechezkel Abramsky: Rise of a Rabbinic Leader

Rabbi Dov Loketch | Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit



*The previous installment told of Rav Abramsky's early development, the spread of his reputation as a brilliant Torah scholar, and his first rabbinic appointments. This installment moves on to his senior appointments and his move, after harsh experiences in Russia, to England.*

In 1923, Rav Abramsky received yet a post more prestigious even than his previous positions – succeeding the great Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer as the Rav of the large Jewish community of Slutzk, where he remained for seven years. By this time, the Communist regime in Russia had embarked on its ruthless campaign to obliterate religion from the country. Rav Abramsky placed himself at great risk by working to maintain Torah life. He secretly performed Jewish weddings and arranged for mohelim to perform *Bris Milah*. He managed to obtain permission for certain activities, such as renewing a Torah journal, *Yagdil Torah*. Rav Abramsky was allowed to begin publishing it anew together with his dear friend and partner, Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin.

#### **Imprisonment and Release**

With time, however, the Jewish division of the Communist

government, which was set up to ban Torah observance of any kind, tightened its grip. Rav Abramsky realized that it was becoming too dangerous to continue his work, and that he could not raise and educate his children under such circumstances. He applied to leave Russia, and influential figures such as Rav Chaim Ozer in Vilna and Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Chief Rabbi in Eretz Yisrael, used their connections to try to pressure the Russian authorities to grant him and his family exit visas. They even arranged for Rav Abramsky to be named Chief Rabbi of Petach Tikva, figuring that an official post outside of Russia might be a reason for the authorities to let him leave. But all these efforts proved fruitless.

In 1930, Rav Abramsky was arrested, jailed in the Lubyanka prison, and sentenced to death for working to promote religion and for applying to leave. This triggered an international outcry, and governments throughout the world petitioned the Russian authorities on Rav Abramsky's behalf. In response, the authorities commuted the sentence to five years of hard labor in Siberia. But pressure continued to mount. Among the prominent figures





## BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

who appealed on Rav Abramsky's behalf, besides Rav Chaim Ozer and Rav Kook, was Rabbi Joseph Hertz, Chief Rabbi of England, who would later become a partner of Rav Abramsky. Interestingly, the influential and respected non-Jewish Russian writer and activist Maxim Gorky also took on the cause, testifying to the admiration Rav Abramsky had earned even among the general population in Russia. Yet another prominent figure who was active in lobbying for his release was the renowned Yiddish poet Chaim Nachman Bialik.

Ironically, it was the German government that succeeded in procuring Rav Abramsky's release. The German authorities cut a deal with the Russians, offering to free six Communist spies from German prisons in exchange for Rav Abramsky's freedom. On *Erev Yom Kippur*, 1931, Rav Abramsky was brought out of Siberia and sent to Latvia.

### **Revolutionizing English Jewry**

One of the conditions of Rav Abramsky's release was that he would not speak critically about the Communist regime. In order to enforce his compliance with this condition, the Russian authorities kept two of Rav Abramsky's children in Russia until 1937.

This might explain why he decided not to emigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*, choosing instead to remain in Europe, where he would not be too far from his sons. He moved to London, where he was named Rav of the *Machazikei HaDas* community, which was comprised of Eastern European and Eastern European-style Jews, what we might describe

**It is truly remarkable that Rav Abramsky, an alumnus of Telz, and one of the most prominent students of Rav Chaim Brisker, was seen as a prospective successor of Rav Kook.**

as a "right wing" population. This was a natural fit. He quickly learned English and began making a strong impression upon the general Orthodox Jewish population in London.

Already in 1933, he was appointed as a *Dayan* in the *Beis Din* of the United Synagogue, which served all of Orthodox Jewry, including the more modern segments. And in 1935, Rav Abramsky was named Av Beis Din. He was widely respected and admired by all the various circles within England's Orthodox Jewish population and had a profound influence upon the Jews of London. He established a close, warm relationship with Chief Rabbi







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Hertz, despite their very different backgrounds and orientations, and they worked together in an effort to raise the standards of Torah observance in England.

