



18 - 24 November, 2018
10 - 16 Kislev, 5779

Torah :
Genesis 32:4 - 36:43

Haftorah:
Obadiah 1:1-21

■ 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.

■ 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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CALLING THE CORE

Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the third Rebbe of Chabad, lost his mother when he was very young. Before her passing, his mother asked her illustrious father, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, to look after her little boy. Rabbi Shneur Zalman, who was the first Rebbe of Chabad and became known as the "Alter Rebbe," looked after his grandson as if he were his own son.

Once, little Menachem Mendel was sitting on his grandfather's lap, and the Alter Rebbe asked him, "Mendel'e, where is Zaide (Grandfather)?" The little boy thought for a moment and pointed to his grandfather's face. "No, that's Zaide's face. Where is Zaide?" asked the Alter Rebbe. The boy pointed to the Alter Rebbe's chest. "No," he responded, "that's Zaide's chest. Where is Zaide?"

Little Mendel did not reply. He simply climbed off his grandfather's lap, and they each walked their own ways. Suddenly, the little boy called out, "Zaide!" The Alter Rebbe spun around to see what his grandson needed. Little Mendel smiled and said, "There's Zaide..."

Not many people can say that they have wrestled with an angel. Our forefather Jacob is one of the select few who can. In this week's Torah Portion he wrestled with the Ambassador Angel of Esau. The two wrestling all through the night until, at daybreak, the angel declared it was time for him to leave. When Jacob refused to let him go,

the angel asked what he can give in exchange for his release.

"Give me a blessing." At that point, the angel pronounced Jacob's name to be Israel. "No longer shall your name be Jacob, but Israel - for you have struggled with God and with man and have overcome." Indeed, for the rest of time, we the descendants of Jacob have been known not as the children of Jacob, but as the Children of Israel.

So, what's in a name? Our sages tell us that when parents decide on names for their children, they are imbued with divine inspiration. A name is not merely a word with which others can refer to a person, but a name actually holds a deep connection with a person's very essence. This is why when a person faints, the first thing people do is call his or her name. Several fire safety equipment manufacturers are actually introducing smoke detectors and fire alarms with a voice recorder with which parents can record their own voices calling their children's names. These companies agree that sound of a person's own name is the most effective way to wake them. The name speaks to the essence. It calls the core.

The Jewish people as a nation have been through a lot throughout history. We have survived unspeakable mistreatment at the hands of countless nations, and yet, in spite of it all we are still here.

In the words of Mark Twain, "The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor,

then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, and have vanished. The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

There may not be one single answer to that mystery. However, we see from our great-grandfather Jacob that there is a significant power deep within us that keeps us going. "Israel" as it were, has struggled for millennia with God and with man and we have, despite everything, overcome.

Sometimes the work can be daunting. Sometimes the world can be overwhelming. But this story reminds us that even the Angel of Esau, representing the nations of the world proclaimed Israel to be superhuman. With God in our corner, there is no goal which the Jewish nation cannot achieve.

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS

After escaping the wrath of his brother Esau, Jacob spends years in the home of his uncle Laban, tending Laban's sheep. Jacob marries and fathers seven of his twelve children and raises

them with the morals and values with which he had been raised. He then decides it is time to return home.

As they travel, Jacob hears that his brother Esau is also traveling in his direction along with four hundred warriors. He sends gifts to his brother along with a message, "I have sojourned with Laban, and I have tarried until now..."

There is a subliminal message in Jacob's words. In Hebrew "I have sojourned" is "Garti." This word has the numerical value of six hundred and thirteen - the exact number of Godly commandments in the Torah. Jacob's message to his brother was, "I sojourned with the likes of Laban for this long, and yet I observed the Torah in its entirety." Jacob was confirming with Esau that he was still the same Jacob; an honest, level-headed and strongly dedicated man.

