**sBrooklyn torah gazette**

**For parshas shemos 5780**

Volume 4, Issue 19 (Whole Number 171) 21 Teveth 5780/ January 18, 2020

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

For a free subscription, please forward your request to [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

*Reprinted from the November 22, 2019 edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Cow’s Milk vs. Camel’s Milk**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Cartons of Saudia Arabian “milk”**

The second speaker at the recent December 25th legal day Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event was Rabbi Eli Reisman, Chaver of The Edison Community Kollel who lectured on the topic of “Cholov Yisroel and Chalav Stam: The Modern Dairy Industries.”

He noted that there is a big custom to eat donuts on Chanukah. Interestingly enough, the Shulchan Aruch (the Jewish Code of Law) doesn’t mention donuts, but does discuss the importance of consuming dairy products.

On a recent tour of a cholav Yisroel dairy farm, Rabbi Eli Reisman saw that the cows were being milked, but that the mashgiach was in his office. So how was the milk kosher? The explanation is that the mashgiach must be on the premises when the cows are being milked and periodically be able to inspect the milking of the cows. Therefore the mashgiach was not in violation of his responsibilities by staying in the nearby office when the cows were being milked by the non-Jewish employees of the dairy.

**A Teshuvah of the Pri Chadash**

Rabbi Reisman pointed out that the Pri Chadash (Rabbi Chezkiah da Silva, 1659-1698), a Torah scholar prior to the 1700s more than 300 years ago argued a leniency for drinking cows milked by non-Jews on a teshuva of the Rebaz that if you know that there are no non-kosher animals that could be milked. The Chasam Sofer, however, ruled that Chalev Yisroel (milk from cows milked under Jewish supervision) is obligatory.

Rav Moshe Feinstein in his Igros Moshe published circa 1960 wrote that we can rely on the existing regulations of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that the milk is thereby cholov yisroel. Rav Moshe held that the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) requires milk that is sold must be 100% cow’s milk and that any violators would be severely prosecuted.

**The FDA Has No Control on Milk Production Outside of the U.S.**

However, Rabbi Reisman pointed out that in foreign countries one cannot rely on Rav Moshe’s p’sak (judgement) as the FDA has no control on the production of milk products outside of the United Sates.

Indeed a Jewish chaplain serving in Qatar in the Middle East saw that the milk containers had a label proclaiming 100% cow’s milk. He wrote to Rav Yisroel Belsky to find out if a Jew could rely on that label.

Rav Belsky wrote back that next to Somalia, Saudia Arabia was the world’s largest producer of camel’s milk and he advised not buying milk based on a label stating that the milk was 100% cow’s milk.

The chaplain therefore would only drink black coffee. Once he asked for a cup of black coffee and was given coffee with milk. He sent it back and asked again for a cup of just black coffee. Once again the coffee he received had coffee and again he returned and insisted on getting a cup of just black coffee. Another soldier came to him and asked him why the chaplain was rejecting the coffee with milk. The chaplain explained that he could only drink cow’s milk and suspected that the milk might be from a camel.

**The Chaplain and the Wisdom of Rabbi Yisroel Belsky**

The soldier told the chaplain that he was absolutely correct since he personally had a lactose reaction and the coffee served on the base with milk was not a problem for him as obviously it was not from a cow but from a camel. Rabbi Reisman said that this proved the wisdom of Rabbi Belsky with regards to not trusting the Saudia Arabia label on the milk that it was 100% cow’s milk.

**The Shmuz onParshas Shemos**

# **Your Middos are Killing You**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



*“But as much as they would afflict it, so it would increase and so it would burst forth; and they were disgusted because of the Children of Israel.”* — *Shemos* 1:12

The Jews become the enemy of the state

Yosef, his brothers, and their entire generation had passed on. A new era was beginning in Mitzrayim, and with it came a new attitude. When the Jews had first entered the land, they were received as celebrated guests. After all, they were brothers of the great Yosef who had saved the nation. That sense of appreciation was gone. No longer were the Jews respected and revered, no longer were they welcome. They had become a thorn in the side of Mitzrim.

And it went downhill from there. As has happened so often in history, the Jews were soon viewed as outsiders and as foreigners — unwanted, unwelcomed and feared. That fear turned to hate when the common wisdom said, “*If a foreign people shall attack, the Jews in our midst will join them in battle and throw us out from our land*.” The Jews had become the enemy of the state.

