



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**

No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

19 - 25 November, 2017

1 - 7 Kislev, 5778

Torah:

Genesis 28:10 - 32:3

Haftorah:

Hosea 11:7 - 12:14

■ CALENDARS

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask your Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ CHANUKAH GELT

Please ask the chaplain for the 'Chanukah Gelt Form'.

Your children will receive Chanukah Gelt from you.

Happy Chanukah!

■ FAST OF TEVET-

The fast of 10th Tevet (12/28/2017) is fast approaching, please send in the necessary paperwork to the chaplain and food service so you receive the bag lunch.

The Abarbanel writes, if the 10th of Tevet would be a Shabbat, we would be required to fast!

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FEELING STUCK

Philosophers have long struggled with the great question of our freedom of choice on the one hand, and our belief in a higher destiny on the other. Is life determined by fate, or do we enjoy genuine freedom?

Generally, Judaism would seem to subscribe to a personal freedom in matters of morality, faith and the ethical choices we make in life. But when it comes to things like life and death, and even health and wealth, much as we would like to think we are in the driver's seat, we do seem to be subject to forces beyond our control. Where we live, how long we will live, how comfortably we will live—these are all in G-d's hands. Where we can and must choose is what kind of life we will lead. Whether it will be a G-dly, righteous, upstanding, decent and honest life—this is up to us, and us alone. G-d steps back to grant us the freedom to determine how good, how kind and how Jewish we will, or will not, be.

And Jacob lifted his feet and went on his way (Genesis 29:1). This verse from our Parshah tells of Jacob's journey in his escape from the wrath of Esau. He was en route to Haran, where he would eventually establish his family and lay the foundations for the Jewish people. But why the curious lan-

guage, "And Jacob lifted his feet"? Does the Torah really need to tell us that in order to move, we have to first lift our feet? Was he stuck in a swamp or something?

So many of us look at our circumstances and shrug our shoulders, "Nu, what can you do?" If we were born into poverty or raised in a less-than-privileged environment, we resign ourselves to being doomed to failure. So many people have told me that they were part of the "lost generation" of Jews who had no Jewish education or upbringing. Their immigrant parents were so busy surviving in a new world that they had no time or headspace to raise their children with the Jewish value system they themselves had back in Europe. Tragically, these individuals felt that, Jewishly, they were lost forever.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom) tells the story of how, as a young philosophy student at Cambridge, he traveled the world visiting great leaders. When he came to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe asked him what he was doing for the Jewish students at Cambridge. He began by saying, "In the circumstances I currently find myself . . ." whereupon the Rebbe interrupted him and said, "No one 'finds himself' in circumstances. We create our own circumstances."

Of course, there are times when we will find

ourselves in circumstances beyond our control; but throughout life, we will find ample scope and opportunities to improve our own circumstances. G-d gives each of us our own unique qualities, talents and potential, and it is up to us to use and develop these gifts. Life is full of inspiring examples of individuals who have overcome disabilities and disadvantages of one kind or another. In the Jewish world, many have risen to prominence from the humblest beginnings. The Torah is the birthright of every Jew. We just have to go out and claim it.

The words of our Parshah are quite deliberate and well-chosen after all. "Jacob lifted his feet and went on his way." Some people follow their feet wherever they will take them. No matter the direction, they simply coast along, allowing their feet to lead them.

Not so Jacob. He was master of his feet and master of his circumstances. He set his feet on the right road, and became master of his destiny.

May we all be inspired to lift ourselves beyond our circumstances.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

THE STRENGTH OF JACOB

Modern day society has sprouted all types of gurus. We have experts on childcare and healthy eating,

education and entertainment. Self-help books top best-seller lists every year. Is there any place for a rabbi in a society that has specialists to advise us on every area of our life? Does Judaism truly have something to say about every aspect of our life, or are the rabbis who claim to have an opinion on everything simply intrusive and controlling? Should rabbis just stick to teaching Torah?

