



**ALEPH  
INSTITUTE**

No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

# TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

6 - 12 January, 2019

29 Tevet -

6 Shevat, 5779

**Torah :**

Exodus 10:1 - 13:16

**Haftorah:**

Jeremiah 46:13-28

## ■ 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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## I GET KNOCKED DOWN, BUT I GET UP AGAIN

“And God spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying: This month shall be to you the head of the months; to you it shall be the first of the months of the year.”

In this week's Torah Reading the Jewish people receive their first Mitzvah, their first commandment as a free nation. God commands the Jews to consecrate the new month based on the cycle of the moon. This is the method used by the Jewish people to this day to calculate the new months and, as a result, the Jewish Holidays.

It seems somewhat anticlimactic, though, that this would be chosen as the very first commandment the Jews receive as they prepare to leave Egypt and begin their journey to the Holy Land. One might have expected the first Mitzvah to be something more essential, more integral to who we are as a nation. Perhaps we would have expected something more mainstream, like the laws of Shabbat or Tefillin, or perhaps family purity. What is it about the sanctification of the new moon that made it God's choice of inaugural statement to His newly redeemed people?

So, let's take a deeper look at the nature of the moon and its cycles. Perhaps the very fact that the moon waxes and wanes and then waxes again is itself a message integral to the very being of the small Jewish nation.

As the people left the land of bondage, anticipating, expecting and hopeful of a bright future, God's message was clear, realistic, as well as timeless. He tells them, if a comfortable ride is what they're expecting for the rest of eternity - they could forget about it. Comfortable is one thing it would not always be. Right off the bat the Jews were told, it's going to be a bumpy ride. Persecution, pogroms, enemies rearing their heads in every generation, and the constant presence of those who want nothing more than to do harm to God's Chosen Nation.

But, like the moon, while we might wane now and again, we can always rest assured we will come back around and wax again. Enemies will rise up, foes will knock us off our feet but we will always continue to get back up and rise again. We never got so busy trying to survive that we forgot to live, because before we ever took a step towards eternal freedom we were told it was going to be rough. We spent our time living, and left the existing in God's hands. That is the secret to our impossible survival. The Jewish Nation is compared to the moon. We may get shattered, but never crushed. We may fade, but we will never disappear.

## THE TIME IS IN OUR HANDS

There is a well-known story of a high school philosophy professor who once stood up before his class

## Parshat Bo

with a large empty glass jar. He filled the jar to the top with large rocks and asked his students if the jar was full. The students said that yes, the jar was full. He then added small pebbles to the jar, and gave the jar a bit of a shake so the pebbles could disperse themselves among the larger rocks. Then he asked again, “Is the jar full now?”

The students smiled, and agreed that the jar was indeed full. The professor then poured water into the jar to fill up any remaining empty space. The students then agreed that the jar was completely full.

The professor went on to explain that the jar represents everything that is in one's life. The rocks are equivalent to the most important projects and things you have going on, such as spending time with your family and serving God. This means that if the pebbles and the sand were lost, the jar would still be full and your life would still have meaning.

The pebbles represent the things in your life that matter, but that you could live without. The pebbles are certainly things that give your life meaning, such as a job, a hobby, a friendship, but they are not critical for having a meaningful life. These things often come and go, and are not permanent or essential to one's overall well-being. Finally, the water represents the remaining space fillers in life, such as material possessions. It could be small things such as playing games, taking vacations or even running errands. These things don't

mean much to one's life as a whole, and are likely only done to during spare time or to accomplish small tasks.

The metaphor here is that if you start with putting water and pebbles into the jar, there will be no room left for the rocks. This holds true with the things we let into our lives. If we spend all of our time on the small and less significant things, we will run out of room for the things that are actually important.

Interesting tidbit: the very first Mitzvah that God commands the Jewish people even before they leave Egypt is the Mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh, sanctifying the new month when the moon fades and reappears.

The verse says, "And God spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying: This month shall be to you the head of the months; to you it shall be the first of the months of the year."

Why does God keep reiterating "to you" again and again? Why doesn't the verse simply say, "This month shall be the head of the months of the year," or something along those lines? Why the emphasis on "to you"?

