



CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space... Grow at your pace.

July 15, 2016 ■ 10 Tammuz, 5776 ■ Shabbos Chukas
Candlelighting: 8:18P ■ Shabbos Ends 9:26P

Kiddush this Shabbos is sponsored by Joe and Ehoud Wilson in memory of their father, Daniel ben Avraham, whose yahrtzeit was this past week. Shalosh Seudos this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, July 15th

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-7:00P
- » Candlelighting-8:18P (Preferably light by 7:25P)

Shabbos Day, June 4th

- » Shacharis followed by Kiddush-8:30A
- » Pirkei Avos for M&W-6:35P
- » Chumash Shiur for M&W-7:20P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men in shul-8:05P
- » Shalosh Seudos for women & young children at the Rich home - 8:05P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends-9:26P

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A
- » Mincha/Maariv followed by NQ Daf HaYomi (Kesuvos)-8:15P

■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

MEN

- » R' Moshe ben Chana Sara Leah (Rebbi of Ari Goldberg)
- » Yechiel Mordechai ben Devorah (Brother of Ken Jarmel)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)
- » Mattisyahu Chaim ben Ettel (HaRav Mattisyahu Solomon)

WOMEN

- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **Mazel Tov to Bruce Dunn & Shanie Davidson** on their engagement. May they merit to build a Bayis Ne'eman B'Yisroel.
- » **Tzeischem L'Shalom:** Congregation Toras Chaim is sad to say goodbye to our members Mike & Bluma Ekshtut and family. May they go from strength to strength on their aliyah to Eretz Yisroel.

■ INCOMPREHENSIBLE: RABBI LABEL LAM

HASHEM spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "This is the (CHOK) statute of the Torah which HASHEM commanded, saying, 'Speak to the Children of Israel and have them take for you a perfectly red unblemished cow, upon which no yoke was laid.' (Bamidbar 19:1-2)

This is the (CHOK) statute of the Torah: Because Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, "What is this commandment, and what purpose does it have?" Therefore, the Torah uses the term (CHOK) "statute." I have decreed it. You have no permission to challenge it. — Rashi

The premise of a CHOK- a statute that cannot be grasped by the human mind can admittedly be challenging and even troubling to the questing mind. To the uninitiated it may seem like a celebration of blind faith or blatant ignorance.

The Sefas Emes explains a CHOK in the following way: "There are Mitzvos that are called CHUKIM that we cannot comprehend and they correspond to the 613 limbs and sinews. This is the statute of the Torah: Because Satan and the nations of the world taunt Israel, saying, "What is this commandment, and what purpose does it have?" Therefore, the Torah uses the term "statute." I have decreed it; You have no right to challenge it. —Just as in the formation of man there are many organs that we do not know their precise function or reason for being. However for a hidden or unknown reason they are absolutely necessary. So it is with the Mitzvos!"

Natalie Wolchover writes, "The poor old human appendix gets lumped in with the likes of wisdom teeth, ear-wiggling muscles and our other "useless" holdovers... The worm-shaped organ's inconsequentiality seems proven by the fact that it can be removed with no obvious drawbacks. But biologists have recently begun to question the long-held assumption of appendix pointlessness. Some suggest it may help train the immune system during fetal development. Other research indicates the organ serves as a "safe house" for the bacteria that aid in digestion, holding a secret stash of microbes that repopulate the rest of the digestive tract after gut-evacuating bouts of diarrhea. The word "appendix" means afterthought. But maybe, just maybe, it isn't one.

A couple of handfuls of your body aren't actually your body. For every one of your cells, 10 microbes live inside you, and these hangers-on

collectively compose a few pounds (1 to 3 percent) of your total weight. Some of this in-house fauna cleans our skin while some helps us digest food, but the bulk of these microbes contribute to our bodily functions in ways unknown. Healthy people even harbor low levels of harmful viruses, which appear to do something besides sicken us. "We're just learning that the consequence of antibiotics is that when you get rid of the good bacteria in our guts, we can develop autoimmune diseases [such as Type 1 diabetes]. We're not as advanced in our understanding of viruses. What do viruses do for us?" Vincent Racaniello, professor of microbiology and immunology at Columbia University, told Life's Little Mysteries. Clearly, we've signed up for a whole bunch of symbiotic relationships, and have no idea what we're getting out of the deal.

