


**CHABAD**  
  
**RESEARCH UNIT**  
 שבת..... *for Friday nights* ..... קדש  
 Friday 1 July 2011 - 29 Sivan 5771  
 Sedra Chukat


**GRANDPARENTS OF THE FUTURE**

**WE ARE ALL CAUGHT UP IN THE CYCLE OF TRANSMISSION FROM one generation to the next. We may regard ourselves as youth, as parents or as grandparents. Yet in some sense each one of us is both receiving and passing on, both gaining from others and giving to others. In particular, hopefully, we each eventually take a position in which we replace those who have gone before.**

The Sedra<sup>1</sup> provides an insight concerning this process. As we know, the three leading figures for the Jewish people during their long journey through wilderness were two brothers and a sister: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. In this week's Sedra, which takes us close to the end of the forty year journey, both Miriam and Aaron pass away.

The immediate effect of Miriam's demise was a lack of water<sup>2</sup>. For four decades water had been provided miraculously from a boulder which somehow travelled with the Jewish people. Now Miriam passed away, and the water stopped flowing. The Sages tell us that during all those years the water had flowed due to her merit. When she passed away, the miracle ceased.

Similarly in the case of Aaron. As soon as he passed away, the

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Canaanites (actually the tribe of Amalek) attacked the Jewish people<sup>3</sup>. The Sages tell us this was because the Clouds of Glory which protected the Jewish camp had vanished. In Aaron's merit the Clouds of Glory had surrounded and covered the camp, shielding the Jewish people from extremes of weather and also from hostile neighbours. When Aaron passed away the clouds disappeared, and an attack immediately ensued.

During the forty years in the wilderness, Moses too had a special merit, apart from being the Lawgiver and guide of the Jewish people. The effect of this merit was the Manna, which provided the Jewish people with food.

Now, what happened when Miriam died? The water stopped - and then began again. Similarly after Aaron died, the Clouds of Glory departed - and then returned. The Sages tell us this was on account of the merit of Moses<sup>4</sup>.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe comments that when Miriam and Aaron passed away, Moses had to embark on a new level of service of G-d. He now had to replace his brother and sister. Achieving this, the miracles of the Well and the Clouds of Glory recommenced.

The message for us is to take an example from Moses. When there was a lack, when something was missing, because Aaron and Miriam had died - Moses saw that he would have to fill the gap. Of course, in his case this was all taking place on a very spiritual and ethereal level. Yet in our own case too, more and more is being demanded of us. We have to take the place of those who have gone before.

We may think of ourselves as youth, or as young parents, yet in fact we are all gradually turning into grandparents. Like Moses, we assume responsibility to fill the lack of those who have gone. We may feel unequal to the task - yet on each of us depends the destiny of the Jewish people and the world<sup>5</sup>.

1. Numbers 19:1-21:1. 2. See Num.20:1-2, and Rashi on v.2. 3. See Num.20:23-21:1, and Rashi on 21:1. 4. See Talmud Taanit 9a, and next note. 5. See *Likkutei Sichot* vol.2 p.331 ff.

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SEDRA CHUKAT

**BEYOND UNDERSTANDING**

“Mum’s birthday is next week. We’ve got to do something for it!” Leah was sitting at the table struggling with her math homework. Her brother, Michael, was sitting next to her also occupying himself with some work.

“Hmm,” he agreed. “How about we get her a iTouch? We can get dad and grandma and grandpa to chip in and then we can probably afford it! She’ll love it!!” Michaels was obsessed with all the latest gadgets so obviously an iTouch would be the perfect gift.

“I dunno...” mused Leah as she chewed on her pencil, “I was thinking of a beautiful painting to go in the hallway! It would add sooo much to the house, y’know?” And she closed her eyes, envisioning the beautiful array of fresh, spring colours decorating the now plain hallway...

Suddenly, the door opened, and in walked Mr Kahn, some papers in hand. “So kids!” he said in a booming voice. “Next week’s your mother’s birthday and I want to get her a really nice present from all of us.”

“Funny dad, we were just talking about that! Michael was saying we should get her an iTouch. Personally I think that’s just a waste of money and a mural for the hallway would be way more worth it! Wouldn’t that be pretty dad?”

“Umm, sure that sounds nice, but actually I was discussing it with mum and she really wants a grandfather clock for the living room. So here,” he said, waving the papers in his hand, “are some pictures of grandfather clocks that I’ve found. How would you like to choose one with me?”

“A grandfather clock? Really?” There was disbelief written all over her face, “even an iTouch would be better than that! Why on earth would mum want a grandfather clock for her birthday? It’s beyond understanding!”

“Yeah,” Michael added. “I mean, I get a painting, but a grandfather clock? Really?!?”

“Let me ask you something,” Mr Kahn said. “Are you getting a present because you like it or because Mummy likes it? What do you think shows you love someone more? Buying something you would really enjoy yourself, or something that you completely can’t understand why they’d even want it, but you know that’s what they want? So the only reason you’re buying it for them is because they want it?”

“I suppose when it makes no sense to you and the only reason you’re doing it is for them – that shows that you really love them.” Slowly, as he said the words, Michael understood where his dad was going with this. He went on, “so, you’re saying if we get mum a grandfather clock then we’re really showing her we love her. Because, even though we personally don’t understand it, that’s what mum wants so that’s what we’ll get her...”

“Exactly Michael! Spot on! In fact this week’s Sedra is called Chukat. A *chok* is a Statute, a kind of Commandment from G-d which we do not rationally understand. For instance, sprinkling water mixed with ashes of a red cow over someone when in an impure state, as they used to do in the time of the Temple. Or the law of Shatnez – not to wear a mixture of wool and linen. You see, unlike the law of not to kill or not to steal, we do not understand why G-d wants us to fulfil these commandments, but since that’s what G-d wants, that’s what we do. And like buying mum the grandfather clock, fulfilling these commandments is the greatest way of showing G-d our love for Him.”

“So what are we waiting for? Let’s go pick out a clock for mum! Oh, and that reminds me, I need to get my new jacket checked for Shatnez!”

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