



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

# TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

22 - 28 July, 2018  
10 - 16 Av, 5778

**Torah:**  
Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

**Haftorah:**  
Isaiah 40:1 - 26

## ■ TORAH STUDIES

We have many Judaic topics for you to study. We will provide the material and courses. Please write to us for more information.

## ■ 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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## A GODLY SPARK PLUG

During the Second World War, countless Jewish parents gave their precious children to Christian neighbors and orphanages in the hope that these would provide safe havens for them. The parents hoped that they, or their relatives, would take these children back if they survived the war. The few parents who did not perish in the Holocaust, and were able to reclaim their children, often faced another horror.

While the parents had summoned the strength to survive the slave labor and death camps, or had hidden out for years, those who took their children were busy teaching them the ways of other religions. Being alone and at very formative ages, many of the children all but forgot their Jewish roots.

Even more challenging, many of the children who were taken in by orphanages, convents and the like, had no parents or close relatives left after the Holocaust to reclaim them at all. When rabbis or distant relatives finally tracked down many of these children, the priests and nuns who had been their caretakers insisted that no children from Jewish homes were in their institutions.

Thus, countless Jewish children were not only stripped of their entire families, they were also stripped of their Jewish identities.

In May, 1945, Rabbi Eliezer Silver from the United States and Dayan Grunfeld from England were sent as chaplains to assist in the reha-

ilitation process after the liberation of some of the death camps. While there, they were told that many Jewish children had been placed in a monastery in Alsace-Lorraine. Without hesitation, the rabbis went there to reclaim them.

When they approached the priest in charge, they asked that the Jewish children be released into the rabbis' care. "I'm sorry," the priest responded, "but there is no way of knowing which children here came from Jewish families. You must have documentation if you wish me to do what you ask."

Of course, the kind of documentation that the priest wanted was unobtainable at the end of the war. The rabbis asked to see the list of names of children who were in the monastery. As the rabbis read the list, they pointed to the names which appeared to be those of Jewish children.

"I'm sorry," the priest insisted, "but the names that you pointed to could be either Jewish or Gentile. You can't prove that these are Jewish children. If you can't prove which children are Jewish, and do it soon, I will need to ask you to leave."

One of the rabbis had a brilliant idea. "We'd like to come back again this evening when you are putting the children to sleep."

The priest reluctantly agreed. That evening the rabbis came to the dormitory, where row upon row of little beds were arranged. The children, many of whom had been in the monastery since the war started in 1939, were going to sleep. The rabbis walked through the aisles of

beds, calling out, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad - Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One!"

As they did this, child after child sat up in their beds and began to recite the Shema along with the rabbi. Some even raised their hands to cover their eyes, as they had been taught by their mothers.

They remembered their mothers and fathers reciting the Shema with them as they put them to sleep when they were younger. Many began to cry and call out for their parents from whom they had been separated for so long. At this point there was no longer any doubt as to which of the children possessed Jewish souls.

The priest may have successfully indoctrinated the young impressionable children with the ways of Christianity and their beliefs, but nothing and no one could ever have totally removed that spark of Godliness which was present in each one of them.

The words of the Shema have always served our people as a declaration of God's oneness, as a source of strength and belief at times of trouble and, most importantly, as a connecting force which has and always will keep the Jewish people together and connected to God.

## FOREVER EX NIHILO

The late great Charles Krauthammer is quoted as having said that atheism is the most foolish of all possible possibilities. God created this world. The preciseness with

which each and every aspect of creation in the entire universe is set up can only have been designed by the Almighty Creator Himself.

Our sages take this concept a step further. When we say that everything came from nothing, *ex nihilo*, that not only means that God brought about all matter from nothingness one time, five thousand seven hundred and almost seventy nine years ago. Rather, at every moment of every day, every part of nature must be recreated, reinforced with the power of its existence - the word of God. Were/he to stop creating, everything would instantly cease to exist and revert back to its original nothingness. In other words, God is creating us and everything around us *ex nihilo* every single moment of our lives.

In this week's Torah portion, we read the Shema, the most well known and widespread prayer and verse perhaps in all of Judaism. "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad - Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One."

