

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

18 - 24 August, 2019
17 Av - 23 Av, 5779

Torah:

Deuteronomy 7:12 - 1:25

Haftorah:

Isaiah 49:14 - 51:3

PARSHAT EIKEY

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

BREAD, BUCKS, AND MAKING A LIVING

Man does not live by bread alone. A famous line (it even figured prominently in an ad for a burger chain some years ago), but what does it mean?

The verse comes from this week's Torah reading, and is a reference to the miraculous manna, which fell from heaven daily during the Jewish people's sojourn in the wilderness. The conclusion of the verse is that "rather, by the utterance of G-d's mouth does man live." Thus, it is reminding us about the true source of human sustenance.

Contrary to popular belief, it is neither our earthly toil, nor the sweat of our brow, nor all those conferences, meetings and sales seminars that ensure our success. The reality is that it is G-d who sustains us and looks after us, in the very same way as our ancestors trekking through the desert were totally dependent on Him for their daily bread. Wealth is a G-dly gift. At the end of the day, it is not our business acumen alone that provides our daily bread, but the blessings from Above which endow our efforts with success. Ask anyone in sales how often their best-laid plans and pitches have come to naught, and then, out of the blue, a big order comes in with little or no effort. Of course, it's not the rule, and we must be prepared to put in effort if we are to succeed. But when it does happen, it reminds us that there are higher forces, beyond our control, at work.

But there's another meaning

to this verse as well. Man does not live by bread alone. The human spirit is such that we crave more than bread. Human beings are never satisfied with money or materialism alone. Money is important, but we cannot live by money exclusively. What about job satisfaction? I know a number of individuals in our community who willingly gave up lucrative positions for less rewarding ones, because they found their work unstimulating. They were making lots of cash, but there was no emotional reward. I also know people who have it all financially, but who are nonetheless unhappy people. They are very successful—and very miserable. The successes we achieve do not guarantee our happiness. After we've bought the house of our dreams, and our fantasy sports car, and the latest cell phones, laptops and DVDs, we tire of them all. For satisfaction to be lasting, it must be more than material; it must be spiritual. We need more than bread and money; we need stimulation and a sense of meaningful achievement. We need to know that our lives have purpose, and that somehow we have made a difference. We want to be assured that our work is productive and will have lasting value. They tell the story of a prisoner in a Russian labor camp whose job it was to turn a heavy wheel attached to a wall. For twenty-five years the prisoner worked at his backbreaking labor. He assumed that this wheel must be attached to a mill on the other side of the

wall; perhaps he was milling grain, or pumping water that irrigated many fields. In his mind's eye he saw the plentiful crops and the sacks of milled grain feeding thousands of people. After twenty-five years of hard labor, when he was about to be released, the prisoner asked to be shown the apparatus behind the prison wall. There was nothing there! The wheel was just a wheel—all his "work" had served no useful purpose. The man collapsed in a dead faint, absolutely devastated. His life's work had been in vain. We have a deep-seated need to know that our life's work is purposeful, physically and spiritually. When we understand that every good deed is attached to a complex spiritual apparatus, that our every action meshes with a systematic structure of cosmic significance, then our lives become endowed with a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. We desperately need to know that, in some way, our work is helping others—that we are making a contribution to society beyond our own selfish needs. Then, we live. Then we are happy. Man does not live by bread alone. We simply cannot.

by Rabbi Yossy Goldman

REWARD?!

One of the primary distinctions between the first paragraph of the Shema (recorded in last week's Torah reading) and the second paragraph (in this week's) is the latter's reference to reward for observance. What is the

role of reward in Jewish life? It seems to be a mixed bag. On one hand, the belief that G-d rewards righteous behavior and punishes transgression is one of the 13 fundamental tenets of our faith. On the other hand, we are implored to be "like a servant who serves his master not for the sake of reward" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:3). There are numerous verses promising benefit for obedience, counterbalanced by an abundance of ethical writings (particularly emphasized in Chassidic teaching) disparaging reward as shallow and superficial.

So if G-d wants us to "perform the true service simply because it is true" (as Maimonides puts it), why does He distract us with promises of recompense? Is it a proper to give someone an incentive if it's essentially not in his or her best interest?

