

# RABBI JACK'S MESSAGE IN A MINUTE



Sometimes I think about all the Rabbis that came before me at Temple Emanu-El. The "Rabbi Jack" era, I pray, will be worthy of remembering. And then I imagine there will be a spiritual leader that someday will come after me.

In this week's long, eventful and complicated Torah portion called *Chukat*, we encounter the very strange purification process that involves a completely red haired heifer, the *parah adumah*. God gives the directions directly to Moses and Aaron. When one is impure you take a crimson cow, burn it on the altar, together with a piece of cedar wood, some hyssop and mix all the ashes with water. After this liquid formula is sprinkled on the offending person, he or she is allowed back into the camp and also permitted to enter the sanctuary. Quite a show. A lot of theatrics and clearly an important religious ritual. That is why it is surprising that it was not conducted by Aaron the High Priest, but rather the Almighty tells Moses it must be performed by Eleazar, Aaron's son and first assistant.

There is no doubt that the voice of heaven was signaling that a change was imminent. Indeed, Aaron dies soon thereafter. Moreover Miriam also perishes in this week's reading. In addition Moses was informed within the body of the same narrative that he will not lead the people into the promised land for he will die before that time arrives.

Our text reminds us emphatically that the journey continues unabated, however there will be a constant transformation of the cast of players on the stage. Our board officers may be different and trustees might be refashioned over time. Perhaps our boss at work is new, or a family member is added through birth or marriage. Representatives from city council members, to legislators, mayors and other officials fluctuate from term to term. Transition is inevitable. But our lives go forward and we continue to pursue our goals. And at Emanu-El, just like our biblical ancestors, we embrace every new face, and every new leader as we march towards fulfilling our mission and ensuring our legacy for the next generation.

L'shalom,  
Rabbi Jack