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Parshat Chukat

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CHUKAS POCUS

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The laws of the parah adumah, the red heifer, have enraptured mortals since the day it was commanded. There was no reason or rationale given for it. The nations of the world, baffled by it, mocked our observance of it. Even King Solomon, the wisest of men, claimed to be stupefied by its reasoning. And Moshe was the only mortal that understood the essence of its every nuance. Its laws are complex, its symbolism mysterious, and the logic of its repercussions quite enigmatic. The red heifer's ashes purify those who have become tamei (impure), yet the administering Kohen who was tahor (pure) becomes tamei! There is no logic behind that occurrence; yet that is the law. So sacred was the red heifer that Moshe and Aaron sacrificed, that its ashes were saved from generation to generation. Each additional red-heifer offering was added to the remnants of the previous, so that the new ashes would mix with the vestigial ashes of Moshe's original heifer. Hundreds of generations and thousands of Kohanim and Israelites who performed the mitzvah of parah adumah believed with unquestioning faith in the law's ritual divinity and power.

I have one simple question. Why were these complex, hidden, and very spiritual laws placed smack in the middle of the Book of Bamidbar? The enigmatical laws of purity and impurity are almost entirely relegated to Sefer VaYikra (Leviticus). That sefer discusses sacrificial offerings. It also details a host of physio-spiritual maladies, among them, the laws of tzora'as, zav, zavah, nidah, and so forth. Shouldn't the mystical requirements of the Parah Adumah join its counterparts together with the laws of the Kohanim? Why is it placed in the Book that recounts the stories of human folly -the malicious uprising of Korach, the miscalculations of the spies, the unfaithfulness of the sotah, the complaints against the heavenly fare of manna? What significance does the juxtaposition of these seemingly unexplainable rituals, obviously not congruent with mortal logic doing with the tales of error and miscalculation?

One evening during World War II, Senator Kenneth McKellar of Tennessee could not sleep. As chairman of the Senate appropriations committee, he could not understand why he should the administration was requesting some \$2,000,000,000 towards certain unusual scientific research. He called Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and began to shout. "Do you expect me to sanction this tremendous appropriation without any idea as to where it is going?" Stimson kept quiet. He pondered and hesitated, then he asked, "Can you keep a secret?" After McKellar assured him that he could, Stimson whispered, "We are about to split the atom." McKellar exploded. "Are you crazy? This is a war! We have men out there! We need guns! We need planes! We need ammunition! And you guys are fooling around with some hocus pocus — splitting atoms!" It was only months later that McKellar, along with the entire world learned the power of this seemingly incomprehensible and esoteric exercise.

Perhaps there is no better place to expound the laws of parah adumah than in the middle of Sefer Bamidbar. For it is this Torah section that discusses a generation that thinks they are able to calculate and define everything. It tells of spies who return from Canaan and exclaim that according to their calculations there is no logical way that Israel will conquer the land. It tells of Korach, who complained that according to his calculations he should be the prince of the tribe of Levi. Its Midrash tells of Korach gathering 250 men and ranting that according to his logic a mezuzah is unnecessary in a room filled with sacred books. It talks about false leaders who would be satisfied if only the spirit of the law is fulfilled, even if the letter of the law is not. Bamidbar even contains the story of Miriam, who, according to her reasoning, spoke ill of her brother Moshe. It discusses Jews who wanted meat rather than manna.

When humans make mortal calculations to redefine Torah law, there is no better time and place to talk about red heifers and the complex and esoteric laws thereof. The red cow and its laws represent the total omnipotence of Hashem, be it spirit, in logic, or in mechanics. It exclaims that that though we may search for rhyme and reason of Torah, we still must observe the mitzvos He commanded, regardless if we understand them. For there will always be some aspect that may only appear to us as mysterious as hocus pocus. Yet with uncalculating faith we must realize that there is great method to the many aspects we cannot deem mortal. In that manner we shall merit to be totally committed to Hashem's Torah, and not our mortal vision of it.

What Lies Beyond Our Understanding?

by Rabbi Avraham Kovel

When physicists first observed electrons behaving like waves and particles simultaneously, they faced an intellectual crisis. The experimental data was undeniable, but it shattered every assumption about reality. A century later, we've built entire industries around these "impossible" phenomena, yet the underlying mystery has never been solved. Modern science has taught us a humbling truth: some of the most powerful realities in our universe operate beyond the reach of human comprehension.