The only choice was to get rid of them. The first step was to oppress them, then to torture them, and finally to enslave them. Yet, despite the hardships placed upon them, the Jewish nation flourished. The Mitzrim found themselves confounded by this despised enemy within their borders who would soon outnumber them.

**Disgusting in their eyes**

Interestingly, when the Torah describes their hatred toward the Jews, it doesn’t say, “They found the Jews disgusting,” or “They were disgusted with the Jews.” It says, “They were disgusted *because* of the Jewish people.”

Rashi explains that because of their hatred of the Jews, their *own* lives had become disgusting. They had become disgusted with themselves.

This Rashi is difficult to understand. How did the Mitzrim’s hatred toward the Jews make their own lives disgusting? Wasn’t it the Jews they hated, not themselves?

The answer to this question can be understood with an observation about human nature.

**Reading faces**

We humans are highly social. Our interactions are governed by many subtle cues and conventions. One of the skills needed to get along well with others is the ability to know how they perceive us, and what they are feeling. Is that guy in a good mood or bad? Is he open to my advances or not?

Most of us do this intuitively. Before we say something, we look at the other person and instantly know if they are pleased or upset, happy or distressed, and we modify our exchanges accordingly. Many children, however, find this skill elusive, and they must be taught to recognize the physical signs that correspond to different emotions.

One of the techniques used is to teach the child to “*read faces.*” A therapist will show the child a picture of a person’s face, and then help him or her identify the emotion that that person is most likely feeling. “See, when the end of the mouth curves up, that’s a smile, and it means he’s happy. When his forehead crinkles up, and his mouth moves down like that, it means he’s angry.”

While most feelings have distinct physical appearances and are easy enough to distinguish, there are two that are remarkably similar: *anger* and *hatred*. In both, the person’s face shows displeasure. In both, the person looks genuinely unhappy. And in both, the person seems to be in pain.

As a result, teaching a child which face represents hate and which represents anger is very difficult. One thing is clear, though: neither face is smiling. Because both anger and hatred aren’t satisfying, enjoyable experiences. Quite the opposite, they are dramatically unpleasant.

**Ruining your life**

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 113b) tells us, “*If someone is accustomed to anger, his life isn’t a life, and he is never happy*.” Why is this? Because powerful emotions are like a gas that spreads till it fills whatever container it is in. When a person is enraged, his entire consciousness is consumed. He can’t think about other things. He can’t concentrate on other ideas. The flames of anger occupy his entire mind.

And he suffers. He suffers with an incurable, burning pain that wells up within him, stealing his attention and eclipsing all other sensations. And so, he can’t enjoy the food he eats. He can’t appreciate music or poetry. All of his wealth and possessions are for naught because he can’t find the peace of mind to enjoy them. He has ruined his life.

**When I hate you, I suffer**

This seems to be the answer to this Rashi. The Mitzrim were consumed with a hatred of the Jews. They walked around with a tape playing in their brain, “I HATE those Jews. Those slimy, ugly Jews! They are despicable. They fill me with RAGE!”

And it wasn’t once or twice a week that the Mitzrim had to see them. “They’re everywhere! In the marketplace and in the bathhouses! In the stable and in the barn! Each morning when I walk to the river, I see them. UGHHHHHHHH! I CAN’T STAND THOSE VILE JEWS!!!

And so all day long, they were racked with burning feelings of hatred, animosity, and disgust, till their very existence became a misery. The Mitzrim destroyed their very lives.

**Living a pleasurable life**

This concept is eye-opening. Many mitzvos focus on developing our character traits. We often think of these as ways of making ourselves into better people. They make us easier to get along with, more pleasant company. While this is true, there is another benefit: I am more at peace with the world and with myself. And as a result, I am happier.

The ways of the Torah are pleasant. When a person follows them properly, he becomes more giving and caring. He learns to overlook others’ flaws, and he becomes more patient and calm. By doing so, he becomes greater, he earns his portion in the World to Come, and he enjoys a better life in the here and now.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*

**The Direct Relationship of**

**The Jewish People and G-d**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week we begin the Book of Exodus with the Torah reading of Shemos.

Our portion opens with a list of the names of the Children of Israel who went down to Egypt, describes the slavery that began after the death of Jacob and his sons, and narrates the birth of Moses, the Redeemer of Israel.

As every Jew is obligated to remember and "relive" the exodus from Egypt every day in the spiritual sense, it follows that each stage in the Jewish people's historical descent to and liberation from Egypt contains deep significance and meaning that is pertinent to our daily lives.

