



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

2 - 8 September, 2018
22 - 28 Elul, 5778

Torah:

Deuteronomy 29:9 -
30:20

Haftorah:

Isaiah 61:10 - 63:9

■ **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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THE TURTH IS INSIDE OF YOU

In 1971, the phone rang in the office of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. The Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Leibel Groner, answered the phone as he always did, so that he may relay to the Rebbe the message of whoever it was on the other end. Calling that night was a young rabbi from Silver Spring, MD, by the name of Tzvi Hirsch Weinreb.

Rabbi Weinreb had several matters for which he was seeking the Rebbe's advice, ranging from his career choices and his children's education to basics in matters of faith and religion.

When the secretary answered the phone, Rabbi Weinreb could hear the voice of the Rebbe himself in the background. The Rebbe asked, "Who's calling?" Rabbi Groner relayed the question. Perhaps more than a little shy about his questions, Rabbi Weinreb decided to respond with, "a Jew from Maryland." He then proceeded to convey his exact questions and quandaries to the Rebbe. Rabbi Groner paraphrased his questions the Rebbe as he spoke and then the Rebbe simply responded with, "tell him that there is a man in Maryland to whom he should direct these questions." The next words made Rabbi Weinreb doubt his hearing. "His name is Weinreb."

"Did you get that?" Asked Rabbi Groner. Certain that he had misheard, though, Rabbi Weinreb asked that the response be repeated. "The

Rebbe says to speak to Weinreb in Maryland."

"But - I'm Weinreb!"

The blurted response caught even the secretary off guard. There was silence on the phone.

The he heard the Rebbe's words clearly, "Well, in that case, sometimes the best thing to do is to speak to oneself."

In this week's Torah Portion, Moses encourages the Jewish people with a message of empowerment. "These Mitzvot which God commands you today - their fulfillment is not beyond you, and it is not remote from you. It is not in the heavens... It is not across the sea... Rather, it is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."

Often times, we seem to search high and low for inspiration. We look in remote places to try and find the motivation to do what's right. We look to our friends and neighbors for guidance in our lives. But the truth is, more often than not, the answer is not far, it is not remote. It lays not with someone else. More often than not, the answer is in us, in our own hearts and minds.

Sometimes, the best thing to do is to speak to yourself.

We all have that spark of Divinity within us. Deep down on some level, each of us knows what is truly right in most given situations. If we could just take a step back and think, if we could ask ourselves, "What is my truth," we would most likely find that we truly share God's essence, and therefore share God's truth.

Parshat Nitzavim A NATURAL RECON- NECTION

Rabbi Shabtai Slavaticki, the Chabad representative in Belgium, was once conducting a weekly Torah course, when a young man in his mid-twenties arrived at the doorway unannounced. "I've heard this is a place where one can come and study about Judaism," the man said. "I was also told that one can board here for a while. Is that O.K.?"

Rabbi Slavaticki nodded in assent. Later, the young man introduced himself as Eitan. He originally came from Israel, but had discovered spirituality through contact with a guru in India. Eitan had followed the guru's teachings in the hope of being accepted to his inner circle of disciples.

At one point, the guru asked about his origins. When he told him that he was from Israel, the guru asked Eitan if he had totally severed his ties to Judaism. Eitan told him that he still felt somewhat connected.

The guru told him that he could not enter his inner circle until he broke all connection with another faith. He instructed Eitan to investigate his own religion. If he were to be disillusioned by it, that would cleanse him and enable him to devote himself to his new beliefs.

After studying with Rabbi Slavaticki for a while, the teachings of Judaism and particularly its mystic dimension really spoke to Eitan. He devoted himself to the classes seriously, and took note of

everything he was taught. However, he was still not ready for an absolute commitment to mitzvos. He was still unsure. Once more he confided in Rabbi Slavaticki.

"I've decided to take 'time out.' Although I feel I'm going in the right direction, I need to be sure my enthusiasm is really coming from within and not merely inspired by the environment. I am going to Holland for a while to see if the desire to connect with Judaism is generated from the real me, without external influence."

