

Torah Weekly

ת"בס

October 13-19, 2019
14-20 Tishrei, 5780
Torah: Deuteronomy 33:1 -
34:12; Genesis 1:1 - 2:3,
Numbers 29:35 - 30:1
Haftorah:
Joshua 1:1-18
**PARSHAT VEZOT
HABRACHA**

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).

The Inheritance

As Moses began to convey his blessings to each of the tribes of Israel on the last day of his life, he reminded them of the Giving of the Torah 40 years prior: The L-rd came from Sinai and shone forth from Seir to them; He appeared from Mount Paran and came with some of the holy myriads; from His right hand was a fiery Law for them. (Deuteronomy 33:2). Throughout history, the Jewish people refer to Moses as Moshe Rabeynu, Moses our Teacher, because while Moses did many great things for the Jewish people—from liberating them from Egypt to conquering the lands east of the Jordan River—conveying the Torah was by far his greatest achievement. How, then, does Moses describe the Torah in his final words to his beloved people? What words, images, or metaphors does he use to convey its preciousness? How does he inspire them to do all in their power to transmit it to future generations? There is so much to say about the Torah. He could have said “The Torah is infinite Divine wisdom made available to the finite human mind,” or “The Torah is the greatest moral code,” or “The Torah will fill your life with inspiration,” or “The Torah will give meaning to your existence.” Moses,

however, said something entirely different: The Torah that Moses commanded us is an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob. (Deuteronomy 33:4.) Moses understood that in order for the Torah to survive the test of time, in order for it to be transmitted and studied throughout the generations, more than telling the Jews about any particular quality of the Torah or what it would add to his life or her life, it was vital to make sure they understood that the Torah is their inheritance. What is an inheritance, and how does it differ from other forms of acquisition? When purchasing something, the buyer “earns” that which is being purchased. I.e., the buyer receives the item in consideration of money being paid. When receiving a gift, there is a reason the gift is given to this person. The Talmud explains that the giver gives a gift because the recipient gives the giver some form of pleasure, joy, or satisfaction. In other words, while the recipient of the gift did not pay for the gift monetarily, the gift is “payment” for the intangible satisfaction the recipient gives to the giver. The transfer of ownership from one party to another can only occur if the recipient wants the transfer to take effect. Inheritance is an entirely different story.

(See Likutei Sichot, Pinchas, vol. 28 sicha 1). A person may have a child who is all of one day old. The person may have never seen his child, and may not even know that the child exists. The child has no capacity to understand that there is an estate and he is its heir. And yet the transfer takes effect. The heir inherits the estate in its entirety, not because of anything he did, and not because he wants it, but because of the essential bond they share. The child inherits from the parent not because the child is deserving, but because deep down, on the soul level, they are one entity. The Torah is the inheritance of every Jew. Even if the Jew is not aware of the preciousness of the Torah, even if the Jew does not want the Torah and even tries to escape it, he and the Torah are one. The Torah may or may not be the bestselling book out there, but it is our book; our story. The Torah is our inheritance because at the core of our identity we yearn to hear its words, its stories, and its teachings. The Torah is our inheritance because of the essential bond between the Torah and the Jewish soul. The Torah is our inheritance because no matter how much knowledge we acquire, our soul will still yearn for something deeper. No matter how many libraries of wisdom we acquire, our soul will still