That same year, Rav Kook, who had served as Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi in *Eretz Yisrael*, passed away, and Rav Abramsky was invited to come to *Eretz Yisrael* and succeed Rav Kook. It is truly remarkable that a figure like Rav Abramsky, an alumnus of Telz, and one of the most prominent students of Rav Chaim Brisker, was seen as a prospective successor of Rav Kook, a worthy candidate to lead the Chief Rabbinate in Israel, which

identified with Religious Zionism. This invitation speaks volumes of how Rav Abramsky had established himself as a consensus figure and unifier.

Rav Abramsky declined the offer. He may have feared entangling himself in the contentious politics which raged in *Eretz Yisrael* at that time, or perhaps he simply felt unwilling to leave his important work in England. In the end, the position of Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi was assumed by Rav Yitzchak Herzog, who until then had served as Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

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## Down Days

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*.

What's with those constantly happy people? And are there any really? I guess some of them are just plain always happy.

But for most people, we go up and we go down.

**Being happy seems to be one of those things we all have to pretend to be all the time.**

It's always funny to me how we all feel the need to hide the things we all do. We all make excuses when we're late. We all pretend to love the things we receive from others. We all behave as if no one does the things we all do. (And those who don't are considered unfiltered or socially off.)

Being happy seems to be one of those things we all have to pretend to be all the time. But that's not how we're made. It's a constant effort. That's why it's a commandment. There is no commandment - that I know of - to breathe. You don't need

to be commanded, because it's your default. There is no commandment to be a human. The very notion of being commanded indicates a resistance to the directive.

So what do we do when we're struggling, when the resistance to the directive feels stronger than the motivation to comply?

For those of you who relate to this struggle, here are some tips. You know yourself best, so feel free to skip the ones that don't apply.

1) Distinguish between being content and being hyper merry. For two reasons. Firstly, if you set your definition too high, you've already failed. Secondly, aiming for contentment requires an attitude change of which we are all capable. Becoming super happy all the time requires a personality change or inauthenticity, neither of which G-d wants for us or from us.

2) Understand that your feelings are deeply influenced by your thoughts. Then identify which of your thoughts are causing you unwanted feelings.

3) Keep a list of things you know always lift you - vanilla ice cream, a



## ERP EDUCATION, RELATIONSHIPS, PARENTING

walk in the park, your favorite song. Have at the ready the mood lifters that you know always work for you when you're ready to shift gears.

4) Have someone in your life who doesn't settle for "fine thank you" as a good answer when you both know you're not.

**Keep a list of things you know always lift you – vanilla ice cream, a walk in the park, your favorite song.**

5) Stop believing that the people you're comparing yourself to who have it all, actually have it all. Struggling is a human condition. If you don't know what their struggles are, that's all that's happening: you don't know what their struggles are.

6) Shift your mind from focusing on

what's wrong in your life to focusing on what's right.

7) If you're going through a rough patch, challenge yourself. When I look back on this rough patch, how would I like to have conducted myself?

8) Leave a little space and compassion for the natural rise and fall of mood. Moods are tides. They change. Don't be overly harsh on yourself when you're in a low one, but don't take it so seriously either because a better one will come by soon, like it always does.

9) Don't abuse your body and expect your body to be good to you. Enough sleep, food, and water play a huge role in how you feel.

10) It's not silly to daven for a feeling of joy. We don't have to restrict our prayers to the physical things that we need. We can daven for anything, including happiness.

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### Life Is a Test: Two Stories

Rabbi Shmuel Kimche

Mashgiach Ruachni at Netzach Yisrael Elementary School, Ramat Beit Shemesh

One of the many well-hidden facts of life is that everything is a test. Everything? Yes, everything! I want to present two special stories about the centrality of tests in our lives.

#### The Patience of a Chasid

A Chasid once visited his Rebbe and asked him for help: "Rebbe, you must help me! I get so angry – I can't control my anger. I've been trying for years and nothing helps!"

