



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

3 - 9 September, 2017

12 - 18 Elul, 5777

Torah:

Deuteronomy 26:1 - 29:8

Haftorah:

Isaiah 60:1 - 22

■ 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.

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MALEDICTION

2.0

Moses; the ultimate leader. Caring, loving, and even putting himself on the line for his people.

In this week's Torah portion we read part of Moses' parting words to his beloved nation. It goes something like this:

"The Lord will cause you to be broken before your enemy... you will flee from them in seven directions. And you will become a terrifying [example] to all the kingdoms on earth."

Now, some might suggest that these words don't sound quite as loving and caring as one might expect. On the surface this may be the case, but there is another, more subtle point made here.

Take, for example, Rabbi Akiva. After the destruction of the holy temple, Rabbi Akiva and two other sages were walking along the desolate ruins, when they noticed a fox emerged from the rubble which was once the Holy of Holies. While the two sages who were with him began to cry unconsolably, Rabbi Akiva himself began to laugh! The sages asked, "Why are you laughing?!" To which he replied, "Why are you crying?!"

He then explained, "The prophets foretold of the destruction. We knew it would be God's will. However the prophets also foretold of the wonders and blessings which are to come in the future, after the destruction and exile! So when I see the first prophecy so clearly fulfilled, I laugh with joy and excitement in anticipation of the fulfillment of the second prophecy."

"Akiva, you have truly comforted us," they replied. When Moses foretells of the misfortune which will befall the Jewish people as a result of their sins, he is not only giving them a warning, perhaps so that they can prepare themselves in some way. It's more than that. He is giving the people hope to hold onto during troubled times.

No matter how impossibly difficult things may seem, we know it has all been promised by God himself. This is not just a bad turn in the course of nature, it is God's hand, and for whatever reason there may be, He knows that this is what is best for us.

Keeping faith in the divinity of everything that occurs is the key to the survival of a small nation amongst many much larger. The suffering is but the first prophecy. There will come about the promise made in next week's Torah portion: "The Lord, your God, will bring back

Parshat Ki Tavo

your exiles, and He will have mercy upon you... And the Lord, your God, will place all these curses upon your enemies..." The second prophecy. It may look bad, but it is God's will. All we can do is pray for the day when we, too, will understand its value.

By Rabbi Nissan Friedman

BREAD [IS] FROM HEAVEN

Sender was the devoted caretaker of the famed Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the Rebbe of Lublin. The Rebbe was known as the "Chozev," or Seer of Lublin, as he often performed wonders and his blessings were often fulfilled in miraculous ways.

Amongst Sender's many duties and responsibilities as caretaker was serving the Rebbe his meals every evening. After a long day of tending to the many needs of the community and the individual, interspersed with deeply focused Torah study, the Rebbe would come home and sit down for dinner which had been dutifully prepared for him by his caretaker. Every night, the Rebbe would sit in his place at the table, raise his eyes toward the heavens and exclaim, "Master of the universe, please provide me with some sustenance!"

Right on queue, every night, Sender would emerge carrying the Rebbe's meal and place it on the table before him. "Thank You, God," the Rebbe

would say. He would then quietly eat his meal, before returning to his Torah study.

Although he certainly believed that it is indeed God who provides our sustenance, it still bothered Sender ever so slightly. "Why does the Rebbe give God so much credit," he'd say to himself, "when the fact of the matter is, I am the one who purchases, prepares and serves the Rebbe's food each and every night..?"

It happened once that a woman came to the Rebbe's door looking particularly distraught. "My husband and my son are traveling overseas," she explained, "and the ship they were on has gone missing!" Bursting into tears, she cried out, "Rebbe! Will I ever see them again?!"

"My dear woman," responded the Rebbe softly, "You must maintain your faith in God. He will provide and protect, just as he provides for us each and every day. May you and your family be blessed with miracles."

From the next room, Sender the caretaker overheard this exchange. He could no longer take it. He felt he had to do something to help the Rebbe attain some sense of "reality." "Tomorrow," Sender thought, "when the Rebbe asks God for his daily sustenance, nothing will come from it. It is not until the Rebbe asks for the food from me directly that his food will arrive. That should bring him to his senses."

Sure enough, the next day when the Rebbe of Lublin sat down for dinner, raised his holy eyes heavenward and asked, "Master of the universe, please provide my sustenance." - nothing happened. No Sender, no food, no sustenance.

The Rebbe sat quietly, patiently for a moment. Then for two. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. Sender instinctively went to open it, and in marched the distraught woman from the day before, only this time she was smiling ear to ear. "Rebbe!" She called out excitedly, "It is a miracle! My husband and son have arrived home safely! We wanted to thank you for your blessing, please accept this gift..."

And with those words she placed on the table, right before the eyes of a shocked and very humbled caretaker, a large basket full of food.

Gratitude. What a concept. Being thankful for the good one receives, and showing it, too! But before one can express his gratitude, one must understand to whom his gratitude is due. When man plows, plants and harvests a field of healthy produce, he may easily feel like it is merely his hard labor and the work of his hands that brought about the wonderful crops which were produced. In reality, our efforts are only the vessel through which God sends us his blessings.

But the Torah provides a precautionary measure through which we can avoid such misguided thinking.

Before a person may enjoy the fruits of his labor, he must bring "Bikurim." He must take the first fruits of his crop and bring them to Jerusalem as a sign of gratitude. He thanks the one true source of his successful harvest. The Master of the universe. He who provides and protects us each and every day.

By Rabbi Nissan Friedman

CHAI ELUL

Shabbat, 18 Elul (September 9) marks the Birthday of Rabbi Israel Ball Shem Tov (1698) and Rabbi Schneur Zalaman of Liadi (1745).

In Jewish History

Sunday, 12 Elul, 5777 - September 3, 2017

Nachmanides Born (1194)

Birth of Nachmanides ("Ramban", Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) -- Torah scholar, Kabbalist, philosopher, physician and Jewish leader -- in Gerona, Spain, in the year 4954 from creation.

Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe visits US (1929)

On the 12th of Elul (September 16) of 1929, two years after escaping a death sentence imposed upon him by the Russian Communist regime and his subsequent departure from that country, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, arrived in New York for a ten-month tour of the United States. In the course of his stay the Rebbe visited the Jewish communities in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, S. Louis, Boston and several other communities, and was received by President Hoover at the White House. The purpose of the Rebbe's visit was twofold: a) to bring the plight of Russian Jewry to the attention of the American Jewish community and raise funds for the Rebbe's efforts on its behalf; b) to improve the state of Yiddishkeit (Torah-true Judaism) in America and strengthen the ties of the American Chabad-Chassidic community with the Rebbe. The Rebbe also wished to explore the possibility of settling in the U.S. and establishing the headquarters of Chabad there; though he did not decide to do so at that time, his 1929 visit laid the foundations for his move to New York in 1940 and the revolutionary changes he wrought in American Jewish life.

During his time in the US, the Rebbe stayed in the home of his trusted student, Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson, who later became his secretary. The bed, the Rebbe used, is a treasured family heirloom and currently graces the library at the Aleph Institute in Pittsburgh.