King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, discovered this same principle three thousand years earlier. In studying the Red Heifer, he declared in defeat: "I thought I could fathom it, but it eludes me!" Like quantum mechanics, this mitzvah has earned its reputation as completely inexplicable, but somehow essential.

Yet at the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Rashi makes a startling declaration about this inexplicable law: "The Red Heifer atones for the sin of the Golden Calf."

If you're paying attention, you'll notice that this statement is a glaring contradiction: If the Red Heifer defies comprehension, how can Rashi definitively declare its purpose? Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik asked this very question—and his brilliant answer doesn't just solve the paradox, it reveals a profound truth about how we're meant to relate to divine wisdom.

You Think You Know Better?

In order to understand this apparent contradiction, we must revisit the sin of the Golden Calf for which the Red Heifer apparently atones. How did this catastrophic sin come about? When Moses vanished into the divine cloud for 40 days, panic set in. The people couldn't bear losing their intermediary to God, so they engineered a solution. Take some gold, melt it down, shape it into a calf—problem solved!

But despite their good intentions, their methodology revealed the most fundamental of errors - thinking we know better than God. Instead of consulting Aaron, a known prophet with decades of experience, and instead of recognizing that their actions violated the second commandment they'd heard directly from God just 40 days earlier, they took matters into their own hands, plowing forward with their flawed plan.

This fundamental sin appears in the story of Adam and Eve. The Arizal explains that Eve wasn't merely tempted by appetizing fruit and the wisdom it promised. She was a brilliant strategist. She realized that if God designed the world to reward proper use of our free will, then humanity needed the most challenging choices possible to earn maximum rewards. By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, she would amplify the difficulty of future decisions, maximizing humanity's potential.

Her logic was sound. Her intentions were noble. But despite her sophisticated reasoning, there was one inconvenient obstacle: God had commanded her not to eat. Yet eat she did, and through her eating, she plunged humanity into a reality of pain and suffering she had not even imagined possible. Her sin? Like the Golden Calf and like every sin since—believing we know better than God.

Action Before Understanding

After Adam and Eve's sin, humanity fell to a spiritual level they would never rise from again—with one exception.

At the moment before the Jewish people received the Torah at Mount Sinai, Moses asked whether they would accept Hashem's commandments. They responded, "*Naaseh v'Nishma*"—"We will do, THEN we will understand." This declaration, according to the Talmud, elevated the Jewish people to the spiritual state of Adam and Eve before their sin. What could possibly be so powerful about this simple phrase that it undid thousands of years of spiritual exile?

Because *Naaseh v'Nishma* represents the ultimate acceptance of God's will over human understanding. It means action comes before understanding—fulfilling God's will takes priority over our comprehension of it. Any understanding that follows serves only to deepen our intention, never to override His commands with our own reasoning.

Through this complete commitment to divine authority, the Jewish nation perfectly rectified Adam and Eve's original error, catapulting themselves to humanity's pre-sin spiritual level. Unfortunately, when Moses delayed his return, the people repeated that ancient mistake with the Golden Calf, crashing their spiritual level back down to earth.

Humbled by the Unknown

Now we can unravel the paradox. We asked how Rashi could explain something that defies explanation—how he could give a reason for something that transcends reason. Here's the brilliant insight: Rashi isn't explaining the Red Heifer at all. He's revealing that precisely BECAUSE the Red Heifer is completely inexplicable and beyond logic, THAT is why it atones for the Golden Calf!

The Red Heifer becomes the perfect antidote to humanity's fundamental error. Our humble acceptance of God's will beyond our comprehension atones for all the sins that resulted from our rejection of His will in favor of our own understanding. A Torah with the Red Heifer demands we acknowledge that God knows best. We don't have all the answers, and we never will. Therefore, our mission isn't to figure it all out—it's to follow His infinite intelligence instead of relying on our own limited understanding.

Accepting God's Morality

I'd like to suggest a way to integrate this perspective of trusting God's will over our own. Anyone who encounters the Torah today—whether through study or simply hearing about its controversial teachings—will face moral challenges. I faced these struggles when I first began reading the Torah as an adult—many issues challenged my 21st century liberal sensibilities. My good friend reminded me that while I was right to have a sensitive conscience, I must also recognize that God's morality operates from infinite wisdom while mine is necessarily shaped by my cultural moment.

