

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

08– 14 September, 2019
8 Av – 14 Av, 5779
Torah: Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19
Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-55:5
PARSHAT KI-TEITZEI

Calendars

The 2019-20/ 5780 Jewish Calendars will be ready within the month. We will be sending them to every Chaplain and Prison. 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 &

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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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

DIY DESTINY We read in Deuteronomy 22:8: “When you build a new house, you must place a guard-rail around your roof so that you will not bring blood upon your house should any man fall from the unenclosed roof.”

The Hebrew wording for “should any man fall” is “*ki yipol hanofel*,” which literally means “should the one who falls fall.” The commentators say that this unusual phrasing implies that this individual—known as “the one who falls”—was actually destined to fall off a roof and lose his life.

So the question is, if that person was in fact pre-ordained to fall, why am I at fault just because it happened in my house? Why am I responsible for the fulfillment of his destiny? Why should his blood be on my hands?

Jewish philosophers answer this question by saying that although we definitely believe in destiny—that whatever happens is part of the Almighty’s vast eternal plan—nonetheless, every individual has an obligation to do his or her best to take precautions and prevent tragedy. Although we *believe* in miracles we are not permitted to *rely* upon them.

There is a Yiddish proverb that “the man destined to drown will drown even in a glass of water.” But that doesn’t mean that you have to be the one to dunk his head into the glass. In short, we believe in the concept of *bashert*, but we mustn’t live by it.

One may ask, is it not an expression of faith to leave it all to G-d? To put our trust

implicitly in Him that He will provide? That He will protect and guard us from accidents? In the Grace after Meals we say that G-d is “the feeder and provider for all.” So if G-d is supporting me, I might ask, why must I *shlepp* off to work? The answer is that it is a Jewish belief that “G-d helps those who help themselves.” That’s why it is a commandment of the Torah to safeguard our health. Likewise, we are not to live dangerously by leaving roofs unenclosed, swimming pools unfenced or our doors unlocked.

A few chapters before the command to erect fences on roofs, the Torah states that “The L-rd, your G-d, shall bless you in all that you do.” Meaning that to succeed in any endeavor, we need G-d’s blessing, but He blesses us in all that we *do*. In order to merit His blessing, we must first lay the groundwork and create the opportunity for G-d’s blessings to be realized.

This is the approach of the farmer who knows that the success of his crop depends on G-d granting rain, but that the blessing of rain will only help after he has tilled, ploughed and planted.

There is the story of the *shlemiel* who kept praying to G-d that He make him win the lottery and solve all his financial problems. Day after day he implored the Almighty to grant him his personal salvation via the lottery. When the lottery was drawn, unfortunately our *shlemiel* was not the winner. So he went back to the synagogue the next day and cried out to G-d bitterly, “L-rd, you let me down. I

prayed so hard. Why didn’t I win the lottery?”

And a deep, booming voice rang out from the heavens saying, “Because you never bought a ticket!”

The concept of playing a role in shaping our destinies applies to every area of life. As the famous golfer Gary Player said, “The more I practice, the luckier I get.” If you want to be *mazal dig*, don’t depend on *mazal* alone. If you want to have *nachas* from your children, don’t rely on the luck of the draw that they will marry the right person. Parents have to plough and plant (and pray very hard) for *nachas* to happen.

In the Psalmist’s words, which we say before the Grace After Meals on holidays in *Shir Hamaalot* (Psalm 126), “He who sows with tears, will reap in joy.”

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

FIELD OR VINEYARD

Among the many laws in the Torah that command us to treat those less fortunate with dignity, we are instructed to allow an employee to eat from the produce he is harvesting: (Deuteronomy 23:25-26)

When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, (Rashi explains that this verse refers to an employee who enters the vineyard to work) you may eat as many grapes as you desire, until you are sated, but you shall not put [any] into your vessel.

When you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pick the ears with your hand, but you shall not lift a sickle upon your neighbor’s standing grain...(Meaning: The employee may not use a

sickle to cut grain for himself)

Why does the Torah repeat the

idea, mentioning both an employee working in a vineyard and one in a grain field? Is it not enough to state the principle once?

The repetition indicates that the Torah seeks to tell us more than the straightforward meaning of the verse. On a deeper level, the two employees refer to two very different attitudes toward man's work and purpose on this earth.