How do the 100 trillion neural connections in our brains work together to create the feeling of being alive? Many great thinkers consider consciousness to be the biggest mystery not just of the human body, but the biggest one, period. As the neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran put it, "Any single brain, including yours, is made up of atoms that were forged in the hearts of countless far-flung stars... These particles drifted ... and light-years later... gravity and chance brought them together here, now. These atoms now form a conglomerate — your brain — that can not only ponder the very stars that gave it birth but can also think about its own ability to think and wonder about its own ability to wonder. With the arrival of humans, it has been said, the universe has suddenly become conscious of itself. This, truly, is the greatest mystery of all."

Now we all know that "gravity and chance" alone lack that creativity. Perhaps, even greater than the capacity for self-consciousness may just be man's ability to comprehend and admit that a thing is incomprehensible.

■ FORGOTTEN FAST DAYS: ZOS CHUKAS HATORAH: RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

This past Motzai Shabbos Korach, our dear, close family friend, Reb Chaim Daskal a"h, was niftar, after a prolonged and painful battle with cancer R"l. Never one to complain, Reb Chaim still exuded Simchas HaChaim and gratitude to Hashem even in his weakened and pain-filled state, the last time this author had the zechus to see him, merely a week and a half prior to his untimely passing. In fact, his tza'ava, will, reflects this as well, including how he wanted his own levaya, kevura, and shiva to be held.

One of the maspidim (eulogizers) at the levaya (at 1:45 A.M.!), Elimelech Lepon, mentioned that Reb Chaim passed away only after Shabbos was over, averring that the Malach HaMaves could not take have taken him on a Shabbos. You see, with an open house and a multitude of guests weekly, Shabbos was truly Reb Chaim's special day. In fact, Mr. Lepon revealed that it was exclusively the merit of Reb Chaim's extraordinary and warm Shabbos hospitality that won him over to personally begin keeping Shabbos properly.

When my father, renowned Kashrus expert Rabbi Manish Spitz, heard the tragic news of the passing of his friend of almost 40 years, he enigmatically exclaimed "Zos Chukas HaTorah"! His intent was that the week of Parshas Chukas is 'mesugal l'puraniyos', a time that has seen much hardship and tragedy for our nation. Therefore, it was fitting that only after Shabbos of Parshas Korach had ended and the week of Parshas Chukas officially began, that such an incredible man, in the prime of his life, passed away.

Yet, there is no mention in the Gemara of the week of Parshas Chukas being one of tragedy, nor is it mentioned by the Rambam, nor Tur, nor Shulchan Aruch! Not even in the Siman where tragedies and proper days to fast are mentioned, Orach Chaim 580! In fact, most are wholly unfamiliar with anything specifically attributed to this week. Yet, the Magen Avraham, citing the Sefer HaTanya (an earlier source that the famous Kabbalistic work of the Shulchan Aruch HaRav), tells of a terrible, albeit fascinating, historical tragedy.

Friday of Fire The Magen Avraham prefaces his terrible tale by quoting certain writings explaining that it is "worthwhile for every Jew to cry for the burning of the Torah". He then proceeds to tell of a customary annual fast specifically for this purpose, on Erev Shabbos Parshas Chukas. On that day, in the year 1242, 20 wagonloads (other versions state 24) filled with Gemaros and Talmudic literature, were burned in Paris by agents of the Church and King Louis IX. The pretext was a public debate between

an apostate monk and several of the most eminent rabbinical authorities in France; the official verdict against them a foregone conclusion. The impact and importance of this loss was tremendous. Keep in mind that this occurred over 200 years before the printing press was invented, and each of these volumes was a priceless, handwritten manuscript. In fact, this was considered such an enormous loss for Klal Yisrael, that the famed Maharam M'Rottenburg, an eyewitness, composed an elegy for our loss, 'Sha'ali Serufa Ba'Aish', deemed so essential, that it is incorporated into the Kinos recited every Tisha B'Av (Kinah 41).

