

**The Shul**  
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January 16, 2021

Vaera

3 Shevat, 5781

## Let It Snow!

Ah, winter! It's cold, it's wet - and in some places it even snows! Even in the south of North America, where snow is rare, this year it snowed.

We have to admit that snow is one of the more interesting things about nature. It's not just frozen water - that's ice. Snow is crystal-like - meaning its structure is a repeating pattern. Think of the pictures of snowflakes, no two of which are supposed to be alike. Each branch of a snowflake duplicates every other branch, and they "grow" in a recognizable pattern.

Because of the structure of snowflakes, snow - the accumulation of millions and billions of snowflakes - has what's called an "open" structure - lots of space between the actual snowflakes. That's why it's soft - unless, of course, it's packed down by lots of pressure from outside.

When snow first hits the ground and accumulates, its soft, powdery - fluffy. It has to harden a bit before we can make snowballs. The more that falls, the more it "packs down."

One more thing: snow forms a blanket over the earth, and ironically insulates what's beneath it. While the snow is cold, and the ground level frozen, deep in the earth next spring's seeds are hibernating, protected from the harsh wind and freezing temperatures.

Chasidic philosophy explains, at length, that Torah is compared to water. Actually, Chasidism discusses how the Torah may also be compared to wine and oil - wine and oil representing different levels of the inner teachings of the Torah, the mystical aspect. Torah is first compared to water, however, for a number of reasons: water, like Torah, descends from a high place to a low place. Water, like Torah, penetrates whatever material it encounters. (One can see how wine and oil share some of these characteristics.) Water, like Torah, causes things to grow and quenches thirst - in the Torah's case, thirst for knowledge of G-dliness.

Water is compared to the revealed level of Torah - the narratives in the Torah, and particularly the laws and customs. For water, like the revealed level of Torah, is open and visible to all. (In this water differs from wine and oil, for the grape and olive must be squeezed to yield their liquids.) But there is a blandness to water; it is, in a sense, without taste; it has no special blessing. So, too, the revealed level of Torah can, if not approached or learned appropriately, appear to be "dry." (Ironic, considering that Torah is compared to water!)

What does this have to do with snow? Well, as discussed above, snow is a crystalline form of frozen water. That is, the "water nature" of snow is hidden within its structure - and condensed. Further, snow doesn't penetrate (until it melts), but covers - conceals and protects.

So, if we are to extend the analogy, perhaps it's possible to do so thus: If snow is an aspect of water, and water represents the revealed level of Torah - then snow should represent some aspect of that revealed level.

The revealed level of Torah has two parts: the legal and the Midrashic. Thus, we might say that snow represents the Midrash or Agada: it conceals deep, powerful lessons and insights, so lofty they must first be concealed in what appear to be "fantastic" legends. But just as the patterns of a snowflake contain not just the power, but also the beauty of water, so too do the Midrashim, in their "story structures," contain essential truths of Torah.

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

## Objectively Respectful

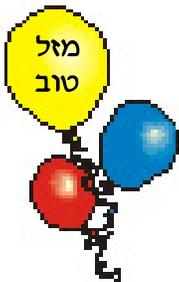
***"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Say to Aharon...' (7:19)***

Hashem commanded Moshe to defer to Aharon the task of implementing the first plague, transforming the water of the Nile River into blood. Citing the Midrash, Rashi explains that since the Nile had protected Moshe when he

*(continued on the other side)*

was an infant, it would be a display of ingratitude to be the instrument through which the river is smitten. What is the notion of expressing gratitude to an inanimate object? The value associated with an inanimate object is generally determined by the manner in which it services mankind. This value increases when the object is used by a person of great distinction; the greater the persona being serviced the more elevated the object becomes. Much credence is given in society to objects or places that once serviced men of great distinction. The home of a past president becomes a landmark and a pair of glasses that were worn by him, a collector's item. An object does not possess intrinsic attributes that require a show of gratitude be made towards it. Rather, showing respect and appreciation to an object expresses our reverence for the person who benefitted by it. Consequently, man's obligation to respect himself makes it a requirement to show respect to those items which have benefitted him. Failing to acknowledge the benefit that he received by lashing out at its source creates the perception that he does not consider himself worthy of this benefit. If he lacks respect for that which he has benefited from, he reveals that he lacks respect for himself. This notion is true concerning all aspects of appreciating benefit we have received. If a person is unable or chooses not to express his gratitude for the benefit he has received, he is proclaiming that he is not worthy of receiving such benefit. Included in our obligation to appreciate what others have done on our behalf, is the obligation that we have to ourselves to acknowledge that we are worthy of receiving the beneficence of others.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org))



A Hearty Mazel Tov to:

**Rivky Goldenberg**  
on her recent marriage to

**Yitzchak Simchah Kotkes.**

Mazel Tov also to the Goldenberg and Kotkes families



Rabbi Kaplan is holding a weekly Thursday evening (8:30pm) online shiur on the Shaar HaBitachon section of Chovos Halivavos. Shaar HaBitachon has been effective in giving strength and encouragement to people facing difficult and challenging situations in everyday life. What a perfect topic, presented by a gifted teacher, for these times. This online shiur is open to anyone who would like to attend and can be joined at: <https://cutt.ly/join-shiur>

<b>Yahrzeits This Week:</b>			
Liz Mayer	9 Shevat - Thursday night / Friday	for father	Yekusiel Shmuel ben Michal
Lawrence Ziffer	9 Shevat - Thursday night / Friday	for mother	Rochel bas Meir Yehuda Leib HaKohen
Dovid & Atara Ziffer	9 Shevat - Thursday night / Friday	for grandmother	Rochel bas Meir Yehuda Leib HaKohen

<b>DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE 322996</b>	
<p><b>Friday, 1/15 — 2 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Shabbat Candles — 4:50 p.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:50 p.m.</p> <p><b>Shabbat, 1/16 — 3 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 9:00 a.m. Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:48 a.m. Beitzah Gemora Shiur — 4:10 p.m. Minchah — 4:40 p.m. Ma'ariv — 5:52 p.m.</p> <p><b>Sunday, 1/17 — 4 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 8:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Monday, 1/18 — 5 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 6:50 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Tuesday, 1/19 — 6 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Wednesday, 1/20 — 7 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Thursday, 1/21 — 8 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 6:50 a.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Friday, 1/22 — 9 Shevat</b> Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Shabbat Candles — 4:58 p.m. Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.</p>