G-d created a beautiful but imperfect world. At the conclusion of the six days of creation, we are told, "G-d rested on the seventh day from all His work which G-d created *laasot*," (Genesis 2:3) which means to correct and perfect. The world is an often chaotic field; we were placed on this earth to "work" it—to create order out of the chaos, to discover the fertility hidden within the earth, to plant and to harvest, and ultimately to bring the world to perfection.

There are two ways to look at our "work." Some see the world as a field of grain, while others see it as a vineyard. The Torah considers grain a staple—necessary for survival, while the vine and the wine it produces represent pleasure and enjoyment. A person can be G-d's employee—he can understand that he has a purpose in life, a goal he must achieve in order to perfect the world and fulfill his responsibility toward his maker—yet he is working with grain. He does what he needs to, but his work is void of passion and pleasure. Or, one can see the world as a vineyard. This person also recognizes his responsibility as an employee of G-d, but he sees the work as a source of pleasure and satisfaction. Both of these people work for the same Employer, in the same line of work, but one is in the field and the other in the vineyard. Both are entitled to "eat on the job,"—to benefit from G-d's blessing, both physically and spiritually. There is, however, a fundamental difference between them. The employee working the field, the one who has no pleasure and just does his obligation, receives a limited flow from Above. The employee working the vine, the one who invests his pleasure and essence into the work, going above and beyond the call of duty, receives an infinite flow from Above as he connects to the essence of G-d.

That is why, explain the Kabbalists, when talking about the employee in the vineyard, the Torah says "You shall not put [any] into your vessel." In the literal sense, this refers to taking grapes home. The inner meaning is that the Divine blessing the vineyard employee will receive—the level of G-dliness he will reach—will be infinite. As such, it will be unable to be contained in the limited confines of a vessel. (Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot Vol. 34, sicha 2.)
By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

Reminder: The Jewish Holidays of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot are approaching. Pop-up Sukkahs are available For the Holiday of Sukkot. Please have your Chaplain/ Rabbi contact us for more information

September 8, 2019- 8 Elul, 5779

Washington Responds to Newport Jews (1790)

The sexton of the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, wrote a heartwarming letter to George Washington, on behalf of the Jewish community welcoming the President on his visit to Newport. In his letter, he expressed a vision of an American government that would permit all religions to live side by side in harmony, giving all its citizens the freedom to practice their religions.

September 9, 2019- 9 Elul, 5779

Nachmanides Renews Jerusalem community (1267)

Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) arrived in Jerusalem, after being forced to flee his native Spain (see "On This Date" for Av 12) and renewed its Jewish community there. The synagogue he established is functional today, having been restored following the liberation of the Old City during the Six-Day War in 1967.

September 9, 2019- 9 Elul, 5779

Birth of Dan (1566 BCE)

Dan, the son of Jacob and Bilhah, fifth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on 9 Elul in Haran. He lived to the age of 125. (*Yalkut Shimoni, Shemot, remez* 162)

September 9, 2019- 9 Elul, 5779

Passing of R. Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin (1900)

R. Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin was one of the most famous chassidic leaders in the second half of the nineteenth century. An original thinker and prolific author, his many works span the gamut of Jewish literature and beyond, addressing topics as diverse as Jewish law, mysticism, chassidic thought, biblical interpretation, and even a collection of scholarly interpretations revealed to him in dreams

September 10, 2019- 10 Elul, 5779

Noah Dispatches Raven (2105 BCE)

On the 10th of Elul of the year 1656 from creation (2105 BCE), as the Great Flood neared its end, Noah opened the window of the Ark and dispatched a raven to determine if the flood waters had begun to recede (Genesis 8:1; Rashi). For a discussion of the deeper significance of this event, see The Window

September 10, 2019- 10 Elul, 5779

Completion of Beit Yosef (1542)

In 1522, Rabbi Yosef Caro started writing the *Beit Yosef*, his famous commentary on the *Arba Turim*, Yaakov Ben Asher's comprehensive Halachic code. He started writing this commentary in Adrianople, Turkey, and continued for the next twenty years, during which time he relocated to Safed, Israel. He completed the monumental work on the 11th of Elul. It took another ten years for the writings to be published.

September 11, 2019- 11 Elul, 5779

Rashab's marriage (1875)

Marriage of the fifth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson ("Rashab", 1860-1920), to Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah Schneerson (1860-1942).

September 12, 2019- 12 Elul, 5779

Nachmanides Born (1194)

Birth of Nachmanides ("Ramban", Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) -- Torah scholar, Kabbalist, philosopher, physician and Jewish leader -- in Gerona, Spain, in the year 4954 from creation.