And cultural morality is simply unreliable. Pre-Nazi Germany led the world in science, art, and technology, yet committed history's worst genocide. Hitler himself campaigned against animal cruelty while orchestrating humanity's greatest atrocity. Where society's morality proves fallible, God's morality remains consistent and objective. If our moral sensitivities grate against the Torah's teachings, our first response shouldn't be to reject them, but to approach them with humility. Sometimes the wisest thing we can do is admit, like Solomon, that some truths are beyond us, yet trust in God's wisdom despite our limitations.

May we find the courage to say "*Naaseh v'Nishma*" in our own lives, trusting in divine truth even as we continue to learn and grow.

Handing Over the Mantle

By Rabbi Berel Wein

The fate of the generation that left Egypt and came to the Sinai desert is finally sealed in this week's Torah reading. Even though we already read in last week's Torah portion about the disaster and eventual demise of that generation because of the slanderous report of the Spies that visited the land of Israel, Moshe somehow was convinced that he himself would escape their fate. He appears to be confident that he will yet lead his beloved people into the promised land of Israel.

However, as we read in the Torah, the Lord informs Moshe that he also will not enter the land of Israel. The Torah does give us a reason for this harsh decree against the greatest of all prophets and leaders. Moshe chose to strike the rock to bring forth water instead of complying with the heavenly order speak to the rock. At first glance, we are certainly troubled by this seemingly asymmetrical form of judgment and punishment. The retribution for this sin seems to be far too harsh, especially when we consider the decades of service, sacrifice and loyalty that Moshe previously exhibited in his relationship with the Almighty. Simply put, it seems unfair. The punishment does not seem to fit the crime.

This issue has vexed Jewish minds over the ages. It is almost as though the Torah is purposely writing a real cause-and-effect relationship regarding Moshe and the land of Israel. Because of this intuitive feeling of uneasiness about the true nature of this incident, many varied explanations and commentaries have been offered over the ages.

Maimonides described the real crime as being the tendency to become angry, and anger always leads to a ruptured relationship with the Almighty and eternity. Others have pointed out that it was not so much the behavior of Moshe, as it was that this was the appropriate time when Joshua should have taken over the mantle of leadership. Every generation has its leaders, and leaders of previous generations, no matter how great they may have been, are not destined to serve as leaders of later generations.

It is this rule of history and of human nature that governs this situation. The fact that Moshe struck the rock is not the essential reason that some commentators believe that a new generation demanded new leadership to be successful. Another nuance added to this explanation is that the leader of each generation is responsible for what happens to that generation. Therefore, it is obvious that if the generation that Moshe redeemed from Egypt and led through the desert of Sinai was not going to merit entering the land of Israel, then its leader, no matter how great and noble a person he may have been, must share the same fate of the generation that he so faithfully led.

This is the statute of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a perfectly red cow, which has no blemish, upon which a yoke has not come” (19:2)

Why is the law of the Parah Adumah introduced as the “statute of the Torah” rather than the “statute of the red heifer?” R’ Dovid Feinstein answers that there are parts of the Torah that do not seem to be applicable in daily life or focused on how a person can grow spiritually. Despite this, studying any part of the Torah makes a person better and changes him. The Parah Adumah is the “statute of the Torah” because it cleansed people and made them pure, even though the workings behind all of its laws are, for the most part, inscrutable. So, too, Torah study will improve our character and refine us, regardless of whether it is practical learning with an obvious application to our daily lives or not. This is a basic principle of the Torah that is embodied in the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah, the epitome of a mitzvah whose reasons are beyond our comprehension.

“And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer” (19:6)

The kohen takes a piece of cedar wood, the highest of all trees, and a bundle of hyssop, the lowest of all trees, and a string of red wool, whose Hebrew name is derived from the name of the worm from which the red dye comes and the worm is lowliest of all creatures. These items are thrown into the pyre upon which the red heifer is burned. Rashi explains: “This is a sign that the arrogant one who acted haughtily and sinned should lower himself like the hyssop and the worm so that it will atone for him.” Why is their one symbol of arrogance and two symbols of humility? The answer is that one should strive to become exceedingly humble, as the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (4:4) teaches us. Rambam emphasizes that this is unique among all character traits. He writes (Hilchos Dei’os 2:3): “There are certain character traits that a person is forbidden to use in moderation, but which from which he should distance himself as far as possible. Specifically arrogance, for the good way to act is not to merely be humble, but to have a lowly spirit and be exceedingly modest... Therefore, Chazal said: “Be very, very low of spirit.”