The Rebbe, stroking his long white beard, told the man, "Hmm. This is a tough one. Please sit outside and wait for a few minutes while I think about how to help you."

As soon as the young Chasid left, the Rebbe called his gabbai in a loud voice: "Could you please do me a favor? There is a gentleman waiting in the next room. Could you please test his patience for me? I want to see how angry he becomes."

The gabbai didn't ask questions, nor did he waste time. Immediately, he prepared a cup of coffee, and passing the Chasid, he "tripped" and spilled the coffee over his overcoat. No reaction.

The gabbai then went to find a pile

of sefarim. As he carried them past the Chasid without seeing where he was going, he trod on his toes. No response.

**"This is an opportunity that comes only once in a lifetime, young man. You should take it and run with it!"**

After waiting for 30 minutes, the Chasid stood up to stretch, at which time the gabbai placed a pile of coats on his chair so he would have nowhere to sit.

The ordeal went on for a while, and after each annoyance, the Chasid remained totally calm!

Finally, the Rebbe called the Chasid and asked in surprise: "I do not understand! It seems that you are completely in control of your anger. Why do you think you need my help?"

The Chasid smiled and responded: "If the Rebbe would have whispered





## STORIES THAT INSPIRE

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his instructions to the gabbai, it would really have been a test. I heard the Rebbe's instructions to test me, so I felt no pain or difficulty. I knew it was just a test!"

"Do you understand?" responded the Rebbe with an even bigger smile. "If we know that whatever happens to us is a test from Hashem, how is it possible to get angry?"

Cute, and, for me, pretty powerful! Always be in a state of test.

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Now listen to this cracker. I heard it from Rabbi Frand, but it's very much a story about our lives.

### **The Drummer's Dream**

Yitzy was a wonderful talmid in a Yeshiva in New York. He never missed a seder and loved Yeshiva life. He also had an unusual talent for music, particularly the drums. He was determined to keep up his musical hobby and play several times a week. He always had a dream – that one day he would play for a band.

After consultation with his Rabbanim, Yitzy began to play once a week at a local hotel. He was soon contacted by a Jewish band to start playing at semachos. Yitzy was good at what he did and only got better. He loved his learning during the day, and

he loved his musical self-expression at his weekly performances.

As he was playing one night, he noticed a man at the back watching him. At the end of the performance, the man gave him his card. "Yitzy, I have heard about you," he said. "I wanted to see if you are really as good as they say. I to be disappointed, but I wasn't. You could fit so well into our band."

Yitzy looked at the card, and his eyes popped out of his head. The person was none other than the manager of a famous band. "Come tomorrow morning at 9 am. I would like you to meet some of the crew and discuss your future. You have immense potential!"

In a daze, Yitzy nodded and started packing up. No sleep that night. Yitzy was confused. He knew that in the morning he was going to face a hard choice. You see, music bands do play during the week, but the main gigs are always the Friday night ones.

The next morning, Yitzy made his way to a glass building on a fancy street in New York. He walked through the front door and a secretary buzzed him in. "Please come right in, sir."

Yitzy took the elevator to the 36th floor and found an entire team



## STORIES THAT INSPIRE

awaiting him. After some small talk, the manager took out a long document and showed Yitzy the six-figure sum on the top. "Let me take home the contract and think about it!" he finally replied in a daze. Surprised, the manager got a little upset – "This is an opportunity that comes only once in a lifetime, young man. You should take it and run with it! This band will take you to stardom!" "I know," Yitzy lied, "It's just a big surprise and I need time for the offer to settle in my mind."

"Very well. You have seven days. If you don't turn up in a week, the offer is off the table. We look forward to seeing you back here soon!"

Yitzy left and went directly to the home of the Rosh Yeshiva. "Rebbe, what should I do? I am so confused! There is nothing more that I have dreamed of since I was a child – but to play on Friday night?"

The Rosh Yeshiva thought for a minute and said, "Yitzy – I want you to take this seriously. Take 48 hours to think about this carefully, and do the following. Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. On one side write all the reasons to join the band. On the other side, write the reasons why it isn't a good idea. Then you will be able to make a good decision!"