What the Holy One, Blessed be He, was telling the Jewish nation on the verge of leaving Egyptian bondage and being free to serve Him, as well as what He is telling us today, is a valuable lesson in Godly service.

The lunar calendar, introduced to the Jews in this week's Torah Portion is used to this day to sort the years, months, and holidays in "Jewish time." Not the classic "Jewish Time" where everything is half an hour late, but Jewish Time in a Godly sense. God's very first message regarding His supernal service is, the time is yours. It's in your hands. Using our time wisely can mean the difference between effective service of God and a chaotic, tumultuous mess of responsibilities which can begin to feel impossibly overwhelming. A fellow by the name of Michael Altshuler is quoted as having said, "The bad news is, time flies. The good news is, you're the pilot."

They say, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. If we can't stop time from moving, then let's join it. Let's just keep moving, keep doing and keep achieving.

But let's always tackle the rocks first, leaving room later for the less significant activities in our lives.

*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.

## *In Jewish History*

**Sunday, 29 Tevet, 5779 - January 6, 2019**

### *Winter*

According to Rabbi Judah (*Talmud, Bava Metzia 106b*), Tevet 29 marks the end of winter. (*Genesis 8:22, the year consists of six 2-month "seasons": seedtime, harvest, cold, heat, summer and winter.*)

### **Passing of R. Yitzchak Kaduri (2006)**

Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri, known in recent years as "the eldest of the Kabbalists," in the Holy Land, was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1898. As a youth, he studied under the great "Ben Ish Chai" (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, 1840-1913) and was regarded as an illu (prodigy) by the sages of the venerable Baghdad Jewish community. In 1922, Rabbi Yitzchak emigrated to the Holy Land and joined the ranks of the Jerusalem Kabbalists, even as he earned his living for many years as a bookbinder. Over the years his fame grew, and thousands flocked to him to receive his counsel and blessing.

Rabbi Kaduri passed away on the 29th of Tevet of 2006, age 108. Hundreds of thousands attended his funeral in Jerusalem.

**Monday, 1 Shevat, 5779 - January 7, 2019**

### **Moses Repeats the Torah**

On the first of Shevat of the year 2488 from creation Moses convened the Jewish people and began the 37-day "review of the Torah" contained in the Book of Deuteronomy, which he concluded on the day of his passing on Adar 7 of that year.

**Tuesday, 2 Shevat, 5779 - January 8, 2019**

### **Alexander-Yannai's death celebrated (76 BCE)**

Hashmonean King Alexander-Yannai (Jannaeus), an avowed enemy of the Jewish sages, died on this date. So great was his cruelty and the ruthlessness with which he persecuted the Sages and those loyal to them (some 50,000 were killed in the years 82-76 BCE), that the day of his death was declared a holiday.

### **R. Zusha of Anipoli (1800)**

Shevat 2 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Chassidic Master Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Anipoli (1718?-1800), a disciple of the 2nd leader of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch.

Despite Rabbi Zusha's erudition and great piety, he was distinguished by his self-effacement and simple ways. A characteristic saying of his goes: "If it were offered to me to exchange places with Abraham our Father, I would refuse. What would G-d gain from this? He'd still have one Zusha and one Abraham..." His colleagues said of him that he was literally incapable of seeing anything negative in a fellow Jew.

**Wednesday, 3 Shevat, 5779 - January 9, 2019**

### **Amshinover Rebbe (1935)**

Shevat 3 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Yosef ben Rabbi Menachem Kalisch zt"l, the Amshinover Rebbe, in 1935.

**Thursday, 4 Shevat, 5779 - January 10, 2019**

### **R. Israel Abuchatzera (1984)**

Rabbi Israel Abuchatzera (1890-1984), known as "Baba Sali," was born in Tafillalt, Morocco to the illustrious Abuchatzera family. From a young age he was renowned as a sage, miracle maker and master kabbalist. In 1964 he moved to the Holy Land, eventually settling in the southern development town he made famous, Netivot. He passed away in 1984 on the 4th of Shevat. His graveside in Netivot has become a holy site visited by thousands annually.