



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

# TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

30 July - 5 August, 2017

7 - 13 Av, 5777

**Torah:**

Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

**Haftorah:**

Isaiah 40:1-26

## ■ 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.

## ■ ROSH HASHANAH, YOM KIPPUR SUKKOT

*The high holidays are weeks away! Make the necessary arrangements with your Rabbi and institutional chaplain, to ensure you are able to celebrate.*

*Our order forms are due in very soon.*

## ■ TORAH STUDIES

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

## ALEPH INSTITUTE

Hyman & Martha Rogal  
Center

5804 Beacon Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

www.alephne.org

info@alephne.org

## A DOUBLE PORTION OF COMFORT

This week's haftorah is the first of seven consoling the Jewish people. After the Three Weeks of darkness and destruction, G-d consoles us through the words of His prophet Isaiah. Each week, the consoling grows more and more powerful.

This Shabbat is called Shabbat Nachamu because the haftorah starts with G-d's words to Isaiah: Nachamu, nachamu ami ("Console, console My nation").

Since this is the first haftorah of consolation, shouldn't we begin with one nachamu—a basic level of comfort—and adding as we go in the coming weeks? What is the idea of starting off with a double expression of consoling?

A double expression such as nachamu nachamu means more than two. Rather, it is an expression of "muchness" in quality and quantity. Not only is this consoling of great intensity, but it is ongoing. And since this is the first in a series of seven, it sets the standard for all subsequent consoling yet to come.

In a few weeks, we will read in a haftorah with another double expression. Whereas now G-d is asking His prophets to console us, there

He will take it to a new level. "I, it is I Who consoles you," says G-d. This double "I" is G-d saying that His comfort comes from the deepest part of His essence. Even deeper than the giving of the Ten Commandments, which begins with only one "I," "I am the L-rd your G-d." This is because when Moshiach comes and we will experience G-d's consoling, it will be even greater than what we saw at Mount Sinai. It will be G-d's deepest essence.

It is true. Following the devastation that befell our people during the Three Weeks, one would think: "Take it slow; first console a little and see if the people can handle so much." But we Jews know that we are always close to G-d; even in times of exile and darkness, He is one with us. With the double nachamu, G-d is saying: "You can handle a full measure of comfort with all its intensity."

This is especially relevant now when we are so close to the coming of Moshiach, and darkness is doubled. We must realize that only our physical existence is in exile. Our spiritual essence, however, is always free and one with G-d. One day we will see the fruits of our labor—a double comfort as the physical will also be set free, and our bodies will experience G-d's essence as well. As our haftorah says "And G-d's glory will be revealed, and all

flesh together will see that the mouth of G-d spoke."

My wife, Dina, asked me: "When every month you were losing more and more abilities to ALS, you just said, 'Let's figure out how to deal with it.' How come it didn't seem to faze you?"

I responded, simply, that I was crazy.

But the truth is that I am certain that G-d is doing this to me for a good reason, and I feel like He has chosen me for a specific mission. I don't necessarily like being unable to do anything and I surely don't wish this on anyone, but if He put me in this situation, then I will use it to accomplish His mission. Soon, this mission will be complete, and the difficult situation will be unnecessary.

The same is true for all of us in this exile. G-d has chosen us to accomplish His deepest desire. He put us here, in this dark exile, to accomplish this mission because it can only be accomplished here. Very soon, because of our efforts, the mission will be accomplished, and we will reap the rewards. This exile will end, and we will be truly consoled, forever.

May it happen soon.

*By Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz  
Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz—father  
of seven, husband of Dina,  
and spiritual leader at Cha-*

*bad Jewish Center in Temecula, Calif.—has been rendered immobile by ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Unable to speak or type, he uses his eyes to write heartfelt thoughts on the weekly Torah portion.*

## THE UNBEARABLE HEAVINESS OF BEING

Perhaps the most radical statement by Judaism is to be found in this week's Torah reading. "G-d is," says Moses to the assembled people of Israel. "There is nothing else" (Deuteronomy 4:35).