At the same time he was also sharing with Esau the secret to his steadfast commitment to God and His Torah. "I sojourned with Laban." One can hardly call a settlement of twenty years, during which Jacob married, started a family and earned fortune and fame a sojourn. But Jacob meant exactly that. Yes, it may have been a long time. Many things may have changed, and Laban may have tried to influence the minds and hearts of Jacob and his family. But they never took him or his ways seriously. They knew that this whole ordeal was nothing more than a sojourn. They knew all along and never forgot that this was all temporary, and that the ultimate goal was to return to their true home in the land of Canaan.

Therein lies the secret to their ability to remain above all the static and noise of Laban's home and the city of Haran. With their eye on the goal, they kept God and truth in their hearts and minds at all times.

This may serve as a lesson to us in these times, as well. All of our time in this world is, in reality, no more than a sojourn before the world to come. We cannot take the world around us too seriously. The Ultimate Redemption is around the corner. As we continue doing what we can to perfect the world little by little, we must keep our eyes on the goal. We must keep God in our hearts and minds and know that very soon we, too, will return to our true home - to the Land of Israel with our righteous Moshiach. and make of ordeal, rebirth.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

Chanukah December 3 - 10

Please make arrangements with your chaplain to schedule candle lighting and prayers.

In Jewish History

Sunday, 10 Kislev, 5779 - November 18, 2018 Liberation of R. DovBer (1826)

In 1826, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch (see calendar entry for yesterday, Kislev 9) was arrested on charges that his teachings threatened the imperial authority of the Czar, but was subsequently exonerated. The date of his release, Kislev 10, is celebrated amongst Chabad Chassidim as a "festival of liberation." Tachnun (confession of sins) is omitted from the day's prayers, farbrengens are held, and Rabbi DovBer's teachings are studied.

Wednesday, 13 Kislev, 5779-November 21, 2018 Talmud completed (475 CE)

In the first decades of the 5th century, Rav Ashi (d. 427) and Ravina I (d. 421) led a group of the Amoraim (Talmudic sages) in the massive undertaking of compiling the Babylonian Talmud -- collecting and editing the discussions, debates and rulings of hundreds of scholars and sages which had taken place in the more than 200 years since the compilation of the Mishnah by Rabbi Judah HaNassi in 189. The last of these editors and compilers was Ravina II, who passed away on the 13th of Kislev of the year 4235 from creation (475 CE); after Ravina II, no further additions were made to the Talmud, with the exception of the minimal editing undertaken by the Rabbanan Savura'i (476-560). This date thus marks the point at which the Talmud was "closed" and became the basis for all further exegesis of Torah law.

Thursday, 14 Kislev, 5779 - November 22, 2018 Reuben Born (1568 BCE)

Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob and Leah, was born in Charan (Mesopotamia) on the 14th of Kislev of the year 2193 from creation (1568 BCE). As Jacob's firstborn, he was initially entitled to the leadership of Israel and to a double portion in the Holy Land, but these privileges were taken from him (and given respectively to Judah and Joseph) because he sinned by "violating the bed of his father." Reuben unsuccessfully tried to prevent the persecution of Joseph by his brothers in 2216 (1545 BCE) and subsequently berated them for selling him into slavery (Genesis 37:21; 42:22). In 2238 he relocated to Egypt together with his father, brothers and their children, where he died on his 125th birthday in 2318 (1443 BCE).

Rebbe's Marriage (1928)

On the 14th of Kislev, 1928, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, married Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (1901-1988), the middle daughter of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson (1880-1950), the sixth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. The wedding was held in Warsaw, Poland, at the Lubavitcher Yeshivah, Tomchei Temimim.

Upon Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's passing in 1950, Rabbi Menachem Mendel succeeded his father-in-law as the Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. On the 14th of Kislev of 1953, at a farbrengen (Chassidic gathering) marking his 25th wedding anniversary, the Rebbe said to his Chassidim: "This is the day that bound me to you, and you to me."