



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

# TORAH WEEKLY

ת"וב

6 - 12 August, 2017

14 - 20 Av, 5777

**Torah:**

Deuteronomy 7:12 - 11:25

**Haftarah:**

Isaiah 49:14 - 51:3

## ■ 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.

## ■ 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.*

## ■ 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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## SEE THE BLESSINGS IN LIFE

Only this, I ask of G-d: Grant me the wisdom to see the blessing in life's challenges. Help me to understand and to feel that when You make things difficult for me instead of easy, it's never because you hate me, G-d forbid, but because You love me know I can do better.

Help me to understand and to feel that when my carefully prepared plans fall apart as circumstances suddenly change, it's not because You're out to get me, but because You're out to test me, to make me stronger.

Help me to understand and to feel that when the going gets tough and tears start flowing, it isn't because You've stepped away from me, but because You're so close, and holding my hand so tight, that I can forge even this raging river.

Help me to understand and to feel that when I feel like my life is filled with darkness because I can't see the way forward, it's the blinding light of Your presence that I'm seeing, and everything is really going to be okay, and even better than before.

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In Parshat Eikev, Moses ma-

kes not one but two declarations in this vein.

First Moses issues a stern warning to the Jewish People regarding the test of wealth. "Lest you eat and be sated... and your silver and gold increase, and all that you have increases, and your heart grows haughty, and you forget the Lord, your God... and you will say to yourself, 'My strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated this wealth for me.' But you must remember the Lord your God, for it is He that gives you strength to make wealth, in order to establish His covenant which He swore to your forefathers, as it is this day."

With these words Moses implies in a gentle and subtle way that the possibility of forgetting about G-d – which inevitably leads to forgetting the purpose and meaning of life – is far more likely when the good times are rolling. During lean times, people turn to G-d and seek Him out – leading inevitably to a focused and meaningful life. In this way, Moses pleads silently with his People to always remember this delicate truth: challenges are not a bad thing; in fact they are a blessing. Don't let them derail you; use their energy to become stronger than ever. Then, a few verses later, Moses describes Israel, the land promised to the Jews:

"For the land to which you

## Parshat Eikev

are coming to possess is not like the land of Egypt, out of which you came, where you sowed your seed and which you watered by foot, like a vegetable garden. But the land, to which you pass to possess, is a land of mountains and valleys and absorbs water from the rains of heaven." By reminding them that in Israel they would depend on rain (unlike Egypt which looked forward confidently to the annual overflow of the Nile river) Moses is making the same point again. The lack and the uncertainty which compel you to lift your eyes to Heaven in prayer are a blessing in not-so-much disguise. Because while it might make it a little harder to make a living, it makes it a whole lot easier to have a life.

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At the Aleph Institute, these ideas are more than deep thoughts; they're a way of life. To rebound from a serious fall in life, a person needs to be able to believe that the misfortune can be converted into a stroke of good fortune, provided the proper lessons are learned and immense energy found in grief and regret is channeled into constructive action.

Yesterday's questionable decisions which led to today's challenges can become tomorrow's blessing. With a little prayer, a little mazal, and a lot of determination, it

can happen. It must happen. And with G-d's help, it will happen.

Shabbat Shalom.

*By Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel*

## Passing of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

Shabbat (August 12, 2017) Av 20 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1878-1944), in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was Chief Rabbi of Yekaterinoslav (currently Dnepropetrovsk), was arrested and exiled to Kazakhstan by the Stalinist regime as a result of his work to preserve Jewish life in the Soviet Union.

The Rebbe would celebrate the yahrtzeit, by teaching the notes his father wrote during his exile.

## Blowing of the Shofar

Wednesday August 23rd begins the Jewish month of Elul.

The month of Elul is a month of preparation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. That's why Jews blow the shofar (almost) every day of the month.

The optimum shofar-blowing time is in the morning.

However we may still blow the shofar any time before sundown.

We blow the shofar every day other than Shabbat, starting from Elul 1 and ending on Elul 28. We do not blow on Elul 29, the day before Rosh Hashanah.

If your institution does not have a shofar, please advise us at Aleph Institute, we will send one to the Institution.

## In Jewish History

*Monday, 15 Av, 5777 - August 7, 2017*

### **End of Dying in Desert (1274 BCE)**

In wake of the incident of the "Spies," in which the generation that came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership demonstrated their unpreparedness for the task of conquering and settling the Holy Land, G-d decreed that entire generation would die out in the desert (see "Today in Jewish History" for Av 8 and Av 9). After 38 years of wandering through the wilderness the dying finally ended, and a new generation of Jews stood ready to enter the Holy Land. It was the 15th of Av of the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE)

### **Ban on Inter-Tribal Marriage Lifted (13th century BCE)**

In order to ensure the orderly division of the Holy Land between the twelve tribes of Israel, restrictions had been placed on marriages between members of two different tribes. A woman who had inherited tribal lands from her father was forbidden to marry out of her tribe, lest her children -- members of their father's tribe -- cause the transfer of land from one tribe to another by inheriting her estate (Number 36). This ordinance was binding only on the generation that conquered and settled the Holy Land during the 14-year period 2488-2503 from creation (1273-1258 BCE); when the restriction was lifted, on the 15th of Av, the event was considered a cause for celebration and festivity.

### **Tribe of Benjamin Re-Admitted (circa 1228 BCE)**

Av 15 was the day on which the tribe of Benjamin, which had been excommunicated for its behavior in the incident of the "Concubine at Givah," was readmitted into the community of Israel (as related in Judges 19-21). The event occurred during the judgeship of Othniel ben Knaz, who led the people of Israel in the years 2533-2573 from creation (1228-1188 BCE).

### **Jeroboam's Roadblocks Removed (574 BCE)**

Upon the division of the Holy Land into two kingdoms following the death of King Solomon in the year 2964 from creation (797 BCE), Jeroboam ben Nebat, ruler of the breakaway Northern Kingdom of Israel, set up roadblocks to prevent his citizens from making the thrice-yearly pilgrimage to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judea. These were finally removed more than 200 years later by Hosea ben Eilah, the last king of the Northern Kingdom, on Av 15, 3187 (574 BCE).

### **Betar Dead Buried (148 CE)**

The fortress of Betar was the last holdout of the Bar Kochba rebellion. When Betar fell on the 9th of Av, 3893 (133 CE), Bar Kochba and many thousands of Jews were killed; the Romans massacred the survivors of the battle with great cruelty and would not even allow the Jews to bury their dead. For 15 years their remains were left scattered on the battlefield. When the dead of Betar were finally brought to burial on Av 15 of the year 3908 from creation (148 CE), an additional blessing (HaTov VevaMeitiv) was added to the "Grace After Meals" in commemoration.

### **Matchmaking Day**

In ancient Israel, it was the custom that on the 15th of Av "the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed linen garments (so as not to embarrass those without beautiful clothes of their own)... and dance in the vineyards" and "whoever did not have a wife would go there" to find himself a bride (*Talmud*,

*Taanit 31a*).