



27 January -
2 February, 2019
21 - 27 Shevat, 5779

Torah :
Exodus 21:1 - 24:18

Haftarah:
Jeremiah 34:8-22;
Jeremiah 33:25-26

■ **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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GRATITUDE TO A BOY NAMED CHRISTOPHER

The Downside of the
Upside

Most of us are familiar with the acronym PTSD, otherwise known as “post-traumatic stress disorder.” Less familiar is PTD, which stands for “post-travel depression.”

When I come home after a vacation or even a short getaway, it’s usually a hard landing. My house likes to welcome me back with water damage or something in need of immediate repair. I do the usual look-through and tend to breathe a big sigh of relief when nothing untoward has happened. Once, I couldn’t start my car. Who knew that undercarriage wires are a delicacy, and nothing says “free lunch” to squirrels more than a stationary car in a driveway?

Post-travel depression. That transition back to the “real world.” If it weren’t for the suitcase full of dirty clothes, the extra five pounds on the scale and the credit-card bills to come, I would wonder: Did I even go away? Did that vacation really even happen?

But this bluesy feeling isn’t limited to travel. It’s common to feel a sense of depression or anxiety following any kind of peak experience. After all, when we’re feeling “up,” where is there to go but “down?” And as much as we may joyfully celebrate a life-cycle or milestone event, we can also experience a

sense of loss for what is no more. After the exhilaration of a child’s wedding, for example, parents can feel sad or nostalgic about the fact that their “baby” has grown up. After all, it’s not just the child’s transition to adulthood that marks a new era; the parents are entering a new life stage as well. For some, that can feel like a real letdown.

Last week’s Torah portion, Yitro, was perhaps the “peakiest” of all peak experiences in Jewish history—namely, mass Divine Revelation, when we received the Ten Commandments and heard the very voice of G-d. Of course, as befits the moment, it was not without spectacular pyrotechnical and stunning effects that made the Ten Plagues seem trivial by comparison. We “saw” the thunder; we “heard” the lightning; and the commentaries tell us that upon hearing G-d speak, we instantly dropped dead—and then came right back to life! I mean, where do you go from there?

And so, Mishpatim, which deals with the seemingly mundane laws of damages and compensation for harm, losses and injuries, doesn’t quite pack the same euphoric punch. And for the weekly Torah reader, behind us are the juicy stories and family sagas; for months to come now, we will read of laws and more laws. It can seem rather anti-climatic.

Judaism, however, is not a “big reveal.” Judaism calls for daily practice, a cultivated discipline of thinking, a way of being that takes time and effort to develop. When we become

skilled at using Torah to craft our lives, we build not just ourselves; we shape a covenantal society in which “other people matter.” As such, we live intentionally so as not to create harm, injury, and loss, etc. It’s as if after giving us the Ten Commandments, G-d implied: OK, so now it’s your turn. Show me what you can do. Can you create your own peak experiences with simple acts of kindness, consideration, and care?

The Kindness of Strangers

And now I’ll tell you about a boy named Christopher and his dad. My husband and I were coming home from a vacation and were waiting at the airport for the shuttle to take us to the remote parking lot. It was late at night, cold and when the shuttle arrived, people were naturally focused on getting on and finding a seat. As my husband was struggling to hoist the heavy bags up a narrow and steep set of steps, I heard a voice boom behind me: “Christopher, help the man with his luggage!” Christopher, a teenage boy, had gotten on ahead of my husband; we were sandwiched in between him and his father. I detected something more than a simple directive to Christopher to help us. The tone of this father’s voice implied that even though Christopher’s back was to us, somehow he should have noticed our plight. With instant grace and kindness, Christopher helped us with our luggage and made sure that we got seats before he sat down.

Saying ‘No’ to the Negativity Bias

For a while, the four of us sat silently in a row, keeping our balance in the swaying vehicle, listening to the churning of the unmuffled engine. I was feeling grateful to Christopher and his dad—not just for the kind act, but for being noticed in a moment of distress. Many of us have an innate negativity bias. From toddlerhood on, we're inculcated with "stranger danger" and learn to keep our heads down low. This has practical benefits; when we don't notice the suffering of others, then we can evade taking any action. To be kind to a stranger, on the other hand, is to overcome the negativity bias that seeks safety and convenience. To be on the lookout for opportunities to show grace is to open ourselves to a very different way of thinking about who we are and our place in the world.