Those last words, "Hashem Echad - the Lord is One," bring out the above mentioned concept. Had the intended meaning of the verse been one of God's singularity as the Master of the Universe then the word should have been "Yachid," implying singularity and exceptionalism. The word "Echad" implies unification and oneness. What we are really saying is that there is nothing besides God. The entire universe, everything that occurs in the world as we know it, everything in the entirety of creation is nothing less than an expression of God Himself.

This is also why it is so sensible to say that everything happens with a purpose, nothing happens just by chance. As the famous story goes about the sage who was walking with his disciples and discussing this idea of divine providence. Suddenly he stopped and they all look up to watch a leaf flutter lightly down off of one of the nearby trees. The leaf hit the ground and then began to tumble in the wind until it finally stopped and lay in one place.

The sage challenged his followers to find the divine providence in such a simple, seemingly meaningless occurrence. When they failed to come up with a satisfactory reason, he helped them understand it. "Lift the leaf up and see what is underneath it." When they did so they discovered a tiny bug underneath the leaf. It had been suffering from the intense heat of the sun, until God orchestrated a chain of events, from the blowing of the wind to the fluttering of the leaf so that it would land in that exact spot and shield the bug from the blazing sun. Based on what was explained earlier this idea falls right into place. Not only does God focus His omnipotent attention to each individual matter as it becomes important, but more than that - His attention is focused on everything, yes, everything, at each and every moment.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

## *In Jewish History*

**Friday, 15 Av, 5778 - July 27, 2018**

### ***End of Dying in Desert (1274 BCE)***

In wake of the incident of the "Spies," in which the generation that came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership demonstrated their unpreparedness for the task of conquering and settling the Holy Land, G-d decreed that entire generation would die out in the desert. After 38 years of wandering through the wilderness the dying finally ended, and a new generation of Jews stood ready to enter the Holy Land.

### ***Ban on Inter-Tribal Marriage Lifted (13th century BCE)***

In order to ensure the orderly division of the Holy Land between the twelve tribes of Israel, restrictions had been placed on marriages between members of two different tribes. A woman who had inherited tribal lands from her father was forbidden to marry out of her tribe, lest her children -- members of their father's tribe -- cause the transfer of land from one tribe to another by inheriting her estate (Number 36). This ordinance was binding only on the generation that conquered and settled the Holy Land during the 14-year period 2488-2503 from creation (1273-1258 BCE); when the restriction was lifted, on the 15th of Av, the event was considered a cause for celebration and festivity.

### ***Tribe of Benjamin Re-Admitted (circa 1228 BCE)***

Av 15 was the day on which the tribe of Benjamin, which had been excommunicated for its behavior in the incident of the "Concubine at Givah," was readmitted into the community of Israel (as related in Judges 19-21). The event occurred during the judgeship of Othniel ben Knaz, who led the people of Israel in the years 2533-2573 from creation (1228-1188 BCE).

### ***Jeroam's Roadblocks Removed (574 BCE)***

Upon the division of the Holy Land into two kingdoms following the death of King Solomon in the year 2964 from creation (797 BCE), Jeroam ben Nebat, ruler of the breakaway Northern Kingdom of Israel, set up roadblocks to prevent his citizens from making the thrice-yearly pilgrimage to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judea. These were finally removed more than 200 years later by Hosea ben Eilah, the last king of the Northern Kingdom, on Av 15, 3187 (574 BCE).

### ***Betar Dead Buried (148 CE)***

The fortress of Betar was the last holdout of the Bar Kochba rebellion. When Betar fell on the 9th of Av, 3893 (133 CE), Bar Kochba and many thousands of Jews were killed; the Romans massacred the survivors of the battle with great cruelty and would not even allow the Jews to bury their dead. For 15 years their remains were left scattered on the battlefield. When the dead of Betar were finally brought to burial on Av 15 of the year 3908 from creation (148 CE), an additional blessing (HaTov VehaMeitiv) was added to the "Grace After Meals" in commemoration.

### ***Matchmaking Day***

In ancient Israel, it was the custom that on the 15th of Av "the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed linen garments and dance in the vineyards" and "whoever did not have a wife would go there" to find himself a bride (Talmud, Taanit 31a).

### ***"The Day of the Breaking of the Ax"***

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, the annual cutting of firewood for the altar was concluded on the 15th of Av. The event was celebrated with feasting and rejoicing.