



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

16 - 22 December, 2018
8 - 14 Tevet, 5779

Torah:
Genesis 47:28 - 50:26

Haftarah:
Kings I 2:1-12

■ 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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BE YOURSELF, EVERYONE ELSE IS TAKEN

The saintly Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk once stated:

“If I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you. But if I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, only then am I me and you you.”

If I live my life based on who you are, as opposed to who I am and what I need to be, then that's no life. And vice versa.

There is an old story of a stonecutter who worked all day in the mountains outside his city. He worked hard, chopping stones off the side of the mountains and selling them for a small profit in order to be able to feed his family. One day, as he's picking away at the mountain, the stonecutter hears the sound of trumpets in the distance. At first he pays them no attention, when all at once he sees the glorious chariot of the king passing by. He sees the king seated comfortably, enjoying the breeze in his face. “Oh,” thought the poor stonecutter, “how I wish I were the king.”

POOF! Suddenly, to his shock and confusion, the stonecutter finds himself sitting in the king's chariot, wearing the king's robes and even his royal crown! His wish had come true! He was so excited he could hardly contain himself.

After a few minutes,

our new king begins to sweat uncomfortably in his heavy purple robes. With the sun beating down, all the breeze in the world couldn't cool him. “Now that's power,” thought the stonecutter-turned-king, “I wish I were the mighty sun...”

POOF! Suddenly, the man found himself floating high above the earth. He had become the sun! He couldn't believe his good fortune. All day he spent beating down on helpless earthlings, until suddenly, something stood in his way. Clouds. Try as he might, his powers were useless against the big puffy clouds. “Man,” thought the sun, “I wish I were a cloud.”

Sure enough, his wish was instantly granted. Smiling widely, this cloud moved all around, shielding and protecting all he could from the sun's mighty rays.

Along came a strong wind and blew the cloud helplessly off his path. “I wish I was the wind!” thought the cloud. And so it was. This happy wind blew all about with gusto, displacing mighty clouds and ruffling trees and plants. Suddenly, he came up against a tall mountain. Try as he might, he made no impression on the mighty mountain. “I want to be a mountain,” thought our stonecutter-turned-wind, “surely, there is nothing more mighty than that!”

Yet, just moments after our friend began to look down on all of God's smaller creations, the mighty mountain felt a sharp pain in his side. Looking down to see what could possibly be such a mighty force as to be able to

disrupt the almighty mountain, he saw none other than - a poor tired stonecutter.

In this week's Torah Portion our forefather Jacob blesses all of his sons before his passing. Each one of them received a personalized blessing based on his own life and future. The brothers got a pretty good picture of who would climb the heights of power and who not, but they did not envy one another. They understood that each one of them, regardless of stature or rank, had his own place in the world and his own contribution to make. A contribution which only he could make.

This same reality applies to every person on the face of the earth. Every person who God placed in this world has a purpose and a mission, one which only he or she can fulfill to God's satisfaction. As a wise man once said, your birthday is the day when God let the world know that it could no longer exist without you.

We all have our place and our own purpose. Let us remember that every day and in every place. We may not realize when our big moment comes, but come it will.

God Himself is counting on it.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

IMMORTALITY

Why does this week's Torah reading — a Parshah which describes the end of

10 TEVES

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

Jacob's life, his death and his funeral — carry the title Vayechi, "And He Lived"?

Let me be faithful to Jewish tradition and try to answer one question with another question. Interestingly, the Torah never actually states that Jacob died. It simply says that "he expired and was gathered unto his people." (Genesis 49:33) This prompted one of the Talmudic sages to expound that "our father Jacob never died." Whereupon his colleagues challenged him and asked, "Did they then bury Jacob for no reason? Did they eulogize him in vain?" To which the Talmud answers: "As his descendants live, so does he live." (Talmud, Taanit 5b)

Life does not end with the grave. The soul never dies and the good work men and women do on earth continues to live on long after their physical passing. More particularly, if there is regeneration, if children emulate the example of their forbears, then their parents and teachers live on through them.