And so, I decided to overcome my "stranger danger" to tell Christopher's dad how much I appreciated their kindness, and I complimented him on the fine job he was doing raising his son. As they rose to get off the bus, they smiled, shook our hands, introduced themselves (Christopher's dad's name is Dave) and, noticing my husband's kippah, wished us a happy holiday (it was during Chanukah). A few minutes later, as we got up for our stop, a chorus of voices from the back of the shuttle instantly called out asking us if we needed any help with our bags. Realizing that they had overheard the conversation, they, too, wanted to be like Christopher. Kindness is contagious!

Everything Awaits Your Attention

When we are in harmony with ourselves and our surroundings, we can experience peak moments of profound love, understanding and unity—where we feel alive, connected and bathed in the light of truth and goodness. The moment is perfect in its totality, just as it is.

The laws of Torah build a culture of "rising to the occasion," cultivating a society sourced in empathy, compassion and connection that plays out in our everyday ordinary lives. We don't need to be at the foot of Mount Sinai to be filled with awe. Look closer to home. Notice the needs of strangers. And notice, too, just how often strangers are kind to you. Look deeply into the "ordinary" laws of Mishpatim, and you will find extraordinary peak moments waiting to happen.

By Mrs. Hanna Perlberger

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

Sunday, 21 Shevat, 5779 - January 27, 2019 ***First Jew Granted Residence in England (1657)***

On February 4, 1657, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, issued the first residence permit to a Jew, Luis Carvajal, since the expulsion of all Jews from England by King Edward I in the year 1290. The edict of expulsion had been officially overturned in the previous year, 1656. The re-admittance of Jews into England was partially due to the efforts of the great scholar Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel.
Rabbi Moshe Galante (1689)

Rabbi Moshe Galanti II was born in Safed in 1620 and later moved to Jerusalem where he founded a large yeshivah. He was a grandson of the famed Rabbi Moshe Galante I, who was a student of Rabbi Yosef Karo.

Rabbi Galanti was the first rabbi endowed with the title Rishon l'Tzion ("the First of Zion"), a title traditionally conferred upon the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Jerusalem and later of the Land of Israel. This due to the profound love and esteem he was given by the Sephardic community in Jerusalem.

He authored a number of works including *Elef HaMagen*, which includes 1,000 responsa on various topics; *Parpara'ot l'Chochmah*, a commentary on the Bible; and *Zevach HaShelamim* on the Talmud.

Counted among his students was Rabbi Chizkiyah De Silva, rabbi of Hebron and author of the *Pri Chadash* (printed in the standard edition of the Code of Jewish Law).

Monday, 22 Shevat, 5779 - January 28, 2019 ***Passing of Kotzker Rebbe (1859)***

Passing of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859), renowned Chassidic leader, and forerunner of the "Ger" Chassidic dynasty.

Rebbetzin's Yahrzeit (1988)

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushkah Schneerson (b. 1901), wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, passed away on the 22nd of Shevat of the year 5748 (1988).

Chabad's annual international conference of sheluchot (woman "emissaries") is held on or near this date.

Tuesday, 23 Shevat, 5779 - January 29, 2019 ***War on Benjamin (1188 BCE)***

Armies of the Tribes of Israel converged upon the tribe of Benjamin in the aftermath of the "Concubine at Givah" incident, in a war which nearly brought about the extinction of the Benjaminites (as related in the Book of Judges, chapters 19-21).

Friday, 26 Shevat, 5779 - February 1, 2019 ***Passing of the Taz (1667)***

Shevat 26 is the yahrzeit of Rabbi Dovid ben Shmuel Halevi (1586-1667), a primary Halachic authority, known as Taz after his work *Turei Zahav* ("Rows of Gold") -- a commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law).