



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

21 - 27 October, 2018
12 - 18 Cheshvan, 5779

Torah:
Genesis 18:1 - 22:24

Haftarah:
Kings II 4:1-37

■ 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.

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ANONYMOUS GREATNESS

Bob arrives at the pearly gates and is greeted by the angel standing guard. "Please tell me one act which you committed during your stay on earth that would earn your entrance to heaven."

"Well," began Bob, "I was once walking down the street and I saw a gang of thugs picking on a young woman. I stood up to my fullest height, grabbed the gang leader by the nose ring and shouted, 'If you guys wanna mess with her, you're going to have to mess with me first!'" "Wow..." said the angel, shuffling through his books. "When did this happen?" "Oh," Bob says sheepishly, "like five minutes ago..."

Our forefather Abraham is lauded for constantly being ready to give up his life for God. But what's the big deal? Was Abraham the only person to give himself up for God? Countless others, Jew and non-Jew, have given their lives for something in which they believed. What put Abraham head and shoulders above the rest?

Living for God is harder than dying for Him. What Abraham was tested with was not merely his willingness to die a hero. Many would be willing to do that. His test of faith was his willingness to give up his life, his own understanding of what his life was about.

God promised Abraham that "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Abraham was certain that Isaac would bear children, grandchildren

and ultimately an entire Jewish nation. Then came the next command. "Take your son... and offer him as a sacrifice on one of the mountains..."

Your average man, no matter how devoted to God, would probably give pause, if only for a moment. "What about God's promise? Isaac is not even married yet!" Not to argue or resist, but even just to collect his thoughts. Had you stopped Abraham on his way to the wilderness with Isaac and asked him where he's going, he'd say, "to sacrifice my son to God." "What about descendants," you ask. "That too - it is God's word," he would undoubtedly reply.

The conflict in human understanding did not phase Abraham. He did not bat an eye. He gathered his supplies and set out to do God's bidding. No thought of who would see, no thought of what kind of reward awaited him, nor any thought of what was to become of his legacy and his lifelong quest to build a nation of God-fearing monotheists. His only concern was fulfilling God's instruction.

That was the ever present theme throughout Abraham's ten tests. Some conflicted with his logic, with his reasoning, and some even with his nature. Abraham was a man of kindness through and through. The thought of killing anyone was probably outside of his comfort zone. Therein lies the greatness of his self-sacrifice. He was willing to LIVE for God, and, if called upon, also willing to die for His sake.

Parshat Vayeira PRAYER IS NOT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

This week we read about the long awaited birth of Isaac. His mother, Sarah, had been barren until the ripe old age of ninety. Even at that age, she continued to pray to God that He grant her a child.

Our sages explain that the reason for the barrenness of some of our matriarchs is to display for the ages the power of prayer. Even when it seems hopeless or impossible, prayer can transform any harshness into blessing. In fact, Sarah herself laughed incredulously when given the good news that she would finally be having a child.

This portion is even read in synagogues over the High Holidays to reiterate this very point in the times of awe and atonement. Prayers are always heard when they come from the heart.

Now, one might say that it's a case of apples and oranges. This is our matriarch we are talking about! And her husband, the greatest of patriarchs, Abraham! What about a regular Joe? What about us regular folk, who are not on the level of, say, speaking to God face to face?

Well, the Torah wastes no time in addressing that worry. In this very same Torah Portion we learn about Abraham's other son, Ishmael, and his mother Hagar. When Sarah sees Ishmael acting vulgar and inappropriately with Isaac she insists that Abraham banish the boy and his Canaanite mother from their home. When Abraham hesitates, God

reassures him. "Listen to your wife and send away the boy, and I shall make him into a great nation as well."

While they are traveling through the desert, the boy becomes dehydrated and falls ill. When it seemed that all was lost, his mother placed him underneath some bushes and walks several paces away so as not to witness her son's demise. She sits down and cries for her son, beseeching God to spare him. An angel then appears to her and tells her, "Do not fear, for God has hearkened to the cries of the boy as he lies there."

Hagar lifts her head and sees that they are in fact only a short distance from a well of water. She carries her son to the well and revives him.