The primary threat of the entire Egyptian experience was expressed in Pharaoh's decree: "Every son that is born you shall cast into the river."

The mighty Nile River, upon which all of Egypt was dependent for its sustenance, is symbolic of the laws of nature. Venerated as a god by the Egyptians, the Nile's waters periodically rose to fertilize their otherwise parched land.

The objective of the Egyptians was for the Jews to reject a G-d Who transcends nature and join them in their devotion to natural phenomenon.

While still in their own land, such a possibility was inconceivable to the Jewish people.

In Israel, the direct relationship between man and G-d was open and apparent: Whenever rain was needed, the Jewish people had only to pray to G-d, and He sent His blessing. It was not hard to perceive that all good emanates from G-d alone. It was only after emigrating to Egypt, a land fertilized by the natural, periodic rising of the Nile, that the possibility for error could even arise.

The subjugation of the Jews could not begin while Joseph and his sons still lived, for that generation had personally witnessed Divine Providence and understood that the forces of nature are only G-d's tools. Slavery, in both the physical and spiritual sense, could only take root in a new generation that had not merited to live in the land of Israel.

It was then that the true descent into Egypt began and Pharaoh was able to issue his evil decree -- the aim of which was the immersion of the Jewish people into the idolatrous worship of natural law.

Moses, G-d's "faithful servant," was the one who gave the Children of Israel the strength to break the bonds of servitude and abandon the lure of Egyptian idolatry.

Moses instilled in his brethren a pure and holy faith in G-d, at a time when it was difficult for them to even imagine that such holiness could exist. In the merit of their belief the Jewish people overcame the decree of Pharaoh and were redeemed from Egypt.

This process is experienced by every Jew in his daily life as well. By beginning the day with prayer and Torah learning, a Jew is able to perceive his direct relationship with G-d, and maintain this perception throughout the rest of the day.

The attribute of Moses that exists within every Jew reminds him that everything -- including those things that appear to be perfectly natural phenomena -- comes solely and directly from the One Above.

*Reprinted from the Issue #348 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Shemos 5755/1994)*

**Fulfilling all 613 Misvot**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**



When G-d appears to Moshe at the burning bush and instructs him to go to Egypt and inform Beneh Yisrael of their imminent redemption, Moshe voices his concern that the people will want to know more about G-d. In response, G-d tells Moshe to inform Beneh Yisrael that “Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh” appeared to him, and He then adds, “Zeh Shemi Le’olam Ve’zeh Zichri Le’dor Dor” – “This is My Name forever, and this is how I am referred to for all generations” (Shemot 3:15).

What exactly is Hashem conveying in his Pasuk?  Why must He emphasize that this is His Name “forever” and “for all generations”?

The answer lies in a deeper understanding of the concept of Misvot.  G-d gave us 613 Misvot, which correspond to the 613 portions of the human soul.  Each Misva that we perform has the effect of nourishing the corresponding portion of the soul.  Our task in this world is to perform all the Misvot to the best of our ability so we can develop our souls to their fullest potential.

The question, however, arises, how can we nourish all 613 portions of our souls if we cannot fulfill all 613 Misvot?  Many Misvot apply only to Kohanim, and many apply only in the times of the Bet Ha’mikdash. Some apply to men, and some only to women. Many Misvot apply only in the Land of Israel. The Misva of Pidyon Ha’ben applies only if one’s firstborn is a boy. The Misva of Yibum applies only in the rare case of a married man who dies without children and he has a brother. There is no person who can fulfill all the commandments. How do we reconcile this fact with the concept that the 613 Misvot nourish and sustain the 613 portions of our souls?

One of the solutions to this dilemma is that we sustain our souls by applying the messages and concepts that underlie the Misvot. It goes without saying that we are strictly obligated to observe every Misva that we are capable of observing. One cannot excuse himself from Shabbat observance and just applying the lessons and messages of Shabbat. This is obvious.

But when it comes to the many Misvot which we cannot practically observe, such as the laws that apply in the Bet Ha’mikdash, we can and must try to study these laws to uncover their deep meaning and significance so we can apply these underlying concepts in our daily lives.

For example, there is a Misva for the Kohanim to pour wine on the Mizbe’ah (altar) in the Bet Ha’mikdash along with the sacrifices. Our Sages teach that one who feeds and supports a Torah scholar is considered to have poured wine upon the altar.