With that, Eitan departed. Rabbi Slavaticki knew he should be patient, but the weeks turned into a month and more, and still no word from Eitan. The High Holidays came and Rabbi Slavaticki found himself immersed in prayer on Rosh HaShanah. As he uttered the verse, "May all creations know that You are their Creator..." his thoughts were with Eitan. He added a silent prayer that Eitan, too, would recognize the ultimate truth.

Just then, he felt a hand on his shoulder. Stirred from his intense prayers, he looked up. It was Eitan! In total amazement, Rabbi Slavaticki embraced him and offered him a seat nearby.

After the services, Eitan explained:

"Today began as does every day, with meditation. In the stillness of the moment, I was suddenly struck with absolute clarity that indeed there is a God and His Torah is true. From some long forgotten memory, I remembered that this was the High Holiday season, and realized it was Rosh HaShanah. I knew that I had to be in the synagogue. But I also knew that one should not travel on this holy day. Aware that this moment of recognition of the truth could slip by, I concluded that it was a matter of danger to the preservation of my soul, so I took a train and here I am. Do you think G-d will forgive me?"

The mitzvot are like the human body. The 248 positive commandments are comparable to our 248 limbs and the 365 negative commandments are compared to our 365 sinews. Because God's will is manifest in Torah and mitzvot, whenever we perform a mitzvah, we reinforce our connection with Him. We energize the particular spiritual limb and strengthening the health of the "body" as a whole. Every transgression, by contrast, weakens that connection and causes a blemish to the corresponding spiritual organ involved.

Nevertheless, every Jew shares a bond with God regardless of his deeds. Every soul is an actual part of God. For this reason, even a person who has failed to establish a connection with God through mitzvot or has obstructed that connection, will still have a desire — and always has the power — to return to Him.

This is the motivation for teshuvah, repentance. A Jew's spiritual core does not allow him to remain feeling separate from God. Spontaneously, it forces itself into the forefront of the person's consciousness and motivates him, her, us to reconnect.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

We have a Lulav and Etrog for your institution at no cost, please ask the Rabbi or Chaplain to contact our office ASAP

In Jewish History

Sunday, 15 Elul, 5778 - August 26, 2018
Dove brings Olive Leaf (2105 BCE)

On the 301st day of the great Flood, Noah sent a dove for the 2nd time from the ark (see "Today in Jewish History" for Elul 17). This time, the dove stayed away all day; "the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off; and Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth" (Genesis 8:11).

9/11 Terrorist Attacks (2001)

On a sunny fall morning, Islamic terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger airplanes. Two were crashed into the Twin Towers in lower Manhattan. A third was rammed into the Pentagon, the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the United States Department of Defense. The last plane was intended for Washington as well, but crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after its passengers tried to overcome the hijackers. In total, almost 3,000 people died in the attacks, including the 227 civilians and 19 hijackers aboard the four planes. It also was the deadliest incident for firefighters in the history of the United States.

Tuesday, 24 Elul, 5778 - September 4, 2018
Passing of Chafetz Chaim (1933)

Elul 24 is the yahrtzeit of the revered Torah scholar, pietist and Jewish leader Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) of Radin (Poland), author of Chafetz Chaim (a work on the evils of gossip and slander and the guidelines of proper speech) and Mishnah Berurah (a codification of Torah law).

Wednesday, 25 Elul, 5778 - September 5, 2018
Creation (3761 BCE)

The 1st day of creation, on which G-d created existence, time, matter, darkness and light, was the 25th of Elul. (Rosh Hashanah, on which we mark "the beginning of Your works", is actually the 6th day of creation, on which the world attained the potential for the realization of its purpose, with the creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Rosh Hashanah is therefore the day from which the Jewish calendar begins to count the years of history; the 1st day of creation thus occurred on the 25th of Elul of what is termed -1 from creation.

Jerusalem Walls Rebuilt (335 BCE)

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem -- which had been in ruins since the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians 88 years earlier -- was completed by Nehemia on Elul 25 of the year 3426 from creation (335 BCE) as related in the Book of Nehemia (ch. 6).

Passing of R. Elazar (2nd century CE)

Passing of the Talmudic sage Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Passing of R. Michel of Zlotchov (1786)

Passing of Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov (1721?-1786), disciple of the Baal Shem Tov.