



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

23 - 29 July, 2017

29 Tammuz - 6 Av, 5777

Torah:

Deuteronomy 1:1 - 3:22

Haftarah:

Isaiah 1:1-27

■ 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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■ TORAH STUDIES

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HOW IS YOUR VISION?

What does it mean to be visionary, to have a vision for your life and pursuits?

In a basic sense, this means conceptualizing goals and objectives; it means considering future potential and focusing on a target for growth. It means recognizing that "now" isn't all that there is.

"Now"—disconnected from the future and its possibilities—can be stale and aimless.

"Now" is our reality; but vision can breathe commitment, animation and hope into that reality.

Vision brings optimism and direction; it is the North Star which guides the efforts that actually bring our dream to life.

The problem is that with the passage of time it becomes more difficult for the realistic person to continue dreaming. Disappointments eventually take their toll on the human psyche.

Which raises the question: When does one learn to adjust one's expectations and recognize that that dreams are . . . just dreams?

Never.

While we should always be acutely aware of reality, warts

and all, we can never stop believing in—and working toward—a brighter future.

Consider this: Our Holy Temple, along with our entire Jewish commonwealth, was destroyed by the Romans almost two thousand years ago.

It's been rough ever since, and we're fully aware of our reality. Every year, on Tisha B'Av, the 9th of Av, we mournfully remember the destruction and recognize the pain of our own times.

Yet, interestingly, the preceding Shabbat is always observed as a "Shabbat of Vision." The Shabbat's reading from the Prophets begins with the words Chazon Yeshayahu, the "vision of Isaiah" regarding the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, an eighteenth-century legendary chassidic master, taught a deeper reason for the moniker "Shabbat of Vision." Every year, he explained, on the Shabbat before our collective day of mourning, G-d shows us a Vision of the Future. We are shown a vision of a rebuilt Temple, a reconstituted people and a better world.

G-d equips us for the mourning by ensuring that hope—the Vision—never dies; this Shabbat ensures that our sobering recognition of "now" doesn't smother our hope for the future.

Parshat Devarim

I can't see this divinely granted vision with my physical eyes; but if G-d is showing it to me, it must be resonating somewhere in my soul.

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So this Shabbat, I'll prepare to tackle reality on Tisha B'Av by first searching myself to find G-d's vision of a beautiful future.

Will you join me?

By Rabbi Mendy Herson

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SENDING YOUR CHILD AWAY?

Last week, my youngest daughter left for a full month of camp, for her first time.

In the last few weeks, we went to buy her everything she would need. Together, we sat on her bed and labeled all her possessions. And we packed all her belongings into a huge suitcase and a duffel bag.

We spoke a lot about what she

could expect in camp. We spoke about different scenarios, and how she could be prepared to deal with them. What if she'd be homesick? What if someone at camp was a bully? What if she became sick?

And then, my husband and I drove her the long distance. We helped her put her bags onto the bus that would take her for the final ride to her camp grounds. We waved goodbye a million times and hugged her just as many.

And now she is on her own.

There's a bitter-sweetness to sending your child away. You worry about if she will fall asleep at night. You worry about her making new friends. You worry about the food and the many mosquitoes.

But ultimately you trust your child to her own devices, realizing that it is time for her to experience this taste of independence. You realize that as a parent you can only prepare your child so much. Ultimately, she needs to spread her wings and fly on her own.

And perhaps that's a bit of what this week's parshah is about.

Although the five books of the Bible were written by Moses, the first four books were transcribed, word for word, as dictated by G-d, while Devarim was written by Moses "in his own words."

Moses, a human being, took the Divine intellect and processed it through his own mind so that it became part of him. G-d wants us to learn from Moses, too, how to use our own words to create a G-dly experience. To use our own talents, personalities and actions to express the Divine will. To take the wisdom that G-d gave us, and apply it to our lives.

And to do so, we need to experience the ups and downs, the successes and the mistakes of our independence.

That is why this section is read on the Shabbat before the Ninth of Av, the saddest day on our national calendar. It reminds us that, while independence has many challenges, ultimately, the loss of the Temples and the subsequent exile will result in a greater elevation. In the final redemption, at the end of our long and lonely journey, we will experience a more intimate relationship with G-d, precisely because of our own independent efforts.

Oh, and as I write, I just was emailed a picture of my daughter. She is fearlessly rope coursing and has climbed to the very top. She is smiling from ear to ear. And now, so am I.

By Chana Weisberg

"Nine Days"

During the "Nine Days" from Av 1st to the Ninth of Av, we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple. We abstain from meat and wine, music, haircutting, bathing for pleasure, and other joyous (and dangerous) activities.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of righteous memory initiated the custom of conducting or participating in a siyum on each of the Nine Days (even if one does not avail oneself of the dispensation to eat meat).

Citing the verse "Zion shall be redeemed with mishpat [Torah] and its returnees with tzedakah," (Isaiah 1:27) the Rebbe urged that we increase in Torah study (particularly the study of the laws of the Holy Temple) and charity during this period.

In Jewish History

Sunday, 29 Tammuz, 5777 - July 23, 2017

Passing of Rashi (1105)

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as "Rashi", passed away on the 29th of Tammuz of the year 4865 from creation (1105 CE).

Rashi was born in Troyes, France, in 1040. His commentaries on the Torah, Prophets and Talmud are universally accepted as the most basic tool for the understanding of these texts for schoolchild and scholar alike. Numerous commentaries have been authored on his commentary. In his famed "Rashi talks", the Lubavitcher Rebbe repeatedly demonstrated how Rashi's "simple meaning of the text" style unfolds many layers of meaning, often resolving profound difficulties in the text and presenting new, innovative interpretations with a simple word choice or rephrasing of a Midrashic passage.

Friday, 5 Av, 5777 - July 28, 2017

Passing of "Ari" (1572)

Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, known as Ari HaKadosh ("The Holy Lion") passed away on the 5th of Av of the year 5332 from creation (1572 CE). Born in Jerusalem in 1534, he spent many years in secluded study near Cairo, Egypt. In 1570 he settled in Safed, where he lived for two years until his passing at age 38. During that brief period, the Ari revolutionized the study of Kabbalah, and came to be universally regarded as one of the most important figures in Jewish mysticism. It was he who proclaimed, "In these times, we are allowed and duty-bound to reveal this wisdom," opening the door to the integration of the teachings of Kabbalah--until then the province of a select few in each generation--into "mainstream" Judaism.