There is a Misva to help somebody unload his cargo from his donkey if the donkey cannot travel because of the heavy load. Although we do not use donkeys nowadays, we can be credited with this Misva by allowing people in pain to “unload” their emotional burden, by lending a sensitive, compassionate ear so they talk about their troubles and experience some comfort.

There is a Misva to leave a corner of one’s field for the poor; we can fulfill this Misva by allocating a portion of our grocery budget for needy families. Couples who are unable to have children can fulfill the Misva of procreation by making a Shidduch or helping to fund another couple’s fertility treatments.

Moshe feared that when Beneh Yisrael hear about G-d’s plan to take them from Egypt and give them the Torah, they would wonder how they could possibly fulfill all 613 Misvot.  He therefore told Moshe, “Zeh Shemi Le’olam Ve’zeh Zichri Le’dor Dor.”

G-d told Moshe that the word “Shemi” – which has the numerical value of 350, can have 15 added to it and thus become 365 – the number of Torah prohibitions. The first two letters of Hashem’s Name is “Yod” and “Heh,” which have a combined numerical value of 15, and they combine with “Shemi” to reach 365.

Likewise, the word “Zichri” has the numerical value of 237, and by adding the numerical value of the final two letters of G-d’s Name – “Vav” and “Heh” (11) – we reach 248 – the number of Misvot Aseh (affirmative commands).

Hashem here is teaching us that we can be considered to have fulfilled all 613 commands “Le’olam” – which can be read to mean “hidden” or “concealed.” By applying the hidden messages underlying the Misvot, we are able to turn 350 into 365 and 237 into 248; we are able to fulfill even those Misvot which cannot practically be observed.

In order to accomplish this goal, however, we need to study. We need to spend the time learning about all the Misvot, even those which we cannot observe in the practical sense nowadays. The more time we devote to learning, the more we plumb the depths of the Misvot and uncover their hidden messages, which we can then apply in our daily lives and thereby fulfill all the Torah’s commands.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of the Edmond J Safra Synagogue of Brooklyn website.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parashas Shmot**

The Torah, Jewish history and tradition indicate to us that Heaven oftentimes chooses unusual people for roles that are essential and pivotal in Jewish leadership. King David is a clear example of this historical phenomenon. But I think that we can agree that the choice of Moshe to be the redeemer and eternal teacher of the Jewish people, if not of all civilization, is, at first blush, a strange one.

Moshe has been separated from the Jewish people for decades. Egyptian law had previously slated him for the death penalty for striking an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Jewish slave. Moshe is a shepherd in Midian, far removed from his brethren suffering in Egyptian bondage. And when presented by Heaven with the offer of Jewish leadership, Moshe declines it very forcefully. But the will of Heaven prevails, as is always the case.

Moshe must now embark on his new role of leadership, albeit seemingly reluctantly. He himself wonders why he is begin chosen, when, logically, his brother Aaron would seem to be a better fit for the mission. And, perhaps just as amazing as the choice of Moshe for this position of leadership, is the willingness of the Jewish people to instantly accept him as being entitled and fit for that role.

To most of the Jewish people he is a stranger, an outsider who has a speech impediment and is, at most, a Johnny-come-lately to their troubles and situation. Yet, again we see that it is the will of Heaven that prevails, and it is only through Moshe that the story of the Exodus from Egypt will unfold.

Moshe, however, has outstanding qualities and traits of character that make him the greatest leader in Jewish and world history. Foremost among these attributes is his trait of humility. All leaders must have an appreciation of their talents and possess strong self-worth. However, most leaders are eventually undone by the growth of their egos and the resulting arrogance. Not so Moshe. For even after forty years of leading his people, the Torah still describes Moshe as being the most humble of all human beings on the face of the earth.



**Rabbi Berel Wein**

It is this trait that makes him the greatest of all past and future prophets. Moshe also has within himself an unquenchable love for his people. His love for them is sorely tested many times during his forty-year career as their leader, but in spite of all of their backsliding, sins, rebellions and mutterings, it is Moshe’s love of the people that remains omnipresent and steadfast. As King Solomon wrote: "Love obliterates all transgressions.”

Finally, Moshe’s path to complete the mission that Heaven thrust upon him never wavers, no matter what the events and circumstances may be. These noble traits and characteristics are apparently what the Almighty searches for in assigning leaders to our people. Moshe is the model for future Jewish leaders in all generations that will follow him.

