

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

February 23-29, 2020
28 Shevat- 4 Adar, 5780
Torah:
Terumah: Exodus 25:1 - 27:19
Haftarah:
Kings I 5:26 - 6:13
PARSHAT TERUMAH

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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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

What Is Your Tower?

Choose Your Tower Two chassidic rabbis were riding in their carriages when they met in the middle of a bridge. One carriage was pulled by two old horses, the other by a team of four powerful stallions. The rabbi with the old horses asked the other, "Why do you need such strong horses?" Answered the other, "To get to my destination quickly." "And what if you are headed in the wrong direction?" "Then I will make up for lost time more quickly when I turn around and correct course." The first rabbi assumed that the other used the expensive, showy horses for his own glory. The second rabbi assured him that it was for G-d's sake. This raises the question, do our possessions and achievements bring glory to us, or are they for G-d's glory? The Torah tells us that in our patriarch Abraham's day, a generation was punished for building a tower. Jewish mystics say that the generation of Jews that suffered in Egypt was a reincarnation of the tower generation, and with their suffering they atoned for the sin of tower building. (Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar Chag Hamatzot.) What is wrong with building a tower? Let's look at what the Torah tells us about the Tower of Babel. The people said to each other, "Let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower that reaches the heaven." (Exodus 11:3-4.) Contrast that with the approach encapsulated by King David, "The L-rd is great in the city of our G-d." (Psalm 48:2.) The Tower of Babel was built to reach heaven in order to serve the city. We build cities to serve G-d. **Two Perspectives** G-d provides us with talents, successes, possessions and people in our lives. We are grateful for all He gives us. Our tower reaches the heaven, and we recognize that our tower, our successes, come from heaven. But is it our tower? Is it for our glory? When we pray, are we attempting

to build a tower that reaches the heaven, to seek more and more glory for ourselves? Our sages taught that all that G-d created is for His glory. (Ethics of the Fathers, ch. 6.) The city that G-d builds is not our city, it is His city. Our talents are not for our glory, they are for His glory. "The L-rd is great in the city of our G-d." You will notice an anomaly though. While the city is not ours, G-d is "our G-d." When you perceive all your achievements as a glory to G-d, you haven't lost your city, you have gained a G-d. G-d has no need for a tower. He gives us a tower so that He can have a relationship with us, so that He can become our G-d. G-d can't have a relationship with angels, because angels perceive that they are part of Him. Similarly, we can't have a relationship with our arms or toes because they are part of us. To have a relationship, He created an existence that perceives itself as separate from G-d; He created people who are capable of taking credit for the things that G-d created, capable of claiming the tower for themselves. The only reason we are given all the blessings that we have is so that we can come to realize that they are not of our making. In other words, He gave us the tower so that He can be our G-d, so that we can choose Him, and He can have a relationship with us. **Brick and Stone** The Torah tells us that the Tower of Babel was built with bricks. Our sages comment that there were no stones available at the time. How is this possible? Bricks are man-made; stones are natural, made by G-d. The sages were saying that the people did not give credit to G-d. The people of that era viewed their achievements as bricks, as man-made achievements, so they built a tower out of bricks. Even as they demanded more from G-d, brazenly reaching to the heavens with their tower, they built it with bricks, in effect telling G-d that they would take credit for

whatever He gave them. To atone for this, the generation of Jews in Egypt were made to build cities and towers out of bricks. But they came out of Egypt and built the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was like a city, and the Holy of Holies was like a tower. But it was not a tower for man, it was a tower for G-d. Today, when we no longer have the Temple, our G-dly city is Torah and mitzvahs, and our tower is prayer. **Two Languages** Just as it is with towers, so is it with words. *(Stones and words are correlated: Just as stones build a house so do words build a sentence. Just as houