



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**

No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

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1 - 7 July, 2018
18 - 24 Tammuz, 5778

Torah :

Numbers 25:10 - 30:1

Haftorah:

Jeremiah 1:1 - 2:3

■ **THREE WEEKS STUDY MATERIAL**

Please us or ask your Rabbi or Chaplain to contact us for study material relating to the building of the Holy Temple, studied in the three weeks (July 1 – 21).

■ **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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DESTINY BECKONS

Pinchas, the hero of this week's Parshah, was previously unheard of. Though as a grandson of Aaron he belonged to the "royal family," he was an unseeded young man, who, with a single act of bravery was catapulted to stardom.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 82a) tells the behind the scenes story. Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Shimon, publicly flaunts his intimate relationship with a heathen Midianite princess. Moses is momentarily stymied. Pinchas respectfully reminds Moses that he himself taught the principle that one who behaves as Zimri did may be executed by the zealous. Moses responds that since Pinchas remembered this, he, Pinchas, should be the one to actually carry it out. Pinchas duly does just that and the terrible plague that had taken the lives of thousands is stilled. G-d blesses Pinchas with His Covenant of Peace and Pinchas goes down in history as the hero who saved the day.

But why did Moses forget what he himself had taught? Apparently, Divine Providence saw fit that the great prophet should suffer a temporary memory lapse in order that young Pinchas assume his destined status.

Now Pinchas could have made a simple calculation. Here stand Moses and Aaron, other prominent elders and leaders and they are all

silent. In the face of such brazen moral travesty all these great men stand back. Who, then, am I to step forward? How can I, little old me, a new kid on the block, stand up and say what I believe in their august presence? Surely I must keep quiet and hold my peace.

But Pinchas did not say that. And thank G-d he didn't. Had he kept his silence, the plague might not have been averted and Pinchas would have remained a non-entity.

This, says the Lubavitcher Rebbe, serves a powerful lesson to all of us. If you witness a situation where you feel that you can make a difference, then you must. And the fact that greater people than you seem paralyzed should not necessarily mean that you too should remain idle. Perhaps this is your unique chance to do something historic. Perhaps you are earmarked for greatness and G-d is opening your window of opportunity. Deny yourself this moment and you deny destiny.

Sometimes the moment is yours. Sometimes greater people may vacillate and the responsibility and opportunity rest with you and you alone. Each of us has so much unlocked potential. Rare and precious are those crossroads of life when the chance to unleash that inner calling presents itself. This is your baby, your moment of glory, your own personal calling and you dare not desist

Parshat Pinchas

from it.

Such was the case with Pinchas and such may be the scenario that every one of us may find ourselves playing out one day.

In the story of Purim, the Megillah records how Queen Esther is asked by Mordechai to intercede with King Ahasuerus on behalf of her people. She explains that she fears this may be absolutely suicidal for her. Mordechai responds with rather strong words, Relief and deliverance will come for the Jews from an other place, and you and your father's house will perish. What Mordechai was telling Esther was that the chance to single handedly save one's entire nation doesn't present itself every day. It is a unique moment and ought to be seized. If you won't do it, someone else will; but this once in a lifetime opportunity may be lost to you forever.

Pinchas reminds us that when opportunity knocks we should open the door quickly. Do not hesitate. Destiny may be beckoning.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

THREE WEEKS LAWS AND CUSTOMS

A 21 Day Period of National Mourning

For eight hundred and thirty years there stood an edifice upon a Jerusalem hilltop which served as the point of contact between hea-

ven and earth. So central was this edifice to the relationship between man and G-d that nearly two-thirds of the mitzvot are contingent upon its existence. Its destruction is regarded as the greatest tragedy of our history, and its rebuilding will mark the ultimate redemption—the restoration of harmony within G-d's creation and between G-d and His creation.

A full three weeks of our year—the three weeks “between the strictures” of Tammuz 17 and Av 9—are designated as a time of mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple and the resultant galut—physical exile and spiritual displacement—in which we still find ourselves.