*Reprinted from the Issue #345 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Mikeitz 5755/1994)*

**Rav Avigdor Miller**

**On Rivka, Our Model**



**QUESTION:** If the Torah is supposed to be teaching us lessons for all time, what do we learn from the encounter between Rivka and Eliezer? What I mean is that she appears to be doing everything that we here wouldn’t want our daughters to do.

For example, first she talks to Eliezer, who’s a stranger – so it’s a young girl talking to strangers.  Then she accepts from this stranger a gift and she then talks to the stranger about where he’s going to sleep that night and she encourages the stranger to follow her home.

And then she tells her parents that she’s going to leave with this stranger with or without their consent and then ten years later at the tender age of thirteen, she’s living with Yitzchok as husband and wife. Why do we hope our daughters turn to be out like Rivka?

**ANSWER:** So we’ll explain it now so that you’ll understand why we should hope they’ll turn out like Rivka.

Girls don’t talk to strangers today because it’s a wicked world; but you must know that even among non-Jews in those days there was law and order, especially if a stranger came into your town.  You have to realize what a town was. There was no democracy in the olden days. A town was a family and when a stranger came into your town he was bereft of rights. He was at the mercy of the town. You understand that? So you could talk to a stranger at the well where people come to draw water without the slightest fear, because the stranger would be most polite –even if he wasn’t Eliezer *eved Avraham;*even if he was a barbarian.

In those days, a stranger who came to your town was afraid of you. Any little girl could go to the patriarch of the town and say, “He said ‘boo’ to me,” and the stranger was finished. They’d take off all his clothing and they’d make him a slave forever to that family. That’s all they’d do.

And they did it. In other countries they did that. Strangers were made slaves, because being a stranger, a traveler who is not settled, was considered a very great sin in some places. And therefore, Rivka had no fear of the stranger.

Now, why did she offer the stranger to go home with her? Because she was taking him home to her family among her people. The stranger would follow her with the greatest decency and politeness – even if he was a barbarian as I explained before.

Now, why should she accept gifts?  Why shouldn’t she? If a man gives you a gift, let’s say, and you’re surrounded by a bodyguard and he’s giving you a gift, are you afraid something will happen?  And therefore, she was safe and sound and she could accept gifts. There was no reason why not.

Now, to engage in marriage at the age of thirteen is the very best thing for a girl.  Because once a girl knows she has a husband, so she begins living together with him and they begin accommodating themselves to each other and by the time she is eighteen or twenty, there’s no problem of adjustment. She grows up with him.

Now today we don’t do that because the culture in which we live is opposed to that. But it’s a good lesson that girls should get married as early as possible because when a boy and girl grow up and they mature more and more into the twenties, then each one acquires their own idiosyncrasies, their own habits and mannerisms, and later it becomes more and more difficult to adjust. The earlier you marry, the easier it is to adjust.

And that’s the advantage of marrying a young girl, because a young girl is more plastic – and also a young boy, by the way. And the girls who wait until they find an old fellow, they’re going to find the reason that he was so old is because he couldn’t get married earlier because he was a tough customer.

That’s why it’s a very difficult thing to talk a *shidduch* to an old *bochur*, because an old *bochur* is a very tough nut to crack.  Of course, sometimes your *mazel* will be that you’ll marry an old *bochur* and it’ll turn out good, but marriage while you're young is the very best method.

Now, as far as marrying a person that you don’t know and against your parent’s consent – let’s understand what happened there. When Eliezer came, you must know, he came with introductions.  When he said, “*Eved Avraham anochi*– I am a servant of Avraham,” immediately they knew who he was, because Avraham was famed in Padan Aram from the mouths of travelers.

And this family, Rivka’s family, thirstily listened to all the stories of Avraham. They knew he was a great man. They knew he had a son Yitzchok and they knew that Yitzchok was to inherit all of Avraham’s possessions and therefore, when Eliezer came, it was all known. There was no question who he was. He had credentials and it was all verified and Rivka chose to marry Yitzchok and she went along with Eliezer.

She chose to marry a prince. Avraham was a *nasi Elokim* and therefore Yitzchok was a prince. And so, whether her parents consented or not, she would be doing the wisest thing she could do. If a girl, let’s say, decides to marry a son of a *rosh* *yeshiva* and her parents want *davkeh* a doctor and she refuses to listen to her parents, are you going to say she is culpable or blameworthy for that?

