



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**

No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

ת"ש

19 - 25 August, 2018
8 - 14 Elul, 5778

Torah :

Deuteronomy 21:10 -
25:19

Haftorah:

Isaiah 54:1 - 55:5

■ **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

THE WINNERS ATITUTDE

The Midrash tells the story of a town in ancient times whose water source became possessed by an evil spirit, putting all of the townspeople in grave danger. After several different attempts were made to expel the spirit, one of the sages of the time instructed them on exactly how to go about it, noting that during the process which he prescribed the people should all chant the words, "Didan Natzach - victory is ours."

This method finally succeeded in killing off the evil spirit from their midst.

A similar concept can be found when we look at practically every major army since the dawn of time. When going out to do battle against an enemy, each army has a victory march tune to which they make their way out to the battle field. Napoleon's armies had a particularly victorious sounding march, which was adapted by the Chabad Rebbes and is traditionally sung at the conclusion of the Ne'ilah prayer on Yom Kippur. Dancing and singing to the tune of a victory march clearly expresses the idea that, after a day of prayer and supplication, we are confident that God has forgiven us for our shortcomings and granted us a sweet new year.

But it does more than that as well. It allows us to enter the new year on a note of confidence and victory. The benefits of this concept can be seen in this week's Torah Portion, the portion of Ki Teitzei. The portion begins with the

words, "When you will go out to war against your enemies." The Hebrew word used in this context for "against" is "Al - on/upon."

The connotation is self understood. God is teaching the people the key to waging a successful war. The key is - be confident in your chances of success. You should not feel as though you are waging a war with an enemy of greater or even equal powers, but should rather feel right off the bat that you are waging war "upon" an enemy, from a position of absolute advantage.

The verse continues, "... And the Lord your God will place [your enemy] into your hands." This is God's promise to His people. When the children of Israel waged war with the absolute confidence that they had Almighty God on their side, God guaranteed their victory.

When someone is confident and morally justified in fighting for a noble cause, in fighting for what is right and just, God ensures his success.

Every day in this life could be a battle, every situation could be a choice between right and wrong. But when we arrived each challenge with the confidence that what we're doing is right and true, and God guarantees our success, we will surely come out on top.

By Rabbi Nissan Eizak

WHO NEEDS ANTI- SEMITES?

It has been called
"the world's longest hatred."

It continues to rear its ugly head across countries and continents. Whether it manifests in the crude bigotry of the lower class or the snide subtleties of the upper crust, anti-Semitism is a fact of life.

Of course, we all wish it would finally go away. We even had reason to hope that after Auschwitz, it really would. Who among us doesn't want to feel accepted and appreciated? But there is a strong argument to suggest that, in a perverse sort of way, anti-Semitism has been good for the Jews. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre made that point in his book *Anti-Semite & Jew*. Without the constant reminders and threats to our existence, we Jews would have been lulled into a peaceful and passive state of national amnesia. Secure in our comfort zones, we might have lost much of our unique identity.

History records that under regimes that persecuted us, we remained steadfastly Jewish; whereas under more enlightened, liberal forms of government, we gradually embraced a welcoming but dominant culture, forfeiting much of our own.

Back in the '70s, when I was working with Jewish university students, we were struggling to break through a wall of icy indifference towards Judaism. It was so frustrating that my colleagues and I even considered going onto campus in the dead of night to paint

a few swastikas on the Student Union building, in the hope that this would jolt them out of their apathy. Of course, we never actually did it, but I confess to having been very tempted.

Towards the end of this week's Parshah we read of the commandment to remember the unprovoked attack by the nation of Amalek against the Israelites when they left Egypt. The command comes in the form of the word *zachor*—"Remember"—at the beginning of the section. The final words are *lo tishkach*—"you shall not forget." But why the need for both expressions? And what difference is there between "remembering" and "not forgetting"? Surely one is superfluous?

Commentaries suggest that "remember" is a command to the Jewish people, while "do not forget" would seem to be more of a prediction—i.e., they will not let you forget! Should you ever lapse into a false sense of security and forget your Jewishness, the anti-Semites of the world will be there to remind you who you are—"a people that dwells alone" (Numbers 23:9).

Everything has a purpose in creation. There is nothing superfluous in G-d's world. So what is the purpose of an anti-Semite? Just that—to remind Jews that they are Jewish!

But why wait for the Amalekites of this world to remind us? Do we want or need their taunting? Rather, let us be proactively Jewish, positively Jewish and Jewishly positive. You can sing the old Yiddish song one of two ways. Either it is *Oy, es iz gut tzu zein a yid* ("Oh, it is good to be a Jew . . .") or *Oy, es iz shver tzu zein a yid* ("Oy, it is hard to be a Jew . . ."). There are a million good reasons, positive reasons, to be proudly Jewish. If seventy years ago being Jewish carried a death sentence, today it is a life sentence, promising a meaningful and blessed life. And when we decide to live proud, committed Jewish lives, we make a fascinating discovery: when we respect ourselves, the world respects us too. And that applies across the board, from the individual Jew to the collective Jewish community.

Judaism is a boon, not a burden. We should be staunch about our heritage. It is a badge of honor to wear with noble pride. If you don't know why, go and study—but that's another sermon.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

In Jewish History

Monday, 9 Elul, 5778 - August 20, 2018

Nachmanides Renews Jerusalem community (1267)

Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) arrived in Jerusalem, after being forced to flee his native Spain (see "On This Date" for Av 12) and renewed its Jewish community there. The synagogue he established is functional today, having been restored following the liberation of the Old City during the Six-Day War in 1967.

10 Elul, 5778 - August 21, 2018

Noah Dispatches Raven (2105 BCE)

On the 10th of Elul of the year 1656 from creation (2105 BCE), as the Great Flood neared its end, Noah opened the window of the Ark and dispatched a raven to determine if the flood waters had begun to recede (Genesis 8:1; Rashi).

11 Elul, 5778 - August 22, 2018

Completion of Beit Yosef (1542)

In 1522, Rabbi Yosef Caro started writing the *Beit Yosef*, his famous commentary on the *Arba Turim*, Yaakov Ben Asher's comprehensive Halachic code. He started writing this commentary in Adrianople, Turkey, and continued for the next twenty years, during which time he relocated to Safed, Israel. He completed the monumental work on the 11th of Elul. It took another ten years for the writings to be published.

Rashab's marriage (1875)

Marriage of the fifth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson ("Rashab", 1860-1920), to Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah Schneerson (1860-1942).

Nachmanides Born (1194)

Birth of Nachmanides ("Ramban", Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) -- Torah scholar, Kabbalist, philosopher, physician and Jewish leader -- in Gerona, Spain, in the year 4954 from creation.

12 Elul, 5778 - August 23, 2018

Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe visits US (1929)

On the 12th of Elul (September 16) of 1929, two years after escaping a death sentence imposed upon him by the Russian Communist regime and his subsequent departure from that country, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, arrived in New York for a ten-month tour of the United States. In the course of his stay the Rebbe visited the Jewish communities in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, S. Louis, Boston and several other communities, and was received by President Hoover at the White House. The purpose of the Rebbe's visit was twofold: a) to bring the plight of Russian Jewry to the attention of the American Jewish community and raise funds for the Rebbe's efforts on its behalf; b) to improve the state of Yiddishkeit (Torah-true Judaism) in America and strengthen the ties of the American Chabad-Chassidic community with the Rebbe. The Rebbe also wished to explore the possibility of settling in the U.S. and establishing the headquarters of Chabad there; though he did not decide to do so at that time, his 1929 visit laid the foundations for his move to New York in 1940 and the revolutionary changes he wrought in American Jewish life.