Some would be quick to point out that a number of eastern religions and philosophies also make the inexistence of the universe a central component of their world-view. Life is a dream, reality an illusion, in truth all is nothingness. But that's not what Judaism says. Judaism says that there is a world -- the first sentence of the Torah states that G-d created one, and the rest of the Torah instructs what should be done with it. Those who seek to escape reality are called "sinners". And yet, at the very same time, G-d is the only existence -- "There is nothing else."

Hundreds of discourses and thousands of pages of Chassidic teaching are devoted to discussing this paradox, which touches on the very crux of Judaism. You'll find samplings of these discussions in this week's magazine -- in Tzvi Freeman's six-part essay on Freedom of Choice and in the "From the Chassidic Masters" section of our Parshah summary. But in this article, I'd like to ask a very un-philosophical question: So what?

So I don't exist. Or I don't exist and do exist at the same time. So what? I still have to get up in the morning, I still have to deal with my landlord, my credit card balance, my mother-in-law, my co-workers and this guy whose elbow is crushing my ribs on this crowded subway car. It might make interesting reading, but in the final analysis, what difference does it make?

The problem is, "so what?" happens to be Chassidim's favorite question. Which means that there are at least as many pages discussing the practical implications and applications of the existence/non-existence paradox as those discussing the paradox itself. This is not going to help us make this discussion any shorter.

So let me just leave you with one thought. Think back to the last time you argued with a friend, or the last time you lashed out in anger at a loved one or a stranger. Now ask yourself: what if you took yourself just a little bit less seriously? What if you were just a tiny bit less certain that you actually exist?

*By Rabbi Yanki Tauber*

## In Jewish History

**Tuesday, 9 Av, 5777 - August 1, 2017**

### **Exodus Generation Condemned to Die in Desert (1312 BCE)**

On the Ninth of Av of the year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE), the generation of Jews who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership 16 months earlier were condemned to die in the desert and the entry into the Land of Israel was delayed for 40 years.

As related in Numbers 14, when the Spies that Moses sent to the Land of Canaan returned with their disheartening report (see "Today in Jewish History" for yesterday, Av 8), the people wept all night -- the night of Av 9th -- proclaiming that they'd rather return to Egypt than attempt to conquer and settle it; G-d decreed that the entire generation would wander in the desert for 40 years until the last of them died out, and that their children, under the leadership of Joshua, will enter the land He promised as Israel's heritage.

This is the first of five national tragedies that occurred on Av 9 listed by the Talmud (Taanit 4:6), due to which the day was designated as a fast day. The other four are: the destruction of the two Temples, the fall of Betar, and the plowing over of Jerusalem. (see below)

### **Holy Temples Destroyed (423 BCE and 69 CE)**

Both the first and second Holy Temples which stood in Jerusalem were destroyed on Av 9: the First Temple by the Babylonians in the year 3338 from creation (423 BCE), and the second by the Romans in 3829 (69 CE).

The Temples' destruction represents the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, for it marks our descent into Galut--the state of physical exile and spiritual displacement in which we still find ourselves today. Thus the Destruction is mourned as a tragedy that affects our lives today, 2,000 years later, no less than the very generation that experienced it first hand.

Yet the Ninth of Av is also a day of hope. The Talmud relates that Moshiach ("anointed one"--the Messiah), was born at the very moment that the Temple was set aflame and the Galut began. [This is in keeping with the teachings of our sages that, "In every generation is born a descendent of Judah who is worthy to become Israel's Moshiach" (Bartinoro on Ruth); "When the time will come, G-d will reveal Himself to him and send him, and then the spirit of Moshiach, which is hidden and secreted on high, will be manifested in him" (Chattam Sofer).]

**Also: Fall of Betar (133 CE) / Expulsion from England (1290) / Spanish Expulsion (1492)**