When Jacob was about to breathe his last, he called his children to gather round his bedside. Our Parshah recounts what he told each of them. But the Oral Tradition gives us a behind-the-scenes account. Apparently, Jacob was anxious to know whether all his offspring were keeping the faith and he put this concern to them at that time. They replied, Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad-- "Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One." They were saying that the G-d of Israel their father would always be their G-d, too. Jacob was comforted and responded, Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto L'olam Vaed-- "Blessed be the Name of the glory of His Kingdom forever and ever" (Talmud, Pesachim 56a) (or in plain English, Baruch Hashem! Thank G-d!)

When all of Jacob's children remained faithful to his tradition, that was not only a tribute to Jacob's memory but the ultimate gift of eternal life bestowed upon him. His spirit lives on, his life's work continues to flourish and he is still present in this world as his soul lives on in the next.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries in New York. At the closing banquet, there were over 2000 rabbis and hundreds of lay leaders in attendance at the New York Hilton. One of the most special moments for me in an altogether powerful event, was when the chairman, Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky did his now famous global roll call. While I was proud to rise and represent South Africa when our turn came, an even prouder and profoundly moving moment was when the rabbis were asked to indicate in which decade they went out to their respective communities as sheluchim (emissaries) of the Rebbe. A handful of old men stood for the 1940's, a somewhat larger group of senior rabbis rose for the 1950's, and so it grew by the decade. But when the call was made for those who had gone out to serve communities around the world after 1994—i.e. after the passing of the Rebbe—many hundreds of young rabbis rose. At that moment, it was clear to everyone in that huge hall that Jacob never died. Just as his students are alive, carry on his teachings and still answer his call to go out and change the world, so too does the Rebbe live on. Whether it means moving to Belarus or Bangkok, Sydney or Siberia, Alaska or the bottom of Africa, the Rebbe's mission is still

moving people, literally and spiritually.

In following his path, Jacob's children immortalized him. Such a Parshah is aptly entitled Vayechi, "And he lived." Ultimately, our children make us immortal. And so do our students, our spiritual children. May we each be privileged to raise families and disciples who will be true children of Israel, faithful to our father Jacob and the G-d of Israel. Amen.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

PASSING OF EZRA THE SCRIBE

Ezra the Scribe passed away on the 9th of Tevet of the year 3448 (313 BCE), exactly 1000 years after the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

It was he who led the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile, oversaw the building of the Second Temple, and helped put a stop to the wave of intermarriage that afflicted the Jews at that time. As head of the Great Assembly, he canonized the 24 books of the Holy Scriptures (Tanach) and legislated a series of laws and practices, including formalized prayer, guaranteeing the continuation of authentic Judaism among the Jewish people to this very day.

15 SHEVAT

15 of Shevat (January 21, 2019) is the new year for trees, please make arrangements to purchase dates or figs from the commissary.

PASSOVER

Please begin working with your Rabbi / Chaplain to ensure the paperwork is being processed and the necessary arrangements are being made for Passover.

The Passover forms were mailed to the chaplain and Rabbis, please contact us if not yet received.

In Jewish History

Monday, 9 Tevet, 5779 - December 17, 2018
Passing of Ezra (313 BCE)

Ezra, who led the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile (423-353 BCE), oversaw the building of the Second Temple, canonized the 24 books of the Holy Scriptures ("bible") and, as head of the "Great Assembly" legislated a series of laws and practices (including formalized prayer) which left a strong imprint on Judaism to this very day, passed away on the 9th of Tevet of the year 3448 from creation (313 BCE -- exactly 1000 years after the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai). The passing of Ezra marked the end of the "Era of Prophecy."

Tuesday, 10 Tevet, 5779-December 18, 2018
Siege of Jerusalem (425 BCE)

On the 10th of Tevet of the year 3336 from Creation (425 BCE), the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. Thirty months later -- on Tammuz 17, 3338 -- the city walls were breached, and on Av 9th of that year, the Holy Temple was destroyed. The Jewish people were exiled to Babylonia for 70 years.