What is the purpose of detailing the entire story? Additionally, what is the meaning of "as he lies there?" Certainly Hagar knew where her son was and that his prayers were presumably coming from that same spot, why did the angel specify, "as he lies there?"

The sages tell us that this is an important detail. The angels in heaven were of the opinion that God ought to let Ishmael die of thirst. He was a wild, violent youth who plunged and murdered for sport. The angels maintained that he did not deserve to have his prayers answered. God, on the other hand said, "Yes, Ishmael is an undeserving young man. He has a violence riddled past, and very possibly an unimproving future. But, 'as he lies there,' in this moment as he prays for salvation, has he not turned his heart to Me?"

This a most powerful lesson to all people in all generations.

We so often feel as though our mistakes and our actions would prevent us from reaching God. Our careless ways or our sometimes rebellious thoughts or actions surely put a blockade between ourselves and our Father in Heaven. But this angel told us otherwise. "As he lies there." What are you feeling right now? Are you remorseful, even if just for the moment? Are you feeling regret, even if you might commit the same acts again, and soon? Are you turning to God in your moment of need? Then God is open for a heart to heart. God is, was and always shall be our loving Father in Heaven, who is, was and will always be eagerly awaiting our prayers so that He may answer them in the most marvelous ways.

May we always find it in our hearts to turn to our beloved Father when we need His added blessings. And may we merit to see His wondrous responses even in our greatest times of challenge.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek.

CHANUKAH

December 3 - December 10

Please make necessary arrangements.

In Jewish History

Wednesday, 15 Cheshvan, 5779 -

October 24, 2018

Passing of Mattityahu (139 BCE)

In the 2nd century before the common era, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks) who, with the collaboration of the Jewish Hellenists, introduced pagan idols into the Holy Temple and set about to forcefully Hellenize the people of Israel. Mattityahu, the son of the High Priest Yochanan, was already an old man when he picked up a sword and raised the flag of revolt in the village of Modiin in the Judean hills. Many rallied under his cry, "Who that is for G-d, come with me!" and resisted and battled the Greeks from their mountain hideouts.

After heading the revolt for one year, Mattityahu died on the 15th of Cheshvan of the year 3622 from creation (139 BCE). His five sons -- the "Macabees" Judah, Yochanan, Shimon, Elazar and Yonatan -- carried on the battle to their eventual victory, celebrated each year since by Jews the world over with the festival of Chanukah.

Kristallnacht (1938)

On this night in 1938 and continuing into the next day -- November 9 on the secular calendar -- the Nazis coordinated vicious pogroms against the Jewish community of Germany. Encouraged by their leaders, rioters attacked and beat Jewish residents, burned and destroyed 267 synagogues, vandalized 7,500 Jewish businesses, and ransacked countless Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools, and homes, while police and firefighters stood by. Ninety-one Jews were killed and 20,000 others were deported to concentration camps.

These pogroms, which collectively came to be known as Kristallnacht ("night of broken glass," referring to the thousands of windows that were broken) were a turning point after which Nazi anti-Jewish policy intensified.

Friday, 17 Cheshvan, 5779 -

October 26, 2018

Great Flood Begins (2105 BCE)

The rains began to fall on the 17th of Cheshvan of the year 1656 from creation (2105), flooding the earth and rising above the highest mountains. Only Noah and his family survived, in the ark built to that end by Divine command, and a pair of each animal species, who entered with him into the ark.

Total time that Noah spent in the ark: 365 days (one solar year; one year and 11 days on the lunar calendar).

Friday, 17 Cheshvan, 5779 -

October 26, 2018

Assassination of Meir Kahane

Born in 1932, Meir Kahane was a controversial American-Israeli rabbi and activist. In 1968, he founded the Jewish Defense League in New York. With the motto of "Never Again," the stated goal of the organization was to protect Jews from anti-Semitism in all its forms. In 1971, he moved his family to Israel, founding the Kach political party, and he was elected to the Knesset in 1984 (the Kach party was later outlawed in Israel). In 1990, after concluding a speech in a Manhattan hotel, Kahane was fatally shot by an Egyptian-born terrorist. While strangely acquitted of the murder, El Sayyid

Nosair was later convicted in relation to the 1993 World

Trade Center bombing.