Over three thousand years ago, our forefather Jacob was on the run. His brother Esau had tried to kill him so he had taken shelter with his uncle Laban, tending his crops, marrying his daughters and earning himself a comfortable living.

After suffering through Laban's continual machinations, Jacob heeded G-d's call that he go back home. He took his family and cattle and headed out for the Holy Land. Laban pursued Jacob and overtook him; only thanks to G-dly intervention was Jacob's life saved.

During their encounter, Laban challenged Jacob on leaving without his permission:

"These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle..."—Genesis 31:43

What was Laban saying? He had literally sold his daughters to Jacob, demanding that he work fourteen years for the privilege of marrying them. Jacob had worked another seven hard years for his herds of cattle. What demands could Laban have of him?

But Laban was arguing a finer point. "The children belong to me," says Laban. "You, Jacob, are fine the way you are: a man raised in the 'old country' whose natural habitat is the tents of Torah learning and prayer. But what do you want of the children? They belong to another generation, another world. They must be raised in the spirit of the times, equipped to earn a living and a place in society. Do you truly expect them to negotiate modern life with nothing but your ancient tomes? You are a good man Jacob, but leave the children to me..."

"The cattle are my cattle, Jacob. I wouldn't dream of interfering with your spiritual life, Rabbi—I'll be the first to admit that I'm no authority on religion. By all means, consult your sacred books on how to keep the Shabbat or how to light your Chanukah candles. But when it comes to business affairs, do you think that the stock market conforms to the standards of the Code of Jewish Law? That you can retain both your competitive edge and your talmudic ethics? You'll be eaten alive out there. Reserve your piety for the synagogue and study hall, but do yourself a favor—leave the cattle to me, okay?"

Jacob refuted Laban then, as we must refute the Laban inside us and the Labans in society now. Judaism has something to say on every aspect of our lives, and its teachings must be as relevant to us as it was to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob thousands of years ago.

By Rabbi Eli Pink

KISLEV

Kislev is the ninth month on the Jewish calendar, counting from Nissan. It is best known for the holiday of Chanukah, which begins on the 25th of Kislev. The message of Chanukah is the eternal power of light over darkness—good over evil. Aside from commemorating the miraculous victory of the small and militarily weak Jewish army over the mighty Syrian-Greek empire, on Chanukah we celebrate the miracle of the oil. When the Jews sought to light the Temple menorah after the war, they found only one small jug of oil that had not been defiled by the pagan invaders. Miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days until new pure oil could be obtained. In commemoration, the sages instituted the eight-day festival of Chanukah, on which we kindle the menorah nightly to recall and publicize the miracle.

Chanukah is particularly significant to women, as it was Yehudit, with her wise and daring plan, who shifted the tide of war and began the Jewish victory.

Also during the month of Kislev, we celebrate the redemption of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chassidism. He was imprisoned on false charges by the czarist regime, where he faced the death penalty. These charges were reflective of spiritual charges brought against him in the heavenly court, for openly teaching the deepest insights of Torah. On the 19th of Kislev, he was cleared of all charges and freed, paving the way both physically and spiritually to continue teaching Chassidism. This day is referred to as the "New Year of Chassidism."

In Jewish History

Sunday, 1 Kislev, 5778 - November 19, 2017
Rebbe's Recovery (1977)

For the first time since suffering a major heart attack five weeks earlier, on the eve of Shemini Atzeret, the Rebbe left his office in 770 Eastern Parkway and returned to his home, signaling his recovery. Chassidim all over rejoiced at the good news.

From that day on, the Rebbe redoubled his efforts on behalf of the Jewish nation and all of humanity, and for the dissemination of Torah and chassidism. From then on, the first of Kislev is celebrated as a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing.

Thursday, 5 Kislev, 5778 - November 23, 2017
Maharsha (1631)

Kislev 5 is the yahrtzeit (date of the passing) of Rabbi Shemuel Eliezer Eidel's (1555-1631), known by the acronym "Maharsha". Rabbi Shmuel authored a highly regarded and widely used commentary on the Talmud and its primary commentaries, Rashi and Tosfot.