

The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

6701 Old Pimlico Road

Baltimore, MD 21209

410-486-2666

www.chabadshul.org



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Chukat

10 Tamuz, 5776

Jewish Acting

Have you ever considered the difference between a play done professionally and the same play done by amateurs (or a school production)? There's a major difference in the quality of the acting. A good performance is so convincing that we can't even be sure the actors are acting. Indeed, they draw us into the world of the play so completely that the characters become real people.

What enables one actor to bring a role to life while another acts so badly that there is no character, just the actor pitifully and transparently pretending?

We might say that there are in fact three types of actors. Let's call them the external, the intellectual and the intuitive.

The external actor knows his lines and follows the director's instructions. But he remains apart from the role. He has not taken on the life of the character. So what we see is the actor, pretending to be the character. Since the actor remains separate and apart from the character, the performance does not move us, does not alter our perspective or deepen our sensibility.

The intellectual actor, on the other hand, understands the character he is playing. He can identify with the character. His performance seems somewhat believable; we "get" the character. We are engaged with the story on some level. But we still see the actor behind the character. The actor acts well, but he still plays himself, so to speak.

The intuitive actor, on the other hand, literally loses himself in the role. He ceases to be himself and becomes the character, transporting us into the experience. We do not just understand the story, we experience it, we know it.

In a sense, we are all actors. For within each of us is a "Jewish essence," the Jewish soul that is an actual part of G-d Above. We - our conscious, physical selves - are actors through which this Jewish essence, this Divine Soul, expresses itself.

Just as actors on a stage, we can allow our Divine Soul, our Jewish essence, to express itself in one of three ways.

We can remain apart from our Divine Soul, in which case its expression, its manifestation in this world is, like bad acting, stiff, unconvincing. In other words, our Judaism remains superficial, somewhat artificial. Even when we follow directions (perform a mitzva - commandment), we may be just going through the motions. There remains a "disconnect" between the "character" (our Divine Soul) and our selves.

On the other hand, we can have some comprehension of our spiritual mission, some awareness of the presence of our Divine Soul. In this instance, Judaism - Torah and mitzvot - pervades our lives and affects all that we do, to one degree or another. We may even feel "spiritual," or allow ourselves to be called "religious." But inspired and motivated as we may be, we still feel an "I" - we recognize an ego, a self-awareness that connects with, and allows the expression and manifestation of, the Divine Soul.

But, at the highest level, we can have an intuitive relationship with our Divine Soul, one in which we so efface our self-awareness and ego that it is totally subsumed to the expression and manifestation of our Divine Soul. Those who see us see the Divine Soul in action. We become in a sense a living Torah, so that we experience life - even the most mundane aspects - from a spiritual perspective. Our perceptions change, for we perceive ourselves to be, and act as though we are, a dwelling place for the Divine.

We are, that level, an expression, a performance, of the Divine Soul within us. There, we are truly at one with our role and truly actors in the world.

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

What Was Lost By Failing To Speak To The Rock?

Parshas Chukas contains the incident of Mei Merivah [Waters of Strife]. There is a wide disparity of opinion as to the exact nature of Moshe's aveyra [sin]. This aveyra cost Moshe the privilege of entering Eretz Yisroel. According to many commentaries, the aveyra was that Moshe hit the rock rather than speaking to it.

The obvious problem with this explanation is that there does not seem to be much difference between bringing forth water from a rock by hitting it, or by speaking to it. Why was it so important to speak to the rock? There was apparently some specific lesson that the people were supposed to learn when Moshe spoke to the rock. What was that lesson?

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, suggests that the lesson is that sometimes in life it is necessary to speak to rocks. Sometimes we need to speak to people who seem unreceptive to what we have to say. Sometimes we need to speak to a congregation or a community or a class and we feel that we are speaking — if not to a rock, then at least — to a wall. Rabbis have been doing this from time immemorial. This goes back to the days of the prophets. They speak, they speak, they speak and it is as if they are talking to a wall.

Even those people who do not have the opportunity to speak to a community or a congregation, may have the opportunity to speak to children. Sometimes talking to children can also feel like talking to a wall. The intended message of talking to the rock was that it is necessary to speak to others, even if it seems like you are speaking to a rock. The Chofetz Chaim often said, "It is necessary to speak to the people, whether one thinks it helps or not. At least seeds are planted."

That is the nature of the business. Sometimes we speak to our children and we think that they are not listening, but we need to keep speaking. We need to keep the dialog open. The lesson of Mei Merivah was so important to the Jewish People because it taught that even when a person speaks to a rock — sometimes there are results. This is a life-long lesson that we must always remember.

(by Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Yahrzeits This Week:

Rabbi Shmuel Kaplan 13 Tamuz - Mon night/Tues for father HoRav Moshe Binyomin ben HoRav Aryeh Laib

SHUL DIRECTORY

Rabbi: Shmuel Kaplan . . . rabbikaplan@chabadmd.com
Treasurer: Michael Frank . . . shul.chabad@gmail.com
Membership: Jay Bernstein . . . bernstein1@msn.com
Kiddush: Reuven Frank rfrank82@gmail.com
Bulletin: Howard Kaplon hkaplon@towson.edu

Website: Shoshana Zakar sue.zakar@gmail.com
Gabbaim:
 Yehudah Buchwalter . . . judahbuchwalter@verizon.net
 Allan Genut agenut@gmail.com
 Ephraim Siff

Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday, 7/15 — 9 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 7/16 — 10 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:30 a.m.
 Berachot Gemora Shiur — 7:00 p.m.
 Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 8:00 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 9:16 p.m.

Sunday, 7/17 — 11 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Monday, 7/18 — 12 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Tuesday, 7/19 — 13 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Wednesday, 7/20 — 14 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.

Thursday, 7/21 — 15 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 8:15 p.m.
 Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.

Friday, 7/22 — 16 Tamuz
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Candles — 8:08 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.