



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**

No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

ת"ו

3 - 9 March, 2019

26 Adar I -

2 Adar II, 5779

Torah :

Exodus 38:21 - 40:38

Haftarah:

Kings I 7:51 - 8:21

■ **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.

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THE FINAL EXAM

Transparency and accountability — these are the new buzz words for 21st century corporate governance. No doubt all upright, honorable people welcome every genuine effort to stop corruption and dishonesty in whatever sphere of society — corporate, governmental or personal. But is this really a new phenomenon? Is ours, in fact, the first generation in history concerned about such issues?

In this week's Torah reading, Pikudei (Exodus 38-40), we learn that way back in the days of Moses a transparent accounting and detailed audit was conducted over the donations made by the Israelites towards the building campaign for the Sanctuary and its sacred vessels. The contributions of gold, silver and copper were all weighed and totaled, so that no one could cast any aspersions on the integrity of Moshe and his team. In fact, the commentaries derive from this episode that those in charge of communal charity funds should likewise hold themselves accountable. We all need to be "innocent in the eyes of G-d and man."

Ethics of the Fathers reminds us to consider that one day we will all face ultimate accountability. Each of us will stand before the heavenly tribunal to give a din v'cheshbon, a "full justification and an accounting" for the way we lived our lives.

It's fascinating to note that somehow the Talmud (Shabbos, 31a) was

able to get wind of the actual questions we will be asked by that supernal tribunal. Know what the very first question is going to be? Surprise, it's not "Did you believe in G-d," or "Did you fast on Yom Kippur?" Believe it or not, the first question on this final of final exams is: "Did you deal faithfully in business?" Not how religious you were with G-d but how you conducted your business affairs. Were you honest and fair with people?

The second question, however, does go to the heart of our Jewishness. "Did you set aside fixed times for Torah study?" It would appear that familiarizing oneself with Torah and becoming a knowledgeable Jew is the key that opens the doors to everything else in Jewish life.

Is it not an anomaly of our times that many of our most brilliant legal minds — attorneys, advocates and judges — may have never opened a single page of the Talmud, Judaism's classic encyclopedia of law? Or that some of our finest doctors may be completely unfamiliar with the medical writings of Maimonides, the great 12th century physician and scholar? Or that our brightest business magnates remain Jewishly ignorant, even illiterate?

When it comes to crossing a red light, ignorance of the law is no excuse. No traffic cop will buy the story that the driver didn't know it was illegal. In our day and age, with so many new opportunities for Torah study available, Jewish ignorance just doesn't wash. If the Tal-

Parshat Pekudei

mud was once a closed book, today it's available in English — and there are teachers to go with it too. Jewish studies opportunities abound in every community. And if one is geographically challenged, the internet can work wonders. You'll even find yourself a virtual Rabbi!

Let's ensure that when the Cop in Sky pulls us over to "ask a few questions" we'll all be able to answer in the affirmative.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

THE PRESSURE PRINCIPLE

This week we finish the reading of the book of Exodus, also known in the commentaries as the Book of Redemption because of its description of the people of Israel leaving Egypt. This second book of the Torah concludes by describing the establishment and dedication of the Tabernacle and, most importantly, the revelation of G-d's Divine Presence within it.

The Torah tells us: "When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would set out, on their various journeys." This seemingly simple verse raises two very significant questions.

First of all, what is the connection between the Jews traveling forward and the establishment of the Tabernacle in the desert? This information would seem to be more appropriate later in the book of Numbers, when it describes in great detail the various travels of the people of Israel during their 40 years

in the desert.

Secondly, the verse implies that the Jews' march toward the Land of Israel is specifically connected to the Divine Presence leaving their camp in the desert. Only when "the cloud lifted" do "the Israelites set out." Why is this so?

Chasidic thought answers both of these questions by dealing with the ultimate existential nature of Creation. It understands the Tabernacle to be a paradigm for all of the world. What dynamic is at play behind the timing of the Jewish people's journeys? One answer is that there is no great spiritual accomplishment in fulfilling the Divine Will at a time when G-d's Presence is revealed and manifest.

