



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

11 - 17 June, 2017
17 - 23 Sivan, 5777
Numbers 13:1 -15:41
Haftorah: Joshua 2:1 - 24

■ GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH

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REMEMBERING G-D

As the graduating class filed into the auditorium at the University of Maryland, graduates smiled broadly sporting their pristine gowns and caps, and parents in attendance beamed with Nachas.

The commencement speech was a challenging one, other speakers were inspirational. They came and went and everything was in order. But not one of the speeches made any mention of divine help. A recent court ruling now prevented the students and staff from wishing heavenly blessing upon the graduates and their loved ones.

All the speeches were routine. All, that is, until the very last student approached the podium. This speaker would receive a standing ovation from all those present.

The student stepped forward with a sweet smile, stood silently for a moment, and then for two.

Then it happened. All of the graduating students, all ninety-two of them, suddenly sneezed!

The speaking graduate leaned in toward the mic, and said, "G-d bless you." And he walked off the stage.

In this week's Torah Portion we are commanded to keep the Mitzvah of Challah. This requires one who is baking bread to remove a small amount of the dough and set



it aside for G-d.

This Mitzvah creates a very simple yet very meaningful awareness. We should always be conscious of G-d's presence, not only while performing some form of divine service. Our relationship with G-d shouldn't be limited to the synagogue, but rather in all of our actions, even the most trivial and mundane. The awareness of G-d's presence in our lives should be on our minds.

Having a constant awareness of something or someone other than ourselves does not only do us well in our spiritual wellbeing. It can even help us better ourselves as a society. Constantly having in mind someone else, even while doing something so basic such as baking bread, a fundamental means of physical sustenance, creates

Parshat Shelach

within us a healthy awareness of the significant others in our lives.

As human beings, we are wired with a survival instinct which causes us to be super self aware, occasionally to the point of fault.

Awareness of self can be healthy, but it can also detract from our ability to be sensitive to those around us.

We could all make a habit of taking a portion of what is rightfully ours and setting it aside for someone else, be it something physical or even something such as our time. The world would quickly become that much more refined and that much more loving and caring a place - the perfect dwelling place for G-d.

By Rabbi Nissan Friedman

MEN OF STATURE

Moses organizes a reconnaissance mission, gathering some of the leaders of each tribe and sending them into the promised land to scout it out.

Unfortunately, things don't go as planned. The spies come back with long faces. They report that it's "a land which consumes its inhabitants." Its cities are heavily fortified, the people are "giants the sons of giants,"

and the fruits of the land are so enormous it takes a group of grown men just to carry a single bunch of grapes.

Almost all of the returning spies advise against even attempting to enter the land, let alone conquering it.

The people are thrown into a panic! Did we come this far only to be told that the land is unconquerable? Or in the words of the spies, “they are stronger than Him,” implying that the giants of the land were too much even for G-d to overcome?

G-d is enraged. He informs Moses that His divine patience has been tested for the final time. The people will all be stricken with a deadly plague. A new nation will come forth from Moses himself.

“Just think about it,” Moses reasons with G-d, “what will the nations of the world say? They’ll claim that G-d obliterated His people in the desert because He could not overcome the mighty nations of Canaan. This would be a massive desecration of Your holy name.”

G-d listens to Moses’ logic and agrees not to wipe the people out. He will, however, honor their wishes... in a manner of speaking. The Jewish people are destined to wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the last of the guilty generation have died. Then, and only then, will the nation receive G-dly permission to take possession of the promised land.

Who were these men? Why were they so adamantly opposed to entering the Holy Land? They were not just a band of randomly selected travelers, but rather were handpicked by Moses for this important mission. In the Torah’s own words, “All were men of stature, heads of the Children of Israel.” How could they have been so off target in terms of what G-d wanted?

Chassidut explains that, ironically, it was their tremendous spiritual stature which made them behave this way. The very fact that they were such “men of stature” contributed to their unwillingness to enter the land.

All throughout the time that the Jews spent in the desert, they lived by miraculous means. They ate manna from heaven, drank from the miraculous Well of Miriam, and were protected from the elements by the Clouds of Glory. This was the ideal situation for someone whose primary goal in life is to learn Torah and celebrate G-d and His wondrous ways. That was all they’d been doing with their time in the wilderness.

Then came the prospect of entering the land. That meant leaving the supernatural life of the desert, dealing with planting and harvesting. That meant worrying about mundane matters such as physical sustenance and business dealings.

Such things had become so foreign to these great men of stature that they were convinced that engaging in them would cause the people to become “consumed by the land,” i.e. to get so caught up in the grind of daily physical life that they would lose touch with G-dliness and become completely absorbed in physicality.

However, although their intentions were noble, they had failed to understand the very purpose for G-d’s delivering us from slavery and preparing to bring us to the Land which He has Promised to our forefathers.

The bottom line of it all is in order to enable us, mankind, to engage with the physical and mundane and transform the world in its physical state into a proper home for G-d. He didn’t want us to hide from the world, busying ourselves with only our own betterment. He wants us to “get our hands dirty,” dealing with the lowest of the low, and elevate it ever so slightly, refining ourselves and our surroundings little by little.

Each of us can, and therefore must deal with worldly matters as we encounter them, because every encounter is nothing less than an opportunity to leave this world a bit better than we found it.

By Rabbi Nissan Friedman

In Jewish History

Sunday, 17 Sivan, 5777 - June 11, 2017

Noah’s Ark on Mt. Ararat (2105 BCE)

Seven months after the beginning of the Great Flood, and 17 days after the waters covering the earth began to subside, the Ark sheltering Noah, his family, and members of all animal species came to rest on the (still submerged) summit of Mount Ararat.

Hasmonean Victory (circa 140 BCE)

The Hasmonean fighters recaptured Migdal Tzur from the Greek enemy and proclaimed this day a holiday (*Talmud, Megilat Taanit*).