“And when we cried to Hashem, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt; and behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of your border” (20:16)

Rashi says that the “malach” mentioned in the posuk is a reference to Moshe Rabbeinu, and this proves that prophets can be called “malachim.” This shows us the full potential of a person. Each of us can grow to the point where we are comparable to angels. Although this is a very high level, it is within reach and something that we can all aspire to.

“Take Aharon and Elazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor” (20:25)

Each time that Elazar is mentioned in this section, he is referred to as “Elazar his son,” connecting him to his father Aharon. Why is this repeated three times? We find a similar connection between a father and children in a teaching of Chazal about Yaakov Avinu. They taught that “Yaakov Avinu did not die. Just as his children are alive, so is he alive.” When children continue to follow in their father’s footsteps and perpetuate his legacy through their actions, it is as if their father still lives. Elazar was continuing to follow the teachings of his father Aharon, so at the time of Aharon’s physical death, his son’s connection to him is repeatedly emphasized to show that his spirit would continue.

“The people spoke against Hashem and against Moshe: Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread and there is no water and our soul loathes this light bread” (21:5)

Rabbeinu Bachya points out that the people’s complaints were astonishing. How could they say that there was no bread when the man fell from the sky every morning? Why did they claim that there was no water when they had just seen water miraculously gush forth from the rock after Moshe hit it? He explains that their issue was related to the difference between how they got bread and water compared to how the other nations had their needs met. They complained that they did not have bread and water in a normal way, but instead in a way that depended on their merit. They were also bothered by the fact that the man was entirely digested by the body and did not produce any waste because that was abnormal. Hashem set up this way of life in the desert so that the people would always look toward Hashem. This was meant to train them to trust in Hashem. It was a gift from Hashem, but instead of seeing the good in it, they were looking to find something negative that they could complain about.

by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

Peace Talks

In this week's Torah portion, Moses' brother Aaron dies. The Torah tells us that the Jewish people mourned more for Aaron than they did for Moses. That's quite an amazing statement. The Sages explain that Aaron was a man who devoted himself to making peace between individuals and, as such, was respected and loved by all.

Here is Aaron's modus operandi: Whenever two people got into an argument, Aaron would visit each of them separately. He would tell the first person (untruthfully) that he had just visited the other, "who is full of remorse and wished to apologize." He would then visit the other person and tell him (again untruthfully) the same thing.

Judaism is not prudish or puritanical. It is a very practical approach to life, and recognizes that there are times when it's right to lie - in this case, in order to bring peace between God's children.

What Aaron did was based on simple human nature. When we perceive someone is attacking us, we will fight our corner and find only wrong in him. When, however, that same person comes humbly to apologize and accepts responsibility, we will more often than not, be willing to accept the role that we have played also. When we don't feel judged, we are more able to own up to our shortcomings.

It's something that we would do well to remember in all of our relationships - specifically, perhaps, in marriage. If we make our spouse feel attacked and judged, their most likely response (assuming they are human) will be to defend themselves and find fault in us instead. This will happen more than nine times out of ten.

If, on the other hand, our spouse feels accepted and respected, and there is an issue that we want to deal with, they are much more likely to be honest and objective about the role they may have played in creating the problem.

Any time we make another person feel judged and put down, we can blame only ourselves if the results are less than satisfactory. It's much better to try the positive approach instead.

A Man for All Seasons

By Sheldon Stern

On occasion, I like to point out themes of the Torah. The one that immediately comes to mind is, as per the Led Zeppelin hit, "Communications Breakdown." It started with Adam Harishon telling Chavah that she can't eat from, nor even touch the Eitz Hadaas. That little fib changed the course of mankind. And failure to communicate played a prominent role in last week's Parsha. In an attempt to avert what he knew would be a disaster, Moshe summoned his two arch-enemies, Dasan and Aviram, hoping to smoke a peace pipe with them. That offer, as we know, was summarily rejected. In Chukas another theme emerges and it plays a prominent role for the remainder of the Torah, Hashem's decision that Moshe won't be allowed to enter the Promised Land and our leader's efforts to have that decree rescinded. There is however, another aspect to consider, one that perhaps we gloss over.

