



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

# TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

12 - 18 August, 2018  
1 - 7 Elul, 5778

**Torah:**

Deuteronomy  
16:18 - 21:9

**Haftorah:**

Isaiah 51:12 - 52:12

■ **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.

**ALEPH INSTITUTE**

Hyman & Martha Rogal  
Center  
5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
412-421-0111  
Fax: 412-521-5948  
www.alephne.org  
info@alephne.org

## COMMIT AND COMPLETE

In the Torah Portion of Shoftim the first verse begins, "Judges and officers you shall appoint at all your gateways." This positive mitzvah commands the Jewish people to establish courts of justice through which the application of Torah law would be disseminated, and enforcing officers who would enforce the decisions made by the judges.

The wording used in this verse is somewhat perplexing. Why would the Torah instruct the people to establish points of judgment and enforcement "at all of your gateways?" Why not just, "establish courts of justice and appoint enforcing officers," to keep it simple?

Our sages draw a wonderful lesson from this particular choice of words. Every part of the Torah pertains not only to the practical, physical implementation of the specific commandments, but also to each and every individual on a personal level as well.

Where does the protecting of the gateways apply to every individual person? The term "gateways" implies the place of entrance and exit. In a personal sense, this refers to all the facets of the human body through which we take in the outside world. Namely, the eyes, ears, and mouth etc. Everything which enters through these "gateways" becomes part of us, often irreversibly. This mitzvah encourages us to create a filtration system which prevents negative or non-kosher

influences from entering our minds and hearts.

Similarly, the mouth. While we must certainly be careful not to allow anything which is not kosher to enter our mouths, it is equally and perhaps even more important to ensure that nothing non-kosher comes out of our mouths. Once a hurtful word or a piece of gossip or slander leaves our lips, we simply cannot take it back. We need to get vigilant in judging every piece of stimulus we encounter, audio, visual or emotional and filter out the things that will hurt us or anyone else.

Interestingly, when counting the six hundred and thirteen biblical commandments, these two steps of appointing judges and assigning officers are counted as one and the same. Two parts of one single mitzvah. Why is that?

The answer is that the duty of a judge is to determine and instruct. The duty of the officer is to implement and enforce. In the spiritual sense, it's the difference between commitment and execution. We all have good intentions, good days when we feel motivated to take on the most noble of commitments, but not everyone has the interesting fortitude to carry through on those commitments.

Says the Torah, one is incomplete without the other. Only having judges to rule hypothetically is not enough, it is only part of the solution. There must be the part of us which will push us to follow through and make sure we act on our good intentions. We must actively filter out the evil and negative influences

## Parshat Shoftim

which try to infiltrate our gateways. Then and only then will we have fulfilled the spiritual obligation to "appoint judges and officers at all your gateways."

## STANDING SIDE BY SIDE

This week's Torah reading includes the mitzvah of "Eglah Arufah," a ritual performed to atone for the murder of a person who was slain by an unknown assailant. "If a slain person should be found... lying in the field, and it is not known who slew him..." The verses then go on to prescribe the process through which the cities proclaim their regret as well as their innocence.

In essence, the life of a Jew is his connection to Godliness, as it is written regarding the lessons and statutes of Torah: "For they are your life and the length of your days." Thus, we can define death on a spiritual level. When a person's connection to Godliness is cut off he suffers a spiritual death. What could strain his connection to God to such an extent? When he is in the field. "The field" refers to a place outside the realm of holiness. It is not an intrinsically negative place. On the contrary, many positive and useful things come from the field. Nevertheless, in the field, one can be met with negative and dangerous influences. Once outside the realm of holiness it is very easy to make the mistake of seeking worldly accomplishments and pleasures without a noble goal, without Godly intent. This is spiritual death -

losing track of one's bond with God.

The Eglah Arufah was brought to absolve the people of the neighboring city for their responsibility for the person's death. But why do they even need to be absolved? Seemingly, the one who has died should be held responsible for his own death. After all, did he not wander from the "city," a place of Torah, and go out to the "field?"

The Mitzvah of Eglah Arufah highlights the inner bond that ties us together and connects us to all of our brethren, even those who may have made wrong choices and find themselves "in the field." No one should ever use the excuse of "he was not my responsibility" to exonerate himself from the misfortune of his fellow man.