The ultimate goal of existence is to rise up and connect to holiness even when it is hidden and concealed from us. The Midrash tells us that G-d desired a "dwelling place for Himself in the lower worlds." But relative to G-d, is there truly an upper or lower world? His realm is infinite.

We can now understand that when G-d's cloud was found among the Jewish people and His Presence was revealed, then the material world ceased to be "lowly." It is only when the cloud of G-d raises itself higher and higher, and His Divine Light is no longer revealed, can we begin the spiritual fulfilling of G-d's design. And the Tabernacle bestows upon the Jewish people the strength and faculties to bring holiness into the world, the ultimate purpose of Creation.

This is an extremely relevant message for us all at this time in Jewish history. We are in a spiritual state of exile. There is a darkness that rests on the world necessitating our best efforts, even more than before, to engage in the study of Torah and the fulfillment of mitzvot. We must understand that our ultimate goal and purpose is to illuminate that darkness with the light of Torah. Just as the disappearance of the Divine cloud from the Tabernacle became the sign to proceed forward, so, too, should today's conflicts encourage and arouse us to dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of G-d's mission, which is to journey past this era and into the Messianic era of the complete and full redemption.

By Rabbi Shraga Sherman

FAST OF ESTHER & PURIM

The fast of Esther takes place on March 20, 2019 and Purim is on March 21, please make necessary arrangements with your Rabbi/Chaplain for both the bag lunch and Purim arrangements (to hear the Megillah scroll of Esther).

PASSOVER

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

Rosh Chodesh Observances

Thursday is the first of the two Rosh Chodesh ("Head of the Month") days for the month of "Adar II" (when a month has 30 days, both the last day of the month and the first day of the following month serve as the following month's Rosh Chodesh).

Special portions are added to the daily prayers:

Hallel (Psalms 113-118) is recited -- in its "partial" form -- following the Shacharit morning prayer, and the Yaaleh V'yavo prayer is added to the Amidah and to Grace After Meals; the additional Musaf prayer is said. Tachnun (confession of sins) and similar prayers are omitted.

In Jewish History

Sunday, 26 Adar I, 5779 - March 3, 2019

First Property Purchase (1677)

In 1658, fifteen Jewish families emigrated from South America to (what was to become) the United States. These families were of Sephardic lineage and settled together in Newport, Rhode Island, where they established a Jewish congregation. For many years they held weekly prayer services in private homes.

When the need arose for a Jewish cemetery, the community purchased a piece of land on Wednesday, February 28, 1677.

This was the very first piece of land in the colonies which was owned by a Jewish congregation. In this cemetery are buried many of the early members of this congregation, and it is still maintained by the Jewish community.

Monday, 27 Adar I, 5779 - March 4, 2019

Rebbe Falls Ill (1992)

On the 27th of Adar I, 5752 (Monday, March 2, 1992), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, suffered a disabling stroke while praying at the gravesite of the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch. On the same date two years later, the Rebbe lost consciousness following another stroke; three months later, on the 3rd of Tammuz 5754 (June 12, 1994), the Rebbe's soul ascended on high, orphaning a generation.

Friday, 1 Adar II, 5779 - March 8, 2019

Plague of Darkness (1313 BCE)

The 9th plague to strike the Egyptians for their refusal to release the Children of Israel from slavery -- a thick darkness that blanketed the land so that "no man saw his fellow, and no man could move from his place" (Exodus 10:23) -- commenced on the 1st of Adar, six weeks before the Exodus.

Passing of Ibn Ezra (1164)

The highly regarded Biblical commentator, Rabbi Avraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089?-1164CE), passed away on Adar 1, 4924.

Passing of Shach (circa 1663)

Adar 1 is also the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the great Halachist Rabbi Shabtai Hakohen Katz (1621-1663?), author of the Siftei Cohen commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's Code of Jewish Law. He is known as "Shach" -- an acronym of the name of his work, which serves to this day as a primary source of Halachah

(Jewish law).