



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

# TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

9 - 15 July, 2017

15 - 21 Tammuz, 5777

Numbers 25:10 - 30:1

**Haftorah:**

Jeremiah 1:1 - 2:3

## ■ 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.

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

## ■ TORAH STUDIES

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## NOT JUST ABOUT THE SOUL

The end of last week's Torah portion tells of the heroic act of Pinchas, who was zealous for G-d's honor when some of the Jewish men sinned with the daughters of Moab. This week's parshah opens with G-d's blessing of Pinchas: "[He] turned back My wrath from the Israelites by displaying among them his passion for Me, . . . therefore, I grant him My pact of friendship. It shall be for him, and his descendants after him, a pact of priesthood for all time."

But what about Moses? He turned away G-d's anger from the Jewish people numerous times during the forty-year trek in the desert, and yet received no reward for it. On the contrary, when he asked for his sons to replace him after his death, G-d told him to appoint Joshua instead. Why do Pinchas and his offspring receive such an incredible reward for a one-time zealous act?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, explained that the answer is found in the words of one translation, that Pinchas "avenged My vengeance amongst them." There is a fundamental difference between the service of Moses and Pinchas. Moses sought to mitigate G-d's anger against

Israel through prayer. In contrast, Pinchas's action took place not in the supernal realms, but rather "below," in the physical world. Moses was top-down; Pinchas operated from the bottom up.

This distinction is also reflected in the forms of the two leaders' self-sacrifice. After the incident of the golden calf, Moses told G-d that if He did not forgive the Jewish people, He should erase Moses' name from the Torah. Moses' was a very bold act, for sure, but he placed only his soul and spirituality on the line. Pinchas, on the other hand, engaged his entire self; his physical being was risked.

## Two Divergent Roads

Moses and Pinchas symbolize two paths in fulfilling our divinely given duties. The overall goal of our existence is to purify the material world and transform it into a vessel for holiness. This can be accomplished in one of two manners. In the manner of Moses, who transmitted the Torah, we can bring from above the intensity of G-d's light and spirit, and lay it upon the world.

Or we can emulate Pinchas. This approach is one of self-transformation, repentance and return—a spiritual cleaning that works from the inside out. This refines the coarse physicality and makes it receptive to G-d's light.

## Parshat Pinchas

As holy and lofty as Moses' service is, it is deficient. The holiness from above does not bond, unify and totally fuse with physical reality, because it comes to the scene as an outsider. After the great experience of Mount Sinai with the giving of the Torah, it took only forty days for the children of Israel to sin. Moses' approach has no permanence or longevity; consequently, he did not merit to have his sons inherit his position.

Pinchas's approach effects the material world on its level. From within, the material reality is purified and made into a receptacle for the divine light.

We need, therefore, to be cautious in our own divine tasks. If we focus exclusively on our spiritual needs—prayer and Torah study—at the expense of our physical, the benefit may not last long. One gains eternity only by combining what concerns the soul with that which is "outside" the spiritual, thereby purifying the physical world to make it hospitable to the divine..

*By Rabbi Shraga Sherman*

## FAST DAY

Tammuz 17 is a fast day, devoted to mourning the breaching of Jerusalem's walls and the other tragic events that occurred on this day (see "Today in Jewish History")

and repenting and rectifying their causes. We refrain from all food and drink from “daybreak” (about an hour before sunrise, depending on location) until nightfall. Special prayers and Torah readings are added to the day’s services.

## THE THREE WEEKS

The Three Weeks is an annual mourning period that falls out in the summer. This is when we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple and our launch into a still-ongoing exile.

The period begins on the 17th of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, a fast day that marks the day when the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans in 69 CE.

It reaches its climax and concludes with the fast of the 9th of Av, the date when both Holy Temples were set aflame. This is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar, and it is also the date that many other tragedies befell our people.

### Observances:

There are various mourning-related customs and observances that are followed for the entire three-week period (until midday of the 10th of the Hebrew month of Av, or—if that date falls on Friday—the morning of that day). We do not cut our hair, purchase new clothes, or listen to music. No weddings are held.

17 Tammuz is a fast day, on which we refrain from eating and drinking from dawn to nightfall.

The final Nine Days of the Three Weeks are a time of intensified mourning. Starting on the first of Av, we refrain from eating meat or drinking wine, and from wearing freshly laundered clothes.

9 Av is a more stringent fast than 17 Tammuz. It begins at sunset of the previous evening, when we gather to read the Book of Lamentations. Besides fasting, we abstain from additional pleasures: washing, applying lotions or creams, wearing leather shoes, and marital relations. Until midday, we sit on the floor or on low stools.

There is more to the Three Weeks than fasting and lamentation. Our sages tell us that those who mourn the destruction of Jerusalem will merit seeing it rebuilt with the coming of Moshiach. May that day come soon, and then all the mournful dates on the calendar

will be transformed into days of tremendous joy and happiness.

### LAWS OF THE TEMPLE:

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of blessed and sainted memory, encouraged us to study the laws of the holy temple, its construction and use, during the three weeks we mourn its destruction.

By studying these laws, and increasing in our love and kindness to our fellow Jew and fellow man, we will merit the evil decree of our exile be annulled.

Send a note to our office and we will send out learning materials, so you can become well versed in the laws of the Temple.

## In Jewish History

*Tuesday, 17 Tammuz, 5777 - July 11, 2017*

### Moses Breaks Tablets (1313 BCE)

The Talmud (Taanit 28b) lists five tragic events in Jewish history that occurred on Tammuz 17, on account of which a fast was instituted on this day (see Laws & Customs”).

The first of these occurred in 1313 BCE, forty days after the Giving of the Torah on Sivan 6. Upon descending Mount Sinai and witnessing Israel’s worship of the Golden Calf (see “Today in Jewish History” for yesterday, Tammuz 16), Moses smashed the Tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments which he was carrying down from the mountain.

### Temple Service Disrupted (423 BCE)

The daily sacrificial offerings (Korban Tamid) in the Holy Temple were discontinued, three weeks before the Babylonians’ destruction of the First Temple in 423 BCE.

### Jerusalem Walls Breached (69 CE)

The other three national tragedies mourned on Tammuz 17 are connected with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and their destruction of the Second Temple in the year 69 CE:

- The walls of the besieged city of Jerusalem were breached.
- The Roman general Apostomus burned the Torah and, placed an idol in the Holy Temple.
- The fighting in Jerusalem continued for three weeks until the 9th of Av, when the Holy Temple was set aflame.