The elders of the city model the obligation that applies to us all, by performing this ritual and declaring: "Our hands did not spill this blood." Our Sages explain that they are saying that they did not intentionally allow this fallen person to leave the city without providing him with food and an escort. "Food" refers to Torah guidance. Before a Jew goes out to the field, before he is ready to get involved in worldly matters, his friends and neighbors must ensure that he has sufficient "food," spiritual nutrition. They must also see to it that he will not face the challenges of the field alone but rather that he always have someone to turn to for guidance and support in his times of need.

A Jew is never alone. Aside from always having God on his side, the Jewish community is there to support him and help him on his life journey. This is and historically has always been the case, innately, just by the nature of the Jewish soul. We stand by each others' sides through thick and thin. And when God sees how his beloved children stand by one another and take responsibility for another's well-being, He, in turn, stands by us more clearly and openly, particularly in our times of need.

There's a well known parable which so beautifully expresses this concept. In a dream a man finds himself standing on the seashore. He sees two sets of footprints in the sand along the edge of the water, and understands that these represent the walk of his life. One set of prints is his, the other brings to God. Then he notices that at the most difficult junctions in his lifetime, one of the tracks is suddenly missing.

Distraught, he turns his eyes to God and cries out, "Why? Why, God, did you abandon me in my greatest times of need?" And the omnipotent, merciful Creator gently reassured the man. "I did not abandon you. Those tracks you see? They are mine. At the most difficult times in your life, I did not leave you alone. I carried you."

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

**Rosh Hashanah**  
**September 10 & September 11**

## ***In Jewish History***

***Sunday, 1 Elul, 5778 - August 12, 2018***

***Moses ascends Sinai for 3rd 40 days (1313 BCE)***

On the early morning of the 1st of Elul of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE) Moses ascended Mount Sinai, taking with him the stone tablets he had hewn by divine command (see "Today in Jewish History" for yesterday, Av 30), for G-d to re-inscribe the Ten Commandments. On the mountain, G-d allowed Moses to "see My back, but not My face" (which Maimonides interprets as a perception of G-d's reality but not His essence) -- the closest any human being ever came to knowing G-d -- and taught him the secret of His "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy" (*Exodus 33:18-34:8*).

Moses remained on the mountain for 40 days, until the 10th of Tishrei (Yom Kippur), during which time He obtained G-d's whole-hearted forgiveness and reconciliation with the people of Israel following their betrayal of the covenant between them with their worship of the Golden Calf. This was the third of Moses' three 40-day periods on Mount Sinai in connection with the Giving of the Torah. Ever since, the month of Elul serves as the "month of Divine mercy and forgiveness."

***Monday, 2 Elul, 5778 - August 13, 2018***

***Shulchan Aruch Completed (Orech Chaim) (1555)***

The first section of the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) authored by Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488-1575) was completed in the Holy Land on this date in 1555.

***Thursday, 5 Elul, 5778 - August 16, 2018***

***First Chassidic Aliya (1777)***

The first Chassidic aliyah ("ascent" - immigration to the Holy Land), led by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk and Rabbi Yisroel of Polotzk, reached the Holy Land on Elul 5 of the year 5537 from creation (1777 CE). They were all disciples of the 2nd leader of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer, the "Maggid of Mezeritch" (who had passed away five years earlier) and colleagues of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad. Initially, Rabbi Schneur Zalman was part of the group; but when the caravan reached the city of Moholiev on the Dnester River, Rabbi Menachem Mendel -- whom Rabbi Schneur Zalman regarded as his teacher and mentor after the Maggid's passing -- instructed him to remain behind to serve as the leader of the Chassidic community in White Russia and Lithuania. Rabbi Schneur Zalman retained close ties with the settlers in the Land of Israel and labored to raise funds for their support.

***Shabbat, 7 Elul, 5778 - August 18, 2018***

***Flight from Liadi (1812)***

Moses' parents remarry (1394 BCE)  
Amram and Jocheved had separated because of Pharaoh's decree that all male Jewish babies be killed. Prompted by their six-year-old daughter Miriam's rebuke ("Pharaoh decreed against the males; you decreed against the males and the females") they remarried on the 7th of Elul of the year 2367 from creation (1394 BCE). Moses was born six months and one day later on Adar 7, 2368 (Talmud, Sotah 12b).