Two days later, Yitzy knocks on the Rebbe's door, his eyes red and puffed. The Rav opens the door, and without saying a word Yitzy thrusts a piece of paper into the Rosh Yeshiva's hand and bursts into tears.

On one side of the line are dozens

**Without saying a word, Yitzy thrusts a piece of paper into the Rosh Yeshiva's hand and bursts into tears.**

of words: money, fame, stability, self-expression, and more. On the other side just one word: Netzach. Eternity!

The band is still waiting for Yitzy – but Yitzy understood the stakes.

True story. The story of us all. Real decisions are decisions of sacrifice.

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Sefer Bamidbar is the classroom for emunah and making tough decisions. We face constant tests, and those tests define our eternity. This is what life is all about.

Good Shabbos.





## Feeding Animals

Josh and Tammy Kruger

### The Story

Once upon a time:

Eden and Rebecca ran up the hill with their puppy, Spotty. They were heading home after a visit to the park.

"Boiling hot today!" panted Eden.

"Yes, we really should have brought water bottles," answered Rebecca.

"Water bottles and lunches," moaned Eden. "I'm also starving."

Rebecca turned to their puppy. "I'm sure that Spotty also can't wait to be fed." She reached down to give him a pat.

When they returned home, Rebecca began to fill Spotty's dish and bowl with food and water.

Eden shook her head. "It's generous of you to want to feed Spotty before yourself, but I think it's the wrong decision. Our lives take precedence over his."

Rebecca wasn't sure what to do.

### Discussion:

Q: Who is right, and what does our story have to do with the parasha?

A: This is a bit of a trick question

because the answer is different for water versus food: In our parasha, after Moshe draws water from the rock, the pasuk states:

וַתִּשְׂתְּ הָעֶדְהָ וּבָעִירָם

"The people and their animals drank" (*Bamidbar* 20:11). The people drank before their animals, and this is the halacha (Rabbeinu Chaim Ben Atar). Can you think of another example in the Torah where a person was given water before his animals? In Sefer Bereishis, Rivka first brought water to Eliezer and then to his camels. In our story, the girls can drink water before Spotty drinks.

In the case of eating food, the Torah teaches the opposite order. At least twice a day we recite the words: "And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and you will be satisfied." (*Krias Shema*) The order in this pasuk puts animals before people. We learn that animals should be fed before their owner eats (*Mishna Berura* 167:40).

Q: Why would the halacha give a different rule for drinking and eating?

A: Two reasons are given by Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, a former chief rabbi of Jerusalem (*Har Tzvi, Orach Hachaim* 90): Being thirsty is much





## PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



more difficult than being hungry, and therefore a person does not have to delay drinking before he gives his animal water. The second reason is if the owner is allowed to eat first, then he may forget to feed the animal! Note that if the owner only plans on eating a quick snack, then the Shulchan Aruch Harav allows him to eat first (167:9).

### Back to Our Story

Spotty quickly ate the food that

Rebecca had given him and then lifted his head out of his bowl. There on the kitchen table was a tasty looking meat dish that Eden had taken out of the refrigerator. But the girls weren't eating it! They were searching through various sefarim and saying words like *halacha*.

Spotty thought to himself "Well, if they're not going to eat that yummy food then I certainly will. I'm always makpid about *b'aal taschis!*"

*Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer and based on the article "Eating Before Feeding One's Pet" by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits. [http://www.shemayisrael.com/parsha/halacha/volume\\_6\\_issue\\_2.pdf](http://www.shemayisrael.com/parsha/halacha/volume_6_issue_2.pdf) le'ilui neshama of Frumit Bat Yosef, Edith Nusbaum a"h.*

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[www.kehillah.org.il](http://www.kehillah.org.il)

Kehillah is an organization dedicated to serving the Anglo-Torah community living in Israel. It is active in areas of community, education, and leadership.

We welcome your feedback! Please send comments, insights, and suggestions to: [info@kehillah.org.il](mailto:info@kehillah.org.il)

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