The great rabbis at the time, at a loss to understand the extent of the tragedy, inquired of Heaven by means of a dream (known as a she'elas chalom) to discover whether this terrible event had been so decreed by Hashem. The heavenly reply was a succinct three words 'Da Gezeiras Oraysa'. This is the Aramaic translation (see Targum Onkelos) of the opening verses to Parshas Chukas, 'Zos Chukas HaTorah', 'These are the decrees of the Torah' (Bamidbar Ch. 19, verse 2). The Rabbanim understood from this cryptic reply that the burning of the Talmud was indeed Heavenly decreed. Moreover, they gleaned that it was due to the proximity of the Parsha that the tragedy transpired, and not the day of the month.

Therefore, and as opposed to every other fast on the Jewish calendar, instead of a specific day established as a fast day, this one, designated a Taanis for Yechidim (fast for individuals), was set annually on the Erev Shabbos preceding Parshas Chukas. For those fasting, Asarah B'Teves would not be the only Taanis that practically occurs on a Friday!

Retribution for the Rambam? Rav Hillel of Verona, a talmid of Rabbeinu Yonah, and another eyewitness to these events, wrote a famous letter in which he considered the burning of the Talmud as a clear sign of Divine anger and retribution for the burning of the works of the Rambam, in the exact same place in Paris not even forty days prior!

After the Rambam's passing (in 1204), many great scholars who did not agree with his philosophical observations in his 'Moreh Nevuchim' and 'Sefer HaMada' banned his sefarim, with a tremendous controversy erupting throughout the Torah world. Eventually, a number of his detractors submitted copies of his work to the monks of the Dominican Order to determine whether the Rambam's works contained heretical ideas. The Dominican Friars, naturally, summarily concluded that the Rambam's writings were not only false, but blasphemous. In 1234, in Montpelier, France, they publicly collected and burned all copies they found of 'Moreh Nevuchim' and 'Sefer HaMada'. Similarly, in 1242, a fanatical mob burned many of the Rambam's writings in Paris. Less than 40 days later, at the exact same site, the 24 wagonloads of the Talmud were burned, on Erev Shabbos Parshas Chukas.

According to Rav Hillel's letter, the famed Rabbeinu Yonah, one of the Rambam's primary opponents, took the Talmud burning as a Divine sign, and publicly and vociferously denounced his former position and opposition against the Rambam's writings and instead emphatically concluded "Moshe Emes V'Torasos Emes, V'Kulanu Bada'in!" "Moshe and his Torah are true (here referring to the Rambam), while we all are liars". He planned on traveling to the Rambam's grave (in Teverya) and begging forgiveness. Some say this tragic incident was the catalyst of Rabbeinu Yonah's writing what came to be known as his Magnum Opus, 'Shaarei Teshuva'.

Further Grounds for Fasting After discussing the burning of the Talmud, the Magen Avraham offers another reason for fasting. On this very day, Erev Shabbos Chukas, two entire cities of Jews were brutally decimated, as part of the Gezeiras Ta'ch V'Ta't, the Cossack massacres led by Bogdan Chmielnitsky ym"sh in 1648 - 1649, as recorded by the Shach.

Although most know of the Shach as simply one of the preeminent halachic authorities, due to his extensive and authoritative commentary and rulings on the Shulchan Aruch, few know that he also wrote a sefer titled 'Megillas Eifa', detailing the horrific slaughter of tens of thousands (possibly hundreds of thousands!) of Jews (and hundreds of entire communities) during these terrifying years. Among his entries

he mentions the two cities that were wiped out on this same day in the year 1648 (5408). Hence, the Magen Avraham avers, that it is proper to fast (Taanis Yachid) on Erev Shabbos Chukas, due to both of these tragedies happening on this same day in history.

20th of Sivan However, that was not the first of the tragedies of Gezeiras Ta'ch V'Ta't. That occurred on the 20th of Sivan, 1648 (5408), when the Cossacks attacked Nemirov (Nemyriv), in the Ukraine, and destroyed the Jewish community, numbering over 6,000. Several hundred Jews were drowned; others burned alive. The shuls were ransacked and destroyed, with even the Torah parchments desecrated and used as shoes. Since this horrifying catastrophe was unfortunately the first of many to come in the following years, the Shach, at the conclusion of his 'Megillas Eifa', declared a personal fast on the 20th of Sivan for himself and his descendants. This was soon codified as a public fast by the Vaad Arba Ha'Aratzos, the halachic and legislative body of all Lithuanian and Polish Jewry. Indeed, the Magen Avraham concludes his passage that in many places in Poland, the custom is to fast on the 20th of Sivan for this reason. Additionally, the Shach, the Tosafos Yom Tov, and Rav Shabsi Sheftel Horowitz, as well several other Rabbanim of the time, composed specific Selichos to be recited on this day annually.

