



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

14 - 20 October, 2018
5 - 11 Cheshvan, 5779

Torah:

Genesis 12:1 - 17:27

Haftarah:

Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16

■ **CALENDARS**

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ **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.

■ **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.

■ **CHANUKAH GELT**

Please ask the chaplain for the 'Chanukah Gelt Form'. Your children will receive Chanukah Gelt from you.

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

“NOBODY” IS HIS CHOSEN ONE

As far back as the early forties, the Rebbe's of Chabad ran a campaign of sending young emissaries to locations near and far around the Jewish holiday seasons.

The mission was to spread the light of the holidays, as well as to supply the Jews of those areas with the necessary goods and services needed for each respective holiday.

Once, a young gentleman, David, was selected to service the people of a quiet area of Tanzania over Passover.

Full of enthusiasm, he arrived a week before the holiday equipped with plenty of Matzah, wine, and gefilte fish. He set out to distribute his goods and invite people to the public Passover Seder he planned to conduct on the first night.

A hint of disappointment lingered in David's heart from not being with the Rebbe for the holiday. But that was far overshadowed by his delight in being on a mission from the Rebbe, helping his Jewish brethren in this remote region reconnect.

But his excitement was to be short-lived. Try as he might, morning until evening, he failed to find a single Jewish person. Passover was fast approaching and he hadn't distributed any Matzah nor invited anyone to his Seder.

His heart ached. "Is this why I forfeited my time in the Rebbe's presence?"

David thought to himself, "To accomplish nothing in this remote region?"

Two days before the holiday he gave himself an ultimatum. "Either I find Jewish people today to attend the Seder, or I return to the Rebbe tonight so that I may at least have a meaningful holiday."

His search continued, but to no avail. That was it.

Nearly midnight, it was time to go. He got into his car and, with a heavy heart, headed for the airport. Just before 12:00 AM, he pulled into a small gas station.

As he approached the scruffy, long haired attendant behind the counter he decided to try one last time.

"Excuse me," he said, "by any chance are you Jewish?" "Yes, I am," the man responded, "Why...?"

Suddenly re-enthused, he ran to his car and retrieved a box of handmade Shemura Matzah. He joyfully handed it to the stunned Jewish attendant. "Here," he said, "this is a gift for you for the upcoming Jewish holiday." Silence. Suddenly, the floodgates opened and the man began to weep uncontrollably.

When he finally regained his composure he explained to David what had happened.

"I abandoned my Jewishness a very long time ago, as a teenager. Recently, though, I was approached by a local missionary who attempted to convince me that "the Jewish God had forgotten me," and that my only hope for salvation would be to formally accept Christianity. "Now, I'm no Tzaddik, but the thought of denouncing

my connection to God just made me very uneasy. But the missionary wouldn't let go. Eventually, I spoke to God directly. 'God, if you truly do remember me, please give me a sign.'

"I decided to give it three days. After that, it would be game over. I'd concede me soul to that missionary."

"Tonight was supposed to be the deadline. Midnight. But then you walk in with a Passover gift from God..."

Last week, in the Portion of Noach, Noah is introduced with the statement, "Noah was a righteous man in his days." In this week's Torah Portion we begin to learn about the life of our forefather, Abraham. Interestingly, Abraham is given no such introduction.

Why does the Torah neglect to tell us all about who Abraham was and his impressive legacy and civilization-altering actions up until the moment he is introduced onto the Torah scene? God's timeless message to us is that Abraham was not, in fact, His chosen one because of his heroic actions, or even his dedication. He was chosen due to an essential connection to God, beyond all apparent reason.

The same is true of each and every Jewish man, woman and child. We are not God's chosen people only when we behave like the patriarch Abraham. Even when we seem to deserve no introduction, even when we are "nobodies," we are still God's chosen people. We are still His beloved children.

MOVING PAST ALL THAT

If you open up the Big Book of Excuses and look under “Why I behave poorly and refuse to get my act together,” invariably you will see an excuse in one of three categories:

One is the “My surroundings don’t allow for change” excuse. This is when we tell ourselves that our neighborhood, our community, our work atmosphere, our society is at fault for preventing my improvement.

Category two is the “this is who I am” excuse. This is where we tell ourselves that it’s simply the way we were born, the way we’ve developed, or were always wired to behave. And if it’s “just what I am,” then there’s certainly no way to change my ways.

