



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

TORAH WEEKLY

ת"ש

21 - 27 January, 2018
5 - 11 Shevat, 5778

Torah:
Exodus 13:17 - 17:16

Haftarah:
Judges 4:4 - 5:31

■ CALENDARS

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

■ FAMILY PROGRAMS

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

■ 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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NOT EVERYTHING IS IN GOD'S HANDS

"It's all in God's hands." We've heard that on many occasions. But when do we rely on that, and when must we act nonetheless? In this week's Torah portion, Beshalach, we read of two episodes in which the Jewish people are under attack from enemy forces. Interestingly, they are given two very different instructions in each episode.

When the Israelites are trapped by the Red Sea, and pharaoh's army is quickly closing in on them from behind, Moses' message from God is a comforting one. "Stand strong and see God's deliverance," he tells the people. "God will wage war on your behalf, and you shall remain silent." And indeed He did. The Jewish people were protected overnight from the Egyptian arrows and spears, and by morning the sea had split, allowing them to cross through dry land. When the Egyptians entered the sea in pursuit, well we all know how that ended.

Quite the contrary, though, was when the freshly liberated Jewish nation was attacked by the mighty nation of Amalek. All the nations of the world bowed their heads after hearing of the miraculous liberation which the Israelites had just experienced.

But Amalek, regardless of what the world thought, and regardless of the reality of the Jewish nation's immortality, were the first to attack.

At that point, Moses' message from God was a different one. "Go forth, and wage war with Amalek."

Why the inconsistency? Why the change of protocol?

Our nation was given an extremely valuable lesson at that time. The Talmud says, "Everything is in the Hands of God - aside from fear of God." Our spiritual decisions, our moral decisions are purely up to us. God has given us the free will to choose the spiritual path on which to live.

The threat which faced the Jewish people at the Red Sea was one of physical annihilation. The problem was, as it were, a worldly one. When it comes to worldly things, the Jews were taught to become accustomed to relying on God's blessings. True, we must make an effort, we must contribute and create the vessel in which to receive God's blessings but the emphasis is on our faith and reliance on Him. Everything worldly is in His hands. "God will wage war on your behalf."

On the other hand, the attack of Amalek represents the evils of spiritual apathy. Their message was, "don't get so excited over the experiences in Egypt and at the sea. Don't take miracles so seriously."

That threat was a spiritual one. The message the people got was not to sit back and rely on God. It was to stand up and fight for your beliefs, defend your spiritual well-being.

When it comes to our daily spirituality, our constant choosing between right and wrong, good and evil, Godly and ungodly, it is purely in our hands. We are not to rely on God to fight our spiritual battles for us.

JUST KEEP "SWIMMING"

"And Pharaoh was informed that the [Jewish] nation had escaped." Really? Pharaoh, the one man with the power to have authorized the recent release of over 600,000 slaves? Did he really need to be "informed" that the nation had fled?

The commentaries explain that what Pharaoh had agreed to was for the three days journey for the Jews to worship God, and he then expected them to return. He sent agents along with the Jewish people to ensure they did just that. When the three day period had passed and it became increasingly clear they had no intention of returning to slavery, the agents returned to Pharaoh with the bad news.

Pharaoh readied his chariot and ordered the pursuit. When the Jews saw pharaoh's army closing in on them from behind and were

facing the Red Sea, they were torn. A disagreement broke out amongst the people. One group said, "let us throw ourselves into the sea." They felt that it was preferable to end their own lives rather than return to Egyptian slavery.

Another group voted that they re-submit to their former tormentors and return to Egypt. Better to live as a slave than to die.

A third group said, "Let us fight them!" In fact the battle-worthy men of the Jewish nation greatly outnumbered the small remainder to Pharaoh's army which had come to recapture them.

And, yet a fourth group maintained that all actions were insufficient, and the only option was to turn to God in prayer.

Moses' response instantly refuted all four opinions. "Stand still and see the salvation of God which He shall do for you today." Do not throw yourselves into the sea. "For as you see Egypt today, you shall never see them again!" Do not return to slavery. "God will wage war on your behalf," do not wage this war on your own. "And you shall remain silent." Even prayer is inappropriate at this time. God's instructions were the same as they had been all along. "Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall go forth!" Go forth to Mount Sinai, so that we may receive the Torah and be God's people. None of the four suggestions lined up with that order. Go forth! That's it! Regardless of what may appear to be an obstacle.

And indeed that is just what happened. As the people determinedly marched forth, straight into the raging sea, the waters split, allowing them to pass through on dry land.

Our sages tell us that the exodus from Egypt should not be looked at as a one time occurrence. Rather, it is something which we can experience again on a spiritual level every year, and indeed every day!

The Hebrew name for Egypt, "Mitzrayim," stems from the same root word as the word for "limitations." The boundaries we set for ourselves and the limitations we create in our minds cause us to fall short of our own potentials and true abilities. "Leaving Egypt" in a metaphorical sense means breaking through the boundaries which stop us from fulfilling our ultimate potential and purpose for which we were placed here on this earth.

No matter what may appear to be an obstacle, we must pay heed to Moses' words. "Go forth!" Even when faced with difficult situations, whether we feel like we should just throw ourselves into the sea of Torah and spirituality shutting ourselves out of the world, or sit back and wait for God to step in. Whether we feel tempted to begrudgingly submit ourselves to the path of the righteous, or are filled with the passion to take on the forces of evil head on, ultimately the only right answer is, "Go forth." Look for what God wants from you right now, and go for it. It is the only eternally right answer.

And when we do our part, God will surely do His. God will split for us the sea of doubt, allowing us to pass through with clear direction and a clean conscience. If that isn't satisfyingly purposeful, well I don't know what is.

The Jews saw many miracles	It is overwhelming while it lasts
In this week's parsha	And they go back to the way it was before then
Yet they kept on complaining	
For meat, a G-d, and water	
There are two types of awakenings	When it comes from below
When you show that G-d you love	From effort and determination
There is an awakening from below	The person is affected
And an awakening from above	In a permanent revelation
	When you put in the effort
	And show that you care
	Hashem will help you out
When it comes from above	And bring you the rest of the way there
A gift from Hashem	

In Jewish History

Friday, 10 Shevat, 5778 - January 26, 2018

Passing of the Rashash (1777)

Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, known by his name's acronym, the RaShaSH, was born in Yemen, and as a young man immigrated to Israel. He was quickly recognized for his piety and scholarship, especially in the area of Jewish mysticism, and was appointed to be dean of the famed Kabbalistic learning center in the Old City of Jerusalem, the Yeshivat ha-Mekubbalim. He authored many works, mostly based on the teachings of the great kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Ari.

Passing of Rebbetzin Rivkah (1914)

Rebbetzin Rivkah Schneerson was born in Lubavitch in 1833; her maternal grandfather was Rabbi DovBer, the 2nd Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. In 1849 she married her first cousin, Rabbi Shmuel, who later became the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Beth Rivkah network of girls' schools, founded by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak in the 1940's, are named after her.

Yahrtzeit of R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1950)

The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, passed away on Shabbat morning, the 10th of Shevat, of the year 5710 from creation (1950)

Lubavitcher Rebbe assumes leadership (1951)

At a gathering of Chassidim marking the first anniversary of the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the late Rebbe's son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, delivered a Chassidic discourse (maamar) entitled Basi L'Gani ("I Came into My Garden"), signifying his formal acceptance of the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.