



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

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

30 December, 2018 -
5 January, 2019
22 - 28 Tevet, 5779

Torah:
Exodus 6:2 - 9:35

Haftarah:
Ezekiel 28:25 - 29:21

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.

ALEPH INSTITUTE

Rogal Center
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-0111
Fax: 412-521-5948
www.alephne.org
info@alephne.org

TIME MIGHT TELL

In a small summer camp in on the East Coast, little Josh was enjoying his time participating in the programs and activities, surrounded with friends.

Everything was going well, until one day, as Josh was stepping down off the bus returning from a field trip, he missed a step and tumbled to the ground. After informing Josh's parents rushing him off to the hospital, the camp was devastated to hear that he had a severe fracture in his foot. Josh would have to wear a cast for several months and stay mostly off his feet, allowing the fracture to heal.

His parents were livid. Having to watch their little boy struggle with a large bulky cast as he sulked around the house, missing out on all the fun his friends were having, and thinking that the injury was a result of staff negligence, the family cut all ties with the camp as well as the umbrella organization which ran it. As much as the Rabbi in charge tried to reason with them, their pain overruled and they wouldn't hear it.

Several months went by with no contact at all. Then came the fateful day, September 11th, 2001. That evening, the Rabbi of the camp received an emotional phone call from Josh's father. Apologizing for his previous allegations and rash behaviours, he explained to the curious Rabbi, "This morning, I had to take Josh to the doctor to get his cast removed. As a

result, I had to miss several hours of work. My office was on the 93rd floor of the World Trade Center towers..."

The Midrash explains that Joseph cried was over the fact that his mother, Rachel, was the only one of the four matriarchs to be buried outside of the cave of Machpeilah. However, he wasn't crying over the injustice of it, and he held no grudges against his father for burying here there. On the contrary, he knew very well that if his father did so, it was for a valid and purposeful reason. The sages explain that generations later, when the Jews were being driven from the homeland and forced into exile, they passed by Rachel's Tomb, and the prayers which they cried there gave them the strength and fortitude to bear the suffering of the exile, knowing that our matriarch, Rachel, was pleading on their behalf before God.

Jacob foresaw this. But it pained Joseph to no end that he was not given that same insight that his father had.

In this week's Torah Portion God instructs Moses confront Pharaoh and command his to let the Jewish people go. He expects the best, but the worst happens. Not only does Pharaoh not only refused to let the people go, but he even increased their workload and decreased the assistance they had gotten until that point from the Egyptians. Moses then confronts God and demands, "Why have You done harm to this nation? Why did You send me? Since I approached Pharaoh to speak in Your

Parshat Va'eira

Name, matters have gotten worse, and You have not redeemed the nation..."

God's response seems to evade the actual question. Instead, God replies, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a mighty hand he will send them, and with a mighty hand he will drive them from his land." The response indicates that God was not addressing Moses' question, seeing as it does not explain "why." God simply moved on to what was to come next, the next part of His master plan, regardless of whether or not Moses and the people fully understood "part one."

God has His ways. We don't always understand His reasons, in fact, we seldom do. Occasionally, we are given some insight into His master plan. Occasionally we see the good behind and sudden death on the roadside in Hebron, or the good behind a broken leg. But more often we are left in the dark.

Like Moses, we can always demand a change from God when we see someone else suffering. And like the Godly response which Moses received, we may not always understand what He does, but we can always be sure that something good is coming down the track.

MODERN DAY EGYPT

The Cohen family was sitting and enjoying their Passover Seder when the fuse blew in their home, plunging their Seder into total darkness. Mr. Cohen walked to the non-Jewish neighbor's house to see if he'd be willing

to come over and switch the power back on. When he returned with the neighbor, the man was shocked by what he saw. It seemed that the entire kitchen was being held together with aluminum foil and masking tape! "What happened??" asked the surprised neighbor. "Oh, we're just celebrating our redemption from Egypt," replied Mr. Cohen. The neighbor asked, "When did this happen?" Mr. Cohen smiled and said, "Almost three and a half thousand years ago." "And you're still celebrating like this?!"