In verse 20:12 Hashem tells Moshe and Aaron that neither one will lead the Bnei Yisroel into the land. We're all familiar with Moshe's reaction. He pleaded, cajoled, importuned okay you get the point, but from Aaron, as Don Mclean sang in "American Pie, "Not a word was spoken." And we shouldn't be surprised. When Hashem took Nadav and Avihu there was, again, deafening silence. The Potoker's grandson told me that his Zeide said the following, "I lost everything in the war but I didn't lose even a Tipah(drop) of my Emunah in Hashem. This is part of our legacy from Aaron, complete acceptance of Hashem's will. But one might ask, If Hashem told Moshe that his entreaties will fall on deaf ears would Aaron have the temerity to ask on his own behalf? Yes, because there's a reason to suggest that had that paragon of peace beseeched Hashem, he might have been successful. When Hashem tried to convince Moshe, at the Sneh, to take the reins, our leader was hesitant. The Midrash explains that Moshe felt it was inappropriate that he should arrive in Egypt as a "conquering hero" while his brother, who bore the burden of keeping the spark of Yiddishkeit alive in that crucible got shunted to the side. Of course, Hashem reassured His chosen one that Aaron will be nothing but delighted that you're in charge. And so it was. However, Hashem is the quintessence of fairness, and so it would seem to make sense that if Aaron was passed over with regard to leading the Jews throughout their sojourns in the Wilderness, that G-d would "make it up" and have him lead the nation into the Land of Canaan. But this was not to be and there was no protest. Throughout the Torah we're told that Aaron did everything he was told to do. And we take it for granted, but the Torah is testifying that it's not a small thing. And we shouldn't leave with the impression that Aaron was some shrinking violet. When his sons passed away he not only kept his equilibrium but was able to stand up to Moshe and explain his rationale for not eating that day. And he advocated for Tziporah when she voiced her chagrin to Miriam. To be sure, Aaron was anything but weak. Rather he exemplified the Middah of Gevurah personified by Yitzchak Avinu that Father(in Heaven) knows best.

But Moshe was made of different(shall we say "sterner") stuff. Tom Petty did a masterful cover of Johnny Cash's "I Won't Back Down." When he perceived injustice, he made his feelings known, even to Hashem. Rashi tells us that our chief's greatest act was

smashing the Luchos. In order to serve as our representative Moshe had to put aside all concerns and stand up to anyone, including Hashem, in order to advocate. If the Potoker emulated Aaron Hakohen then the Berdichever was a later day Moshe Rabbeinu. His Dinei Torah with the Creator are legendary. What we see then is that Moshe and Aaron were two sides of the same coin which is Avodas Hashem, but each from his own vantage point. Using contemporary terms it was a good cop, bad cop paradigm. Therefore, when Aaron dealt with the people at the Eigel, it wasn't in his wheelhouse to lay down the law, that was Moshe's province. Yes, but you'll protest that Moshe evinced weakness when he threw himself at the feet of Dasan and Aviram. Nothing could be further from the truth. Moshe didn't swallow his pride before meeting his nemeses, because he had no pride. Rather, he was just acting in the best interests of the people, as he hoped to avert a catastrophe. Just as an aside, I'd like to add a personal vignette about the Potoker. My father passed away in 1991. I arranged a Siyum Sheloshim on Mishnayos for him. Boruch Hashem I was part of Rabbi Friedman's yeshiva at the time so the guys and the Rabbeim all pitched in but they took the "easy" Mesechtos. My concern was Kodshim and Taharos, but I had an ace up my sleeve, the Potoker. When I asked if he could participate he responded bluntly, "Ich Kennit." I can't. I was careful not to give away my disappointment. I just accepted what he said. Years later I told this story to his grandson, Rabbi Yosef Toviah Horowitz who told me that he had the same experience. He explained, "Every second of his life was accounted for and he literally couldn't add anything onto his schedule." So even though he was incredibly nice, when he had to be firm he was up to the task. That's a Gadol.

