

TORAH WEEKLY

ת"ס

16 June – 22 June, 2019
13 Sivan – 19 Sivan, 5779
Torah: Numbers 8:1 – 12:16
Haftorah: Zachariah 2:14-4:7
PARSHAT BEHAALOTCHA

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 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

We offer 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 (available to all prisons).

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TIMELESS TORAH I

believe, you believe, we all believe. Otherwise, you wouldn't be reading this column. Yet not all believers necessarily practice every one of the observances that are part of our belief system. We subscribe to the ideology. We don't necessarily advocate moving the goalposts. But not all of us are quite ready to put into practice all those wonderful ideals. What is the underlying argument that allows us the luxury of that rationalization? One which, in

a moment of frankness, we might admit is somewhat inconsistent with our own stated beliefs? I get the impression that the subconscious criticism of the traditions we have not yet embraced is that they are out of touch with contemporary society. We happily accept those practices we identify with, but pronounce the others "old-fashioned," obsolete and out of step with the modern world.

So, some will argue that in an age of government inspection and accepted hygiene standards, the kosher dietary laws are obsolete. Others will claim that if G-d really intended man to walk on Shabbos, Henry Ford would never have invented the automobile. (A Jewish humorist who had a fear of flying once said that if G-d intended man to fly, surely He would have made it easier to get to the airport!) And still others contend that today our sexual mores can be determined only by consensus, and that as long as it's consenting adults, who cares what people are doing in their bedrooms? For many of us, the laws of the Torah feel every

bit of their 3,300 years. Are we really and truly expected to adhere to this ancient code, so out of touch with the modern reality? So, let's think about it. Are we suggesting that G-d, who gave us these laws in the first place, had them in mind only for those poor Israelites traipsing through the Sinai desert? Is He so myopic that He cannot see beyond His Jewish nose? As a rabbi once told an atheist, "The god you don't believe in, I don't believe in either." Unless we accept that G-d could have seen the world of the 21st century, I would refuse to believe in Him too. A real G-d sees past, present and future, and is equally as comfortable in our day as He was in the days of Moses. And the promised land of California is no more challenging to His credentials than ancient Canaan.

This week's Parshah tells us, "The Ark of the Covenant of G-d journeyed before them" (Numbers 10:33). Rashi interprets this to mean that the Ark—which housed the Tablets inscribed with the Ten commandments—would miraculously prepare the groundwork for their future encampments. What this is also telling us is that the Torah (as embodied by the Tablets) is way ahead of the game. It goes before us. It is not only timeless; it is ahead of its time. I can think of so many values and lifestyles which have become trendy now, which Torah has been encouraging for centuries.

A recent Time magazine cover story focused on young moms who are putting successful careers on hold in order to stay home and nurture their children when they need them

most. From the beginning, Torah exempted women from timebound mitzvahs like tefillin or thrice-daily prayers, so that they could fulfill the more important mitzvah of raising the next generation.

The Jewish tradition of sitting shiva when one loses a family member is today recognized by psychologists of all faiths and cultures as being excellent bereavement therapy. When Jacob cooked lentils for his father, Isaac, it was because Isaac was a mourner sitting shiva for Abraham.

Whereas a generation ago women spurned mikvah as demeaning, today's woman is embracing it as a supreme acknowledgment of her sexuality and as the most beautiful spiritual experience available. But there were mikvahs in Masada, in Jerusalem during the Temple era, and long before. And the phenomenon of a society in search of spirituality, with celebrities and pop icons studying the Kabbalah, serves only to validate the teachings of Jewish mysticism, which are indeed of ancient days.

Bellbottoms have come and gone, and come back again, and will soon recede until another season comes. Paisley ties were once compulsory, but today are verboten. Fads and fashions come and go, but G-dly values, the morals of menschlichkeit and the mitzvahs of Torah, are not behind the times. If anything, they are ahead of the times. As He is beyond time, so are His commandments. If they appear to our mortal eyes as anachronistic, then that is our challenge: to relate Torah to our own realities, and to shape our lives according to its

standard. He intended it for us and our world, so obviously it can be done.