The First Blood Libel However, the 20th of Sivan was not chosen as a fast day exclusively due to the annihilation of the hundreds of Jewish communities during Gezeiras Ta'ch V'Ta't. It actually held the ignominious distinction of being the date of the very first blood libel, in Blois, France, almost 500 years prior, in 1171 (4931)!

According to one of the Selichos recited on that day 'Emunei Shelumei Yisrael', which lists the place and year of the tragedy, the King offered the 31 innocent Jewish prisoners (some listed by first name in the Selicha!), including several Gedolim, Baalei Tosafos, the chance to convert. When they refused, he ordered them burned alive! The martyrs recited Aleinu L'Shabayach in unison as the decree was being executed. Although, as recorded in 'Emek HaBacha', a chronicle of the terrible devastation of the Crusades (starting in 1096 / 4856; known as Gezeiras Tatn"u), the martyrs' bodies did not burn, still, this tragedy foreshadowed and portended future cataclysmic events for the Jewish people. In fact, this terrible libel was a major factor in the expulsion order of Jews from France mere ten years later.

The great Rabbeinu Tam and the Rabbanim of the time instituted the 20th of Sivan as a fast day, even exclaiming that this fast is 'akin to Yom Kippur!'. The Selichos established for 20 Sivan, aside for the one mentioned previously, which actually describes the horrendous pyre in Blois, were written by the Gedolim of the previous generations regarding the destruction of many Jewish communities during the Crusades (Gezeiras Tatn"u; many Kinos of Tisha B'Av are recited in commemoration of these tragedies as well), including Rav Shlomo HaBavli, Rabbeinu Gershom, and Rav Meir ben Rav Yitzchak, the author of Akdomus.

Re-Establishing the Fast In fact, it is due to the dual tragedies that occurred on this day that the Shach declared the 20th of Sivan a fast day. In other words, he didn't set a new fast day; rather he re-established the 20th of Sivan as a fast day, as it already had the distinction of a day that went down 'in infamy' almost 500 years previously. Therefore, it was only fitting to commemorate the unspeakable Cossack atrocities with a fast, on this very same day.

Chronicles of the disastrous occurrences of this day do exist and can still be found. Aside for the Shach's 'Megillas Eifa', there is also Rav Nosson Nota of Hanover's 'Yavein Metzulah' and Rav Avraham ben Rav Shmuel Ashkenazi's 'Tzar Bas Rabbim', all written by eyewitnesses to the carnage and wanton destruction.

Although nowadays it seems not widely commemorated or even known about, nevertheless, the 20th of Sivan is still observed among several Chassidic communities, mostly of Hungarian origin. During the Holocaust, Hungarian Jewry was R"l decimated mainly over the span of the months of Sivan and Tamuz in 1944. Therefore, Rabbanim of Hungary re-established the 20th of Sivan as a fast day for Hungarian Jewry.

Good Shabbos

■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

Friday Night, July 15th

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-7:00P
- » Candlelighting-8:18P (Preferably light by 7:25P)

Shabbos Day, June 4th

- » Shacharis followed by Kiddush-8:30A
- » Pirkei Avos for M&W-6:35P
- » Chumash Shiur for M&W-7:20P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men in shul-8:05P
- » Shalosh Seudos for women & young children at the Rich home - 8:05P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends-9:26P

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A
- » Mincha/Maariv followed by NQ Daf HaYomi (Kesuvos)-8:15P

■ CLASSES

- » Before Shacharis Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)
- » NQ Daf HaYomi Kesuvos for men (Sunday-Thursday following Maariv)
- » Pirkei Avos for men & women (Shabbos 90 mins before mincha)
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos 45 mins before mincha)
- » Hilchos Taaruvos for men (Sunday 7:00-8:00A)
- » Supercharge Your Sundays for men (Sunday after Shacharis for 45 mins., with R' Noach Klug)
- » Marriage Chaburah for women (Tuesday 7:15-8:00P)
- » In-Depth Hilchos Shabbos for women (Time is Changing)