But perhaps we have it backwards. We tend to perceive reward as a motivation to serve or an affirmation of achievement, but perhaps its primary purpose is not our benefit at all; perhaps rewarding us is gratifying to G-d.

Chassidic teaching emphasizes that all of creation, including our divine service, is designed for G-d's interests. That includes reward. Rewarding us serves G-d; it is what He wants. A parent longs to give to his child. A husband's desire to shower his wife with presents is even stronger than her enthusiasm for the gifts, for a material object certainly cannot capture the intensity of their relationship. It is an expression of his appreciation, and she delights him far more by receiving and enjoying it than she benefits from its practical use.

It can be hard to accept gifts, sometimes even earned rewards. It's awkward. Yet refusal can be insulting. How odd: one suggests that another retain his property, and the donor is hurt, even offended. By accepting the present, one enables the benefactor to express himself, to actualize his needs.

G-d is the essence of good, and it is the instinct of the good to do good. Rewarding is G-d's nature (albeit a nature He chose to assume), the way He expresses Himself. If we shut ourselves off from this aspect of G-d, we (as it were) stifle Him.

So do good because it is your duty, and accept the reward with equal obedience; it too is part of your divine service.

By Rabbi Baruch Epstein

REMINDEERS! Please work with your Rabbi/Chaplain to ensure Rosh Hashanah order forms are processed by August 23rd

August 19, 2019 -18 Av, 5779

Western Lamp Extinguished (c. 578 BCE). Every evening, the priest would kindle the seven lights of the menorah in the Holy Temple. Miraculously, although six of the seven candles would burn out, the western lamp would remain lit until the following evening. During the reign of the idolatrous King Ahaz (father of the pious King Hezekiah), this miracle discontinued. The first time the western lamp was found to have extinguished was on 18 Menachem Av (or, according to other versions, 17 Menachem Av). (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 580:2)

August 20, 2019 - 19 Av, 5779

Passing of Rabbi Yaakov Culi (1732). Born in Jerusalem in 1689 (5449?), Yaakov Culi moved to Constantinople, Turkey, where he found adequate facilities and financial backing to publish the scholarly output of his learned grandfather, Rabbi Moses ibn Habib, including classics such as Get Pashut and Ezrat Nashim. The brilliant young scholar quickly came to the attention of the chief rabbi of Constantinople, Yehuda Rosanes, the undisputed leader of Sephardic Jewry at the time, and he was appointed to the beth din (rabbinical court). Upon the passing of Rosanes, Rabbi Yaakov edited and published his late teacher's writings with his own additional glosses: Mishneh Lamelech on Maimonides's Mishneh Torah and Perishat Derachim.

Toward the end of his own short life, Rabbi Culi began work on the Mea'am Loez, a compendium of rabbinic lore and commentary on all books of Scriptures. He wrote in Ladino, then the common language of the Sephardic diaspora. Unfortunately, he never completed his project and passed away on 19th Av, 5492 (1732), having only completed the book Genesis and most of Exodus. However, subsequent scholars used his extensive notes to finish the work. Popular to this day, the Mea'am Loez has been translated into many languages, including Hebrew, English, and even Arabic.

August 21, 2019 - 20 Av, 5779

Zohar Published (1558). First printing of the Zohar, the fundamental work of the Kabbalah (Jewish esoteric and mystical teachings), authored by the Talmudic sage, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

Passing of R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1944). Av 20 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1878-1944), in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was Chief Rabbi of Yekaterinoslav (currently Dnepropetrovsk), and was arrested and exiled to Kazakhstan by the Stalinist regime as a result of his work to preserve Jewish life in the Soviet Union.

August 22, 2019 - 21 Av, 5779

Passing of R. Chaim Brisker (1918). Passing of Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik of Brisk (1853-1918), outstanding Talmudic scholar and Jewish leader.

August 23, 2019 - 22 Av, 5779

Passing of R. Mordechai ben Hillel (1298). R. Mordechai ben Hillel was a prominent scholar who lived in Nuremberg, Germany. He authored a famous halachic compendium known as Mordechai, included in all standard printings of the Talmud. R. Mordechai, his wife, and five children were killed in the notorious Rindfleisch massacres.