During this period, we lessen the extent of our rejoicing. We don't:

Conduct weddings. (Engagement parties – without music – are allowed until Rosh Chodesh Av.).

Play musical instruments or listen to music.

Recite the Shehecheyanu blessing. Thus, we do not wear new clothing or eat fruit which we have not yet eaten this season so that we will not be required to recite Shehecheyanu.

Take a haircut or shave. Many Sephardic communities permit haircuts and shaving until the week of Tisha b'Av (in other words, until the Saturday night before the fast).

(Speak to your rabbi if there are extenuating circumstances that prevent you from observing any of the above customs.)

Shabbat

All the laws of mourning are suspended on Shabbat. All the laws of mourning are suspended on Shabbat. This includes the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av themselves—when they fall on Shabbat, the fast days are postponed until Sunday, and the Shabbat is joyously celebrated. The Rebbe stated on numerous occasions that on these Shabbats we must increase our joy, and add an extra tasty dish to our meals, to emphasize that we are not in a state of mourning.

On the first Shabbat of the Three Weeks (or on the 17th of Tammuz itself, if it falls on Shabbat) we almost always read the Torah portion of Pinchas. The end of the reading discusses the three Jewish festivals. It has been said amongst chassidim that this alludes to the idea that the three Shabbats of the Three Weeks are to be celebrated on par with the three festivals...

Why is all mourning suspended on Shabbat?

Though these days and weeks heralded an exile rife with persecution and spiritual estrangement, it is our belief that ultimately this is for the good. Very soon, with the coming of Moshiach, we will understand that all the suffering was necessary in order to reach the ultimate good. At that time, the prophets foretell, these sorrowful days will be transformed into days of joy.

Every Shabbat constitutes a foretaste of the Messianic Era. As such, on Shabbat we only focus on the positive element of this period.

Determination to Rebuild

Aside from the aforementioned “technical” rules and restrictions, during this period we spend extra time contemplating the less-than-perfect state the world is in now and what we can do to improve it by increasing in deeds of goodness and kindness.

The Rebbe urged that the Three Weeks should be a time of increased Torah study and giving of charity— in keeping with the verse, “Zion shall be redeemed by law, and her returnees by charity.” Particularly, the Rebbe requested time and again the study of those portions of Torah that deal with the building of the Holy Temple.

The Three Weeks should be a time of increased Torah study and giving of charity. Why these laws? The Rebbe based his request on a dialogue, cited in the Midrash, that transpired after G-d told the Prophet Ezekiel to instruct the then exiled Jewish People about the measurements and design of the third Holy Temple:

“Master of the world,” Ezekiel replied, “why are You telling me to go and tell Israel the form of the House; they are now in exile in the land of our enemies—is there anything they can do about it? Let them be until they return from the exile. Then, I will go and inform them.”

G-d answered: “Should the construction of My House be ignored because My children are in exile? The study of the design of the Holy Temple as detailed in the Torah can be equated to its actual construction. Go tell them to study the form of the Holy Temple. As a reward for their study and their occupation with it, I will consider it as if they actually built the Holy Temple.”

It is our generation in particular, that stands on the threshold of Redemption, that must study these laws with the awareness that these laws will be quite practical in the imminent future!

From Destruction to Renewal

But there is more to the Three Weeks than fasting and lamentation. The prophet describes the fasts as “days of goodwill before G-d”—days of opportunity to exploit the failings of the past as the impetus for a renewed and even deeper bond with G-d. A sense of purification accompanies the fasting, a promise of redemption pervades the mourning, and a current of joy underlies the sadness. The Ninth of Av, say our sages, is not only the day of the Temple's destruction—it is also the birthday of Moshiach.

May we soon merit the fulfillment of the prophecy: “I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow” (Jeremiah 31:12).

In Jewish History

Sunday, 18 Tammuz, 5778 - July 1, 2018

Golden Calf Destroyed (1313 BCE)

Moses destroyed the Golden Calf, and re-ascended Mount Sinai to plead G-d's forgiveness for the Jewish people. (Exodus 32:20; Talmud Taanit 30b.)