Why indeed? Won't we ever get over it? Hasn't it been long enough? The answer, in a word, is no. The truth of the matter is the exodus from the bonds of Egyptian slavery which we commemorate each year is not merely a remembrance for the exodus which we experienced way back when. It is reminder of the exodus we ought to experience every year, if not every day.

The Hebrew name for Egypt, "Mitzrayim", can also be translated as boundaries, restrictions or limitations. So the real underlying theme of Passover is the constant struggle which we have with our own personal restrictions and self-inflicted limitations. The overwhelming "yes I want to better myself, but..." or the "of course I know this is wrong, it's just so..." that we so often experience is our own personal, inner Mitzrayim from which we must try to free ourselves.

One of the ways through which this is done is through the plagues. Yes, the infamous ten plagues of Egypt. Each one carries its own unique meaning and lesson even in our modern day service of God.

But let's look at the first two. Blood and frogs. What can we possibly learn from a bloody river and an invasion of frogs?

The Chassidic masters explain that the cold waters of the Nile can be likened to the coldness and indifference which we often feel towards the things we should be more enthusiastic about. The first step is to pay more attention to what it is we are doing, to learn the deeper meanings behind our actions, and develop a warmth towards those things. Change our feelings for them from the coldness of water to the warmth and life of blood.

The next step is to conquer those things which do excite us, although they shouldn't. The things in life which we have become somewhat emotionally attached to - our physical belongs or mundane pleasures. Similar to the frogs, cold blooded creatures, which invaded every inch of Egypt - even the insides of their burning ovens.

By Rabbi Nissan Aizek

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.

In Jewish History

Monday, 23 Tevet, 5779 - December 31, 2018
Portuguese Expulsion (1496)

Following the death of King Joao of Portugal in 1494, his son King Manuel I ascended the throne. When his legitimacy as heir to the throne was challenged, Manuel wished to marry Princess Isabel of Spain, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, in order to solidify his position. As a precondition to the marriage, the Spanish monarch demanded that Portugal expel its Jews—many of whom were refugees from the 1492 Spanish Expulsion who found refuge in the neighboring country of Portugal. Manuel agreed, and five days after the marriage agreement was signed, on Tevet 23 (5257), he issued a decree giving Portugal's Jews eleven months to leave the country.

Appreciating the Jews' economic value, Manuel was unhappy with the potential loss of this economic asset, and devised a way to have the Jews stay in Portugal—but as Christians. Initially, he instructed the Jews to leave from one of three ports, but soon he restricted them to leaving from Lisbon only. When October of 1497 arrived, thousands of Jews assembled there and were forcibly baptized. Many Jews decided to stay and keep their Jewish faith secret; they were called Marranos or Crypto-Jews.

Over the next 350 years, the infamous Inquisition persecuted, tortured and burned at the stake thousands of "marranos" throughout Spain, Portugal and their colonies for continuing to secretly practice the Jewish faith.

Wednesday, 18 Tevet, 5779- December 26, 2018
Passing of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1812)

The founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), passed away on the eve of the 24th of Tevet, 5573, at approximately 10:30 pm, shortly after reciting the Havdalah prayer marking the end of the Shabbat. The Rebbe was in the village of Peyena, fleeing Napoleon's armies, which had swept through the Rebbe's hometown of Liadi three months earlier in their advance towards Moscow. He was in his 68th year at the time of his passing, and was succeeded by his son, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch.

Friday, 20 Tevet, 5779 - December 28, 2018
Birth and Passing of Shimon (1567-1447 BCE)

According to sources cited in Seder Hadorot, Tevet 28 is both the birthday and the day of passing of Shimon the son of Jacob; other sources place the date as Tevet 21. (See the entry for Tevet 21).

Sadducees Ejected From Sanhedrin (81 BCE)

Shimon ben Shetach successfully completed the expulsion of the Sadducees (a sect which denied the Oral Torah and the authority of the Sages) who had dominated the Sanhedrin (Supreme Court), replacing them with his Torah-loyal disciples, on the 28th of Tevet of the year 3680 from creation (81 BCE).

Rebbetzin Chana Born (1879)

Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson (1879 (O.S.) - 1964), mother of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was born on Tevet 28.