With what we've discussed to this point we can address a somewhat puzzling verse in Tehilim. Many years ago, my former Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Dr. Zelig Friedman remarked that Tehilim was Dovid Hamelech's Peirush on the Torah. That was a Chiddush for me as I always thought of it "simply" as sublime poetry. Verse 99:6 states, "Moshe and Aharon among His priests and Shmuel among those who call in His Name." The Gemara expounds this and concludes that Shmuel was on a par with the combination of those two icons. But how can that be? As I noted in an essay on Parshas Emor, Rabbi Friedman remarked that contemporary Gedolim tend to be one dimensional in comparison to our Biblical figures. He described Rabbi Miller as tough and Rav Pam as soft, but then he spoke about Shmuel Hanovi. Shmuel was the quintessence of spirituality. As Paul Simon wrote (Loves Me Like a Rock) "I'm a consecrated boy." Shmuel's mother designated him from birth to serve in the Mishkan. This was the only life he knew, however when King Saul spared Agag the King of Amalek Shmuel didn't waste a moment. He grabbed a sword and cut him to ribbons. So this was Shmuel's greatness, the ability to act in a way that was totally foreign to him so that he could serve Hashem. Perhaps it was this faculty that set him above Moshe and Aaron, who basically followed their natural inclinations. (Of course I'm being oversimplistic.) And we can draw a parallel to music. Stairway to Heaven by Led Zeppelin is generally considered the greatest composition of the rock era. It was certainly a wonderful song but I think there's another reason it's so highly lauded. The band started in 1969. At the time the Beatles were about to call it quits and three groups vied to fill the void for rock supremacy, Zep, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple (I favored Elton John.) All three were considered heavy metal, but when Zep released Stairway it was such a departure. Beautiful lyrics, mostly acoustic guitar and a string section, it was a musical smorgasbord and it took the world by surprise that such bangers could produce something ethereal.

Chazal teach that in the ultimate future there will be a great banquet and King David will lead the Birkas Hamazon. This is alluded to in Psalm 116:13, "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the L-rd." The question is, "Why will that honorific go to the "Sweet Singer of Israel?" As Mordechai Ben David sang, "Avraham and Yitzchok will be there to greet us, Yaakov and his sons will stand by and smile, Moshe Rabbeinu will lead us once again." All great choices and let's not forget Aaron who should have first dibs by virtue of his Kohanic status. So we explained that Shmuel was able to leave his comfort zone of Torah and take matters into his own hands when the time called for action, but Dovid Hamelech took that one step further. He's called the "warrior poet." The Gemara teaches that during the day he tended to affairs of the state and at night he studied Torah and wrote Tehilim, but that doesn't give the full picture. When Dovid said that he kept Hashem before him at all times he meant it literally. Therefore, whether he was lopping off the heads of the Philistines with his sword or composing Tehilim there was no discordance. Everything was Torah. David, then, was Shmuel, in his shining moment, for his entire life, truly a man for all seasons. I believe I once read that when King Solomon wrote Koheles he was thinking of his father., "A time of love, a time of hate, a time of war a time of peace (and as the late great Pete Seeger added (I swear it's not too late.) Or as Kris Kristofferson wrote, "He's a walking contradiction partly truth and partly fiction." But with David there was no contradiction. He was the real deal. Many years ago I heard a Rabbi (don't recall his name) speak in the Bialystoker about Rabbi Yitzchok Singer who was Mora D'Asra at the time. He said that it's commonplace to speak of Rabbis as world class, but the true measure of a Rabbi is whether he's seen as world class in his shul, because it's the congregants who really know him. Yes King David achieved herculean feats, but to truly appreciate his greatness we need to look at smaller snippets of his life. Dovid could show "cruelty" as when he told his son Shlomo to get rid of his enemies, but he also displayed mercy for Saul sparing his life on two occasions.

But this leads us to our final question. Moshe Rabbeinu is universally hailed as the greatest man who ever lived, so why did he have to be assisted by his brother? Surely he mastered the full gamut of human emotions. I think that the Torah is teaching us a lesson, to wit, that there are two ways to develop a relationship with Hashem, the Moshe model and that of Aharon. Chazal tell us that when Moshe spent 40 days and nights on Sinai it was in prayer. And Parshas Vaeschanan alludes to the 515 prayers that Moshe uttered hoping to convince Hashem to "change" His mind. In contrast, Aaron is stoic. He has complete trust that Hashem knows exactly what He's doing. Which approach is correct? Eilu V'Eilu Divrei Elokim Chayim, or as Pete Seeger wrote, "To everything turn, turn, turn, there is a season turn, turn, turn. And take time for every purpose under Heaven." Boy do I love that song.