by Rabbi Yossy Goldman

NICE GUYS FINISH LAST I always wondered about the motivation of someone who runs a marathon and comes in at last place. The amiable couple in their 60s, ambling together towards the finish line—what made them do it? Each year, some 36,000 people line up to participate in the New York City Marathon, a grueling 26-mile route that snakes through all five boroughs of the city. Of those thousands, only one will come out in front. Why do people run the marathon, knowing that they have no chance of coming in one of the top 10 or even the top 1,000? I did a little research, reading first-person accounts of marathon runners. For one thing, completing a marathon is hardly a walk in the park. All the runners, even those who finish in last place, prepare for weeks in advance with fitness training. There's a vast difference between runner—even the one who finishes last—and the spectators on the sidelines. Neither of them has any hopes of winning the race. The participants, though, have an inner contentment and sense of satisfaction. They're in the race. For them, just completing the marathon itself is a badge of courage and pride, and they have no need for an external trophy. The Torah portion of Behaalotecha (Numbers 8-12) describes the encampment of the Jewish people in the desert and the manner in which they traveled. After hearing the signal sounded by special silver trumpets, the 12 tribes of Israel packed up their camp, lined up in a designated order and marched forth into the desert. The tribe of Dan always marched last. Their job was to bring up the rear and gather up any objects left behind—missing socks, perhaps, or lost children. They picked up after everyone else. It's not a very glorious role. Not nearly as impressive as leading the tribes, like Judah, or carrying the holy vessels like the Levites. But it was a job that needed to get done. Chassidic teachings explain that in addition to maintaining the baggage claim department, the Danites also ran a different type of "lost and found." There's something that people can lose when they're out in the front, soaking up all the glory. They can lose perspective. They can lose their sensitivity to others and the awareness of their own fallibility. The Danites were able to return this to the tribes who were out in front. They were in last place, but they were in the race, eyes on the goal. Without any fanfare, they did what needed doing and stayed focused on the needs of others. With a wonderful blend of self-effacement and self-esteem, they felt no need to get ahead. They knew they were doing exactly what G-d needed from them.

The Danites are my inspiration, especially on those days when I'm in a slump and it seems that the world is passing me by. The days that no one returns my phone calls or reads my emails, and I feel like I'm the bottom of the heap. I'm so far behind in the social stratum that keeping up with the Joneses or the Greenbergs is not even a realistic possibility. But maybe today there's someone who needs a smile from me or is losing their balance, and I can help them find it. Maybe someone out there needs a friend who will return their phone calls and respond to their e-mails. There's a little child right here who needs my full attention while he tells me about his day.

I'm chugging along in last place, the wind blowing in my face. Nothing is important; everything is important. I'm coming in last, but I'm in the race.

By Chaya Shuchat

IN JEWISH HISTORY

June 16, 2019 - 13 Sivan, 5779

Moses Atop Mount Sinai (1313 BCE). "Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain...for six days. On the 7th day G-d called to Moses from within the cloud... And Moses came within the cloud, and he went up to the top of the mountain, and Moses was upon the mountain forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 24:15-18). On the morrow of the giving of the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended Mount Sinai in order to receive from G-d the remainder of the Torah- the remaining commandments and the Oral Law. After being "cleansed" by the cloud for 6 days, he was ushered into the presence of G-d on the 13th of Sivan.

June 18, 2019 - 15 Sivan, 5779

Birth and Passing of Judah (1565 & 1446 BCE). Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, was born in Charan on the 15th of Sivan, of the year 2196 from creation (1565 BCE). He passed away on the same date 119 years later, in Egypt. Judah took the leadership role both in selling Joseph into slavery and in the brothers' later attempts to find him and free him, and to protect Benjamin. On his deathbed, Jacob conferred the leadership of Israel upon Judah, proclaiming: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the legislator from between his feet, until Shiloh (the Moshiach) comes..." The royal house of David, as well as many of the great sages and leaders of Israel throughout the generations of Jewish history, trace their lineage to Judah. Judah had five sons: Er and Onan, who died without children; Shelah; and his twins from Tamar, Peretz and Zerach. Their descendants formed the Tribe of Judah, the most populous and prestigious of the twelve tribes of Israel. After the death of King Solomon in 797 BCE, the people of Israel split into two kingdoms: 10 tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel in the north, with Shomron (Samaria) as the capital; only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Solomon's son, Rechavam, and formed the Kingdom of Judea in the south, in the areas surrounding the capitol Jerusalem. Eventually, the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria and the ten tribes living there were exiled and lost to the Jewish people; the inhabitants of Judea were also exiled (to Babylonia) but subsequently returned to the Holy Land and rebuilt Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Over time, the terms "Judean" and "Jew"—which originally referred to a member of the tribe of Judah—became synonymous with "Israelite" and was used to refer to the descendants of all of Jacob's 12 sons--i.e., the Jewish people.

6th Lubavitcher Rebbe arrested (1927). Shortly after midnight of the 15th of Sivan of 1927, the 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), was arrested by agents of the GPU (Soviet Secret Police) and Yevsketzia ("Jewish section" of the Communist Party) for leading the underground network of rabbis, teachers and emissaries working to preserve and disseminate Jewish learning and observance throughout the Soviet Empire.

June 20, 2019 - 17 Sivan, 5779

Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat (2105 BCE). 7 months after the beginning of the Great Flood, and 17 days after the waters covering the earth began to subside, the Ark sheltering Noah, his family, and members of all animal species came to rest on the (still submerged) summit of Mount Ararat.