Then there’s number three, and that is the excuse of “it’s my parents’ fault.” It’s when we say things like, “but my mother always...” or “I always remember how my father used to...” or any other form of mistreatment or misguidance that some feel they received from a parent or parents. And this lingering trauma serves as an additional obstacle to self-improvement.

While there is no question that all of these feelings may very well be realistic problems and might truly make the already difficult task of self-embetterment ever harder, these excuses are nevertheless just that - excuses.

The first recorded mission statement given to Abraham from God is in this week’s Torah Portion. God says, “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you.” With these words God is setting the record straight, right from the get-go, that the aforementioned excuses are ultimately irrelevant.

“Go from your land,” get over the influences of your surroundings and your atmosphere. There is a higher way. “From your birthplace,” move beyond what you imagine to be your natural limitations. God created you, knows what you are capable of, and gives you the ability to reach a potential that may not be readily apparent.

“And from your father’s house.” Were your parents perfect? Maybe they were, but probably not. Might some of their choices have lingering effects on your everyday life? Possibly. Should that prevent you in any way from reaching your own true potential, as an individual human being with a unique life and potential? Certainly not. “Leave your father’s house,” means get past the past. If things must be dealt with, so be it, but never should that stop you from moving forward.

“To the land which I will show you.” The Hebrew word for land, Eretz, shares the root of the word Ratzon, which means will.

God empowers us by saying, “move past all of these obstacles, and reach your true potential. Reach your unbelievably endless potential, matched only by My Ratzon, My Will.”

We can do it. And if we can, well, then we must.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek.

CHANUKAH

December 3 - December 10

Please make necessary arrangements.

In Jewish History

Tuesday, 7 Cheshvan, 5779 - October 16,

2018

Last Jew comes home (2nd Temple Era)

During the Second Temple Era (circa 230 BCE), Cheshvan 7 was the date on which the Jew most distant from the Holy Temple -- who resided on the banks of the Euphrates River, a 15-day journey’s distance from Jerusalem -- arrived at his homestead upon returning from the Sukkot pilgrimage. All Jews would wait for this before beginning to pray for rain. Cheshvan 7 thus marked the return to everyday activities following the spirituality of the festival-rich month of Tishrei.

Passing of R. Meir Shapiro (1933)

Passing of Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin, founder of the daily “page a day” regimen of Talmudic study known as Daf Yomi.

Friday, 3 Cheshvan, 5779 - October 12, 2018

Passing of Methuselah (2105 BCE)

Methuselah, the longest-lived human being of all time, died at the age of 969 years on the 11th of Cheshvan of the year 1656 from creation (2105 BCE) -- exactly seven days before the beginning of the Great Flood. Methuselah was Adam’s great-great-great-great-grandson and Noah’s grandfather.

Rachel (1553 BCE)

The matriarch Rachel died in childbirth on the 11th of Cheshvan of the year 2208 from creation (1553 BCE) while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin.

Rachel was born in Aram (Mesopotamia) approximately 1585 BCE. Her father was Laban, the brother of Jacob’s mother, Rebecca. Jacob came to Laban’s home in 1576 BCE, fleeing the wrath of his brother Esau. He fell in love with Rachel and worked for seven years tending Laban’s sheep in return for her hand in marriage. But Laban deceived his nephew, and on the morning after the wedding Jacob discovered that he had married Rachel’s elder sister, Leah. Laban agreed to give him Rachel as a wife as well in return for another seven years’ labor.

Rachel was childless for many years, while her elder sister and rival gave birth to six sons and a daughter in succession. Finally, in 1562 BCE, she gave birth to Joseph. Nine years later, while Jacob and his family were on the road to Jacob’s ancestral home in Hebron (after a 22-year absence), she gave birth to a second son, but died in childbirth. Jacob buried her by the roadside, in Bethlehem; there, “Rachel weeps over her children, for they are gone [in exile]” (Jeremiah 31:14). Her tomb has served as a place of prayer for Jews for more than 35 centuries.

R. Nachum of Chernobyl (1797)

Rabbi Nachum of Chernobyl was a disciple of the second leader of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch, and the founder of the Chernobyl dynasty of Chassidic Rebbes.