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

yearn for the Torah. Because the Jew, the Torah, and the Holy One Blessed be He are all one. *Starting Over -V'zot Haberachah "And there was no other prophet who arose in Israel like Moses, whom the L-rd knew face to face, as manifested by all the signs and wonders, which the L-rd had sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and all his servants, and to all his land, and all the strong hand, and all the great awe, which Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel"—Deuteronomy 34:10-12.* The final verse of the final portion of the Torah refers to "the strong hand and all the great awe, which Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel." According to the Talmud, the phrase "before the eyes of all Israel" alludes to the incident when Moses smashed the Tablets of the Covenant when he found the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf. An odd conclusion for the Five Books of Moses! The whole Torah ends by recalling the destruction of the Ten Commandments by Moses! Another interesting point to consider is that after completing the reading of this portion in the Synagogue, we immediately begin reading from the first portion of the Torah (Gen. 1:1): "In the beginning, G-d created..." The reason that the Torah ends as it does – by alluding to the breaking of the Tablets of the Covenant – is the same reason that we start over again once we've finished. Both ideas are rooted in the same principle; we never just finish up and move on. Just when we think we've reached the end – when we get to the very last line of the very last portion – we are reminded that the Tablets of the Covenant were once destroyed and had to be remade. So it is with our spiritual journey; there is never a completion, only the reminder that we always start again. As newcomers looking at the Steps for the first time, many of us wondered what we were supposed to do once they were completed. The answer is that our recovery is never finished; it continues by beginning again. We remember that the life we now have was once in a state of apparent destruction, just as the Tablets containing the Word of G-d had been smashed. In our despair, we agreed to let go, and let G-d give us a new life. We learned to trust G-d. We cleaned house; and we repaired our relationships with others. The promises of the Program began to manifest in our lives. And finally, we "had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps." But our spiritual awakening in Step 12 is not the end of our recovery. Our new-found faith and selflessness lead us to an even greater acceptance of the original powerlessness in Step One. Just as we initially admitted to G-d, we start over and surrender again. No matter how many times we have worked through the Steps, we never stop admitting that we are alcoholics and addicts. We admit again that our lives had been unmanageable; for it is with that admission that our renewed spiritual lives begin. We remember that it is He who takes away our pain and gives us joy. It is He who takes away our sickness and gives us health. It is He who instills renewed energy into our desolate lives. Our spiritual awakening in Step 12 takes us back to the very First Step; it reminds us how the spiritual lives we now have began out of darkness, chaos and void. It is now our job to once again transform our lives with light, order and fulfillment.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

October 13, 2019- 14 Tishrei, 5780

Passing of R. Israel Hopstein, the Maggid of Kosnitz (1814)

R. Israel of Kosnitz was a disciple of a number of great chassidic Rebbes, including R. DovBer of Mezeritch. A famed miracle worker, he authored the work *Avodat Yisrael* and was one of the disseminators of Chassidism in Poland.

October 14, 2019- 15 Tishrei, 5780

Passing of R. Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo (1655)

R. Yosef Shlomo was a rabbi, philosopher, and physician. A prolific author, he was proficient in many sciences in addition to Talmudic studies. He is known as "the Yashar from Candia," *Yashar* being an acronym for Yosef Shlomo Rofei (Hebrew for *doctor*), and Candia (Crete) being his place of birth. Among his more famous works are *Sefer Eilim*—on mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences—and *Matzref Lechachmah*, a defense of Kabbalah

October 15, 2019- 16 Tishrei, 5780

Passing of R. Moshe Zacuto (1697)

R. Moshe, known by the acronym *Ramaz*, was an Italian rabbi and Kabbalist, well-known for his erudition and piety. A scion of Portuguese Marranos, he authored numerous works, many of them on Kabbalah, as well as a number of liturgical hymns.

October 17, 2019- 18 Tishrei, 5780

Passing of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1810)

Passing of the famed Chassidic rebbe, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Ukraine (1772-1810). A great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, he championed a unique path of divine service that entails simplicity, joy, and solitude. He left no successor, but his teachings remain influential more than 200 years after his passing.

October 18, 2019- 19 Tishrei, 5780

Passing of Vilna Gaon (1797)

Passing of the famed Talmudist and Kabbalist, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania (1720-1797), known as the "Vilna Gaon." Rabbi Eliyahu was the leading figure in the opposition to the Chassidic movement in its early years.

October 19, 2019- 20 Tishrei, 5780

Passing of R. Heshel of Cracow (1663)

R. Heshel was a Polish scholar known for his sharpness and depth of knowledge. Although most of his writings are not extant, his influence is greatly felt until today, as many of the classic Halachists of his day were his students, such as R. Shabtai Katz (the Shach) and R. David HaLevi (the Taz). Many stories are told about his quick-wittedness even as a young child.