*Reprinted from the November 21, 2019 email of Toras Avigdor adapted from Tape #245.*

**Judaism and Cremation**

**By Rabbi Gil Student**



Death rites are widely observed in any religion, as people look to tradition for guidance in that confusing time following a loss. Judaism demands a simple burial in the ground. However, often out of ignorance, many Jews opt for cremation. This is certainly contrary to Jewish practice.

The Tur (Yoreh De’ah 362) and Shulchan Aruch (ad loc., par. 1) explicitly require burial in the ground, as opposed to placement in a coffin or container above ground, based on a Biblical verse. It is best to bury a body directly in the ground, without any interference.

However, in most places the custom is to bury someone in a wooden biodegradable casket, as discussed below, so the deceased’s remains merge into the earth. “You shall surely bury him” (Deut. 21:23). “For dust you are, and to dust you will return” (Gen. 3:19).

For many, Jewish law requiring burial is sufficient. For others, Rav Doron Kornbluth wrote a convincing book titled Cremation or Burial? A Jewish View (Mosaica, 2012).

Orthodox Jews should understand the arguments against cremation because everyone has a relative, friend or neighbor who is not religiously observant and might be unaware of the importance of a traditional Jewish burial. They may even think that cremation is consistent with Jewish tradition. It is worthwhile discussing burial long before someone nears the end of their life, by which point they usually have already made up their mind. By convincing a loved one of a traditional Jewish burial, you will be doing them a true chesed.

Many choose cremation because they think it is cheaper and more environmentally friendly. Rav Kornbluth points out that the most expensive cremation is on par with the most expensive burial while the least expensive cremation is only slightly cheaper than the least expensive burial. The key to managing the cost is embracing Jewish burial tradition.

An ancient custom demands that Jews use burial shrouds that are simple white robes and that any casket used is a plain pine box with no metal at all. Deceased bodies are not embalmed, covered with cosmetics or otherwise tampered with beyond the (free) purification performed by the burial society (Chevra Kadisha).

While many choose to hold funeral services at a chapel prior to burial, a graveside service is certainly acceptable and even common. All this saves significant money and also makes for a more environmentally friendly burial. This becomes even more cost-effective when done through a bulk program like OU’s Levaya Program, which works with Parkside Memorial Chapels.

People often mistakenly think that cremation is the natural way to dispose of a body. It is actually more damaging to the environment than a traditional Jewish burial. Statistics comparing the environmental impact of burial and cremation fail to consider that much of burial’s impact is avoided by Jewish tradition.

The coffins, formaldehyde and cosmetics that pollute the earth are contrary to Jewish law. A Jewish body decomposes along with its wooden coffin, completing the cycle of life by returning to the dust from which we came (Gen. 3:19). While decomposed dust brings life to the ground and allows for plant life to flourish, ashes destroy the ground and prevent anything from growing. The energy required to cremate a body — maintaining approximately 2,000 degrees for about 2 hours — is a significant use of fossil fuel.

Additionally, every cremated body emits toxins. Those with fillings, medical insertions or other unnatural parts will emit even more. The environmental impact is significantly diminished in a simple burial.

Rav Kornbluth sensitively points out that graves are for the living. Children, grandchildren, even distant relatives may someday want a place where they can connect to their lost loved one. Even when people live far away, a single location designated for a deceased relative is a very meaningful connection to the past, a way to return to your roots.

Jewish law requires burial in the ground. Rav Kornbluth goes beyond the law, using language and ideas accessible to all readers to show why burial is the most sensitive and appropriate way to conclude a life and continue the chain of existence.

Rav Kornbluth’s excellent book received input from many, including Rav Elchonon Zohn of the National Association of Chevra Kadisha. Shabbos Vayechi is designated as TEAM Shabbos, a time for increasing awareness of traditional end-of-life issues, including proper burial. I pray that this contribution will help to console the bereaved and guide them toward tradition during their difficult time.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayechi 5780 email of the Jewish VUES.*

**Thoughts that Count**

**For Parshas Shemos**

*And he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the staff of G-d in his hand* (Ex. 4:20)

While Moses certainly demonstrated to Pharaoh the proper honor due a king, he nonetheless "took the staff of G-d in his hand" in all his dealings with him -- prideful in his Jewish heritage, imbued with an attitude of G-dly assurance, and without any feelings of inferiority. *(Likutei Sichot)*

*Reprinted from the Issue #348 of L’Chaim Weekly (Parashat Shemos 5755/1994)*