



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

25 November -
1 December, 2018
17 - 23 Kislev, 5779

Torah :
Genesis 37:1 - 40:23

Haftorah:
Amos 2:6 - 3:8

■ 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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IS THIS SPACE AVAILABLE?

Joseph and his brothers couldn't seem to get along. The way their father treated him with such clear favoritism drove them mad. He had special learning sessions with Joseph, showed off his greatness to the rest of the family and even gave Joseph a special made multi-colored coat to show his tremendous love for him.

The clincher came when Joseph had two dreams in which he saw that he was destined to rule over his brothers and even his parents. He shared these dreams with his family and they were, predictably, none too pleased by them.

Everything imploded when the brothers were out tending to Jacob's sheep and Jacob asked his favorite son, who was at home learning with his father, to go out and check on his brothers' welfare.

Joseph obediently obeyed. When he finally managed to locate his brothers, they were less than thrilled to see "the dreamer." They grabbed him and threw him into a pit, where they planned to leave him for dead. Instead though, they ended up selling him into slavery, which ultimately wound up being the very event which began the fulfillment of Joseph's prophecy.

Joseph quickly climbed the ranks of the Egyptian monarchy and in the end, during the years of famine, his brothers indeed wound up bowing before him in obedient submission.

But let's return for a moment to the episode with the pit. The Torah states, "and the pit was empty, there was no water in it." The obvious question is, why does God feel the need to specify that the pit had no water in it, when we just read that it was empty?

The great biblical and Talmudic commentator, Rashi, explains: "Water, there was none. But snakes and scorpions it did contain." On a spiritual level, indeed on a psychological level, this has tremendously powerful truth.

What was it that brought about the presence of snakes and scorpions in this pit? It was the lack of water. When a pit is devoid of anything nurturing and useful, it attracts undesirable alternatives.

This same reality applies to the hearts and minds of mankind. When we fill our hearts and our minds with positivity, with good thoughts, holy thoughts, we are in good shape. But if one were to leave his heart and mind devoid of these Godly things, they would be replaced with the undesirable.

The mind of a person is an incredibly powerful machine. It never stops working, even while the person sleeps. If someone were to tell himself, "I'll just stay neutral, neither here nor there," it would only be recipe for disaster. Only when we fill our minds with the good, does the negative have no place.

10 TEVES

12/18/2018 is the Fast of Teves, request bag lunch.

Parshat Vayeishev HIS GREATEST WEAKNESS

Jim is preparing for a big job interview. Hair freshly trimmed, suit freshly pressed, tie freshly purchased, he enters the head office and stands across from the man behind the mahogany desk.

They exchange greetings, Jim answers a few basic questions and then all is quiet for a minute while the boss reviews Jim's resume through the bifocals perched on his nose.

Finally, the boss sits back and says, "Well, Jim, what would you say is your greatest weakness?"

Jim thinks for a moment and the responds, "Sir, I'd have to say it's my honesty."

"Why, I don't think honesty is a weakness..."

"Well, frankly," Jim fires back, "I don't care what you think!"

In this week's Torah Portion we read the story of Jacob's long-awaited return to the land of his forefathers, "And Jacob settled in the land which his forefathers had dwelled, in the land of Canaan." This seems like the ultimate point of peaceful triumph.

Jacob had spent most of his life either running for his life or trying to defend his honor and wellbeing and that of his family. He narrowly escaped the wrath of his twin brother, Esau, when Jacob usurped the blessing of their father Isaac on his deathbed; blessings which were intended for Esau. He spent two decades tending to the sheep of his sly uncle, Laban, who tried time and time again to swindle Jacob of his hard ear-

ned pay. He fends off an attack from Esau's guardian angel, suffering a dislocated hip, from which he would limp the rest of his life. And then he survived a terrifying encounter with Esau himself and four hundred henchmen, each armed to the teeth.

One would think that finally settling in Canaan would bring about the end of his trials and tribulations. But this was not to be. Au contraire. The exact opposite would prove to be the truth.

With the help of God and firm belief in Him, Jacob had managed to maintain a healthy family both physically as well as spiritually throughout all his time in exile. His children were all imbued with the same values and morals with which he himself had been raised. They were all righteous, they were all following in the footsteps of their father.

Then, almost immediately upon their arrival in Canaan, Jacob's life begins to rapidly unravel. His favorite son is lost to what he believes at the time to be a wild animal attack. His emotional and physical health suffer as a result, and his remaining sons all live their lives with shame and guilt weighing on their consciences for the evil they had perpetrated against their younger brother. This only brought about more division amongst themselves.

So what was it? What changed in Jacob's life that caused it to spiral out of control? What was Jacob's greatest weakness...?

The answer is infighting. So long as Jacob had a strong family bond amongst all those in his family, they were unbeatable. They were invincible. They had each others' backs, they always had the other's best interest in mind, and, most importantly, they had God on their side. Now, that is not to say that God abandoned Jacob when his children began to quarrel. That was never the case. But, as our sages taught in the Mishna, "God has no greater vessel for collecting blessings for Israel, other than peace."

Peace amongst Jews is the primary channel through which God funnels His endless blessings into this world. When we love and respect each other the way loving brethren ought to, God fills that vessel of peace with all of His greatest treasures which He desires to give unto His chosen people.

However, when we, His people, turn our backs on one another and treat each other with less than the proper dignity and respect, His blessings simply have no place to go. They have to channel through which to flow. God yearns to give us His blessings. Let us reach out to our neighbors with love, dignity and respect, even and especially those with whom we disagree on many things. God eagerly awaits every opportunity to shower us with reciprocal kindness. Let's give Him the opportunity to do just that.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

Chanukah December 3 - 10

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

In Jewish History

Tuesday, 19 Kislev, 5779 -

November 27, 2018

Passing of Maggid (1772)

Rabbi DovBer, known as "The Maggid of Mezeritch", was the disciple of, and successor to, the founder of Chassidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. Rabbi DovBer led the Chassidic movement from 1761 until his passing on Kislev 19, 1772.

Liberation of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1798)

On the 19th of Kislev of the year 5559 from creation (1798), Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi -- a leading disciple of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch (see previous entry) and the founder of Chabad Chassidism -- was released from his imprisonment in the Peter-Paul fortress in Petersburg, where he was held for 53 days on charges that his teachings threatened the imperial authority of the Czar. More than a personal liberation, this was a watershed event in the history of Chassidism heralding a new era in the revelation of the "inner soul" of Torah, and is celebrated to this day as "The Rosh Hashanah of Chassidism."

Rebbetzin Menuchah Rachel born (1798)

On the very day that Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was liberated from prison (see above), a granddaughter was born to him -- the daughter of his son Rabbi Dovber and his wife Rebbetzin Sheina. The girl was named Menuchah Rachel -- "Menuchah", meaning "tranquility" (Rachel was the name of a daughter of Rabbi Schneur Zalman who died in her youth).

In 1845, Rebbetzin Menuchah Rachel realized her lifelong desire to live in the Holy Land when she and her husband, Rabbi Yaakov Culi Slonim (d. 1857), led a contingent of Chassidim who settled in Hebron. Famed for her wisdom, piety and erudition, she served as the matriarch of the Chassidic community in Hebron until her passing in her 90th year in 1888.

Wednesday, 20 Kislev, 5779 -

November 28, 2018

Ezra's Address (347 BCE)

Ezra, head of the Sanhedrin and the leader of the Jewish people at the time of the building of the Second Temple, made an historic address to a three-day assemblage of Jews in Jerusalem, exhorting them to adhere to the teachings of the Torah and to dissolve their interfaith marriages (the Jewish people were on the verge of complete assimilation at the time, following their 70-year exile in Babylonia).

Tanya Published (1796)

The first printing of the "bible of Chassidism", the Tanya, the magnum opus of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad.