



**ALEPH  
INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

# TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

28 May - 3 June, 2017  
3 - 9 Sivan, 5777  
Numbers 4:21 - 7:89  
Omer: 47 - 49 (Shavuot ends the counting of the Omer)  
Haftarah: Judge 13:2-25

## ■ GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll; it is available to all prisons.

## ■ ALEPH LIBRARY

*The Aleph Institute Library (6000 books!) is now available to you through the institution library.*

*Please ask to see our catalog in the chapel in every institution.*

*You can then ask the librarian to order that book.*

## ■ TORAH STUDIES

*Aleph offers many Judaic topics for study. Aleph Institute will provide the material and courses. Please write for more information.*

## ALEPH INSTITUTE

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## Do You Know How To Get To The Ballpark?

A child asks a professional athlete for directions: "How do I get to the ballpark?"

The sports star responds: "Practice!"

### Sinai.

It's where G-d gave us the Torah.

But it's more than a spot in the wilderness; it's a concept.

Sinai represents our interface with the Divine, and our embrace of the challenge to live truly meaningful lives.

The Jews arrived in the Sinai Desert just over six weeks after they left their slavery in Egypt.

They'd made it—but "getting to the ballpark" wasn't easy. In anticipation of Sinai, the Jews had spent weeks searching themselves and their behaviors, finding their best selves and reshaping their perspectives on life.

But, as they approached that sacred ground, they needed the strength for a step beyond the intellectual, emotional and spiritual exercises they'd undergone.

They needed to act, to deliver – in real life – on their commitments.

Introspection is strenuous, and it's not easy to acknowledge one's weaknesses. But the real challenge lies in making concrete changes. Contemplation is great, but we find life's greatest meaning in action.

The Torah tells us that the Jews left Egypt, and then traveled from place to place in the desert. Ultimately, they came to Refidim and, upon leaving there, they arrived at Sinai.

They had a "weak hands syndrome." Once they got past it, they were ready for the Sinai Experience

Jewish tradition tells us that the word "Refidim" is a linguistic hint at the fact that the Jews' "hands were weak in Torah study" (the Hebrew word for weak is rafeh).

They had a "weak hands syndrome." Once they got past it, they were ready for the Sinai Experience.

The Rebbe once observed the oddity of describing a spiritual deficiency as having "weak hands."

The Rebbe explained that the Torah is pointing to the fact that the Jews' spiritual commitment stalled in the world of theory. Their spiritual attitude wasn't being expressed in their "hands."

## Parshat Naso / Shavuot

So, after six weeks of internal search and refinement, the Jews had to cross that great chasm that lies between theory and action. That passage – leaving Refidim – made them ready for the experience that awaited them.

Every year, we relive Sinai with the holiday of Shavuot.

But in order to properly celebrate Shavuot, one first needs to arrive at Sinai.

And in order to get to Sinai, we need some practice.

*By Rabbi Mendy Herson*

### Torah Reading

#### Shavuot

#### Torah Reading Shavuot

##### Day 1:

Exodus 19:1 - 20:23, Numbers 28:26-31, Haftarah: Ezekiel 1:1-28; Ezekiel 3:12

##### Day 2: Deuteronomy 15:19 -

16:17, Numbers 28:26-31 Haftarah: Habakkuk 2:20 - 3:19

### Children in Shul

The Lubavitcher Rebbe urged that all children -- including infants -- should be brought to the synagogue on the first day of Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments in re-enactment of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. Our sages relate that when G-d came to give the Torah to the people of Israel, He asked for a guarantee that that they will not forsake it. "The heaven and the earth shall be our

guarantors,” said the Jews, but G-d replied that “they will not last forever.” “Our fathers will guarantee it,” said the people, but G-d said that “they are busy.” It was only when

we promised that “our children will guarantee it” that G-d agreed, “These are excellent guarantors.”

## ***In Jewish History***

***Wednesday, 6 Sivan, 5777 - May 31, 2017***

### **Torah Given (1313 BCE)**

On the 6th of Sivan of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), seven weeks after the Exodus, G-d revealed Himself on Mount Sinai. The entire people of Israel (600,000 heads of households and their families), as well as the souls of all future generations of Jews, heard G-d declare the first two of the Ten Commandments and witnessed G-d's communication of the other eight through Moses. Following the revelation, Moses ascended the mountain for 40 days, to receive the remainder of the Torah from G-d.

At Sinai, G-d rescinded the “decree” and “divide” (gezeirah) that had been in force since the second day of creation separating the spiritual and the physical into two hermetic worlds; from this point on, “the higher realms could descend into the lower realms, and the lower could ascend to the higher.” Thus was born the “mitzvah” -- a physical deed that, by virtue of the fact that it is commanded by G-d, brings G-dliness into the physical world.

### **Passing of King David (837 BCE)**

David, a descendent of Judah the son of Jacob as well as of Ruth, a Moabite convert to Judaism, was anointed King of Israel by Samuel in 878 BCE. All future legitimate kings of Israel were David's descendents, as will be Moshiach (the messiah), who will “restore the kingdom of David to its glory of old.”

David fought many wars, defeating Israel's enemies and securing and expanding its borders. He conquered Jerusalem, purchased the Temple Mount from its Yebusite owner, and prepared the foundation for the Holy Temple (which was built by his son, King Solomon). David served as the head of the Sanhedrin and the foremost Torah authority of his generation; he is also the “sweet singer of Israel” who composed the Book of Psalms that for 28 centuries has embodied the joys, sorrows and yearnings of the Jewish people.

King David passed away on the 6th of Sivan of the year 837 BCE, age 70.

### **Cologne Jews Martyred (1096)**

During the first crusade (see “Today in Jewish History” for Iyar 8), the Jews of Cologne, Germany chose to be killed rather than convert to Christianity. This was the case, during the first crusades, for many of the Jews who were given the choice between being killed or being baptized. Most of those who converted continued to practice Judaism in secrecy and, one year later, were permitted by Henry IV to openly return to Judaism.

### **Passing of Baal Shem Tov (1760)**

In 1734, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (“BeSHT”, 1698-1760), who up until that time had lived as a hidden tzaddik, began to publicly disseminate his teachings. While adding nothing “new” to Judaism, he re-emphasized truths and doctrines that had been buried under the hardships of exile: the immense love that G-d has for every Jew, the cosmic significance of every mitzvah a person performs, the divine meaningfulness that resides in every blade of grass, in every event, and in every thought in the universe. He spoke to the downtrodden masses and to the aloof scholars, giving meaning to their existence, and thus joy, and thus life. Many disciples came to imbibe the “inner soul” of Torah from him, and the new movement came to be known as “Chassidism.”

Rabbi Israel passed away on the 6th of Sivan of 1760, and was succeeded (one year later, on the first anniversary of his passing) by his disciple, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch.