



28 January -
3 February, 2018
12 - 18 Shevat, 5778

Torah:
Exodus 18:1 - 20:23

Haftorah:
Isaiah 6:1 - 13

■ 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.

■ 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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SHABBAT - A G-D SEND

“Last night the power went out in our neighborhood. The entire area was plunged into darkness and all the WiFi went down. I had no choice but to go downstairs and spend time with my family - They seem like nice people...” This week we read the Ten Commandments. Number four is “Remember the Shabbat day, to sanctify it. Six days work shall get done, and on the seventh day you shall rest...”

Is the Shabbat a gift or a burden? Well, there is a whole list of “thou shalt not”s, thou shalt not turn on the light, thou shalt not drive your car, thou shalt not cook, shalt not shop not carry nor check social media.... If Shabbat is a gift, why is it so restrictive? The answer is, it’s not. On Shabbat we are essentially closer to God. We rise to the level of Angels. When we take that to heart, if we really believe it, our Shabbat is a different experience.

We suddenly realize that, in reality, there is no suffocating restriction, but a supra-natural bliss. We don’t work on Shabbat because it simply doesn’t make sense to work. We are likened unto angels! At the moment it is beneath us, and unrelated to us.

But even in a human sense, Shabbat is a gift. The sun goes down and instantly

the pressures of the week disappear. Deadlines don’t matter no matter how urgent. Lights on, lights off, that’s how they’ll stay. Phones don’t exist, internet is of no consequence. You find yourself relaxing with your family - and you may even get to know them!

The real burden, in truth, is not the Shabbat, but the continuation of the mitzvah. The mitzvah to work during the week. “Six days work shall get done, and on the seventh day you shall rest.” First work, then rest. The key is, your work doesn’t have to be a burden. The Torah doesn’t say “Six days you shall work,” but rather, “Six days work shall get done.” Meaning to say, we mustn’t get so engrossed in our work that it becomes our very being.

Worldly responsibilities are referred to in Torah as “work of your hands,” or “toil of your palms.” Let the work remain in the hands, not overtake you entirely. Don’t let work take over your life and your family. Don’t let work disturb your prayers, your sleep.

Let’s remember that although it is an important mitzvah to create that vessel through which we receive God’s blessing, our purpose on earth is not work. Our purpose is life. To discover the Shabbat in every one of us, in every person and in every moment of our lives.

Parshat Yitro

KEEP YOUR BALANCE

What is the definition of a well-balanced individual? One who has a chip on both shoulders!

In Exodus we read the Ten Commandments. The great revelation at Sinai saw Moses come down the mountain bearing the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments engraved on them. As we know, the two tablets were divided into two columns—the mitzvahs between humankind and G-d, and the commandments governing our human relations. The one side was devoted to our responsibilities to G-d, such as faith and Shabbat, while the other side dealt with our interpersonal duties, e.g., no murder, adultery and thievery.

The message that so many seem to forget is that both these areas are sacred, both come directly from G-d, and both form the core of Torah law and what being Jewish is all about. We must be well-balanced Jews. We may not take the liberty of emphasizing one tablet over the other. A healthy, all-around Jew lives a balanced, wholesome life, and is, as the Yiddish expression goes, gut tzu G-tt un gut tzu leit—good to G-d and good to people. If you focus on one side of the tablets to the detriment of the other, you walk around like a hinke’dike, a handicapped Jew with a bad limp.

A good Jew is a well-balanced Jew. This means that it's not good enough to be frum ("religious") on the ritual side of Judaism and free and easy on the *mentschlichkeit* side. You've got to be honest and decent and live with integrity so people will respect you, too. If you are "religious" towards to G-d but not fair with people, you can become a fanatical fundamentalist blowing up people in the name of G-d! The same G-d who motivates and inspires us to be G-dly and adhere to a religious code also expects us to be a *mentsch*. There is no doubt whatsoever that it is, in fact, a *mitzvah* to be a *mentsch*.

But neither can we neglect the right side of the tablets. A good Jew cannot simply be a democrat, a humanitarian. Otherwise, why did G-d need Jews altogether? It is not enough for a Jew to be a nice guy. Everyone must be nice. All of humankind is expected to behave honestly and honorably. To be good, moral, ethical and decent is the duty of every human being on the planet. A good Jew must be all of that and then some. He or she must be a good person—and also fulfill our specific Jewish responsibilities, the *mitzvahs* that are directed to Jews which are uniquely Jewish.

I recently came across an interesting statistic on the Ten Commandments. The right-hand tablet, bearing the duties to G-d, consists of 146 words. The left-hand tablet, listing our human responsibilities, has only 26 words. Yet tradition has it that both tablets were filled with writing. There were no big, blank spaces. So how did 26 words equal the space of 146 words?

Well, anybody who uses a computer or word processor knows the answer. You simply adjust the font size. You can type in 10-point size or 24-point size. Take your pick. So if we apply that same principle to the tablets, we have a simple solution. The 26 words on the left, reflecting our moral and ethical human responsibilities, were simply a bigger size than the 146 words on the right, reflecting our G-dly, religious responsibilities. So we must never underestimate the importance of the human-relations side of the Ten Commandments.

Then again, just so we don't start limping, the very same G-d who said we should be nice also said we should have faith, keep Shabbat (yes, it is one of the Big Ten), kosher, *mikvah*, and the rest of it. In fact, when people say to me, "Rabbi, I'm not that religious, but I do keep the Ten Commandments," I often wonder whether they are actually aware that keeping Shabbat is Commandment No. 4.

As we read the Ten Commandments this week, let us resolve to keep our Jewish balance, not to limp or become "one-armed bandits." Please G-d, we will live full, wholesome, rich and well-balanced Jewish lives. Amen.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

In this weeks parsha
The aseres hadibros are read
The most difficult commandment
Is the one at the end
It's one thing not to steal
That not much of a lesson
But to not even desire
Your neighbors possession
When the pasuk says
Do not covet
It's just teaching a lesson
Either want none or all of it

A house may look nice
When you see it from out
But there may be thing inside
That you don't know about
Someone may look happy on the outside
But on the inside he is sad
No one's life is perfect
There is always good and bad

In Jewish History

Sunday, 12 Shevat, 5778 - January 28, 2018 Warsaw Ghetto Insurgency Begins (1943)

On January 18, 1943, the Germans began their second deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, which led to the first instance of armed resistance. The deportation was halted within a few days; only 5,000 Jews were removed instead of 8,000 as planned. The Nazis retreated, only to return three months later, at which time the Warsaw uprising started in earnest.

Monday, 13 Shevat, 5778 - January 29, 2018 Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah Schneerson (1942)

Wife of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson, and mother of the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah (1860-1942) lived through the upheavals of the first half of the 20th century. She fled the advancing front of World War I from Lubavitch to Rostov, where her husband passed away in 1920 at age 59. In 1927, she witnessed the arrest of her son by Stalin's henchmen the night he was taken away and sentenced to death, G-d forbid, for his efforts to keep Judaism alive throughout the Soviet empire. After Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's release, the family resettled in Latvia and later, Poland; in 1940, they survived the bombing of Warsaw, were rescued from Nazi-occupied city, and emigrated to the United States. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah passed away in New York on the 13th of Shevat of 1942.

Auschwitz Liberated (1945)

On January 27, 1945, the Russian army arrived in Auschwitz, the most infamous of the Nazi death camps, and liberated some 7,000 survivors—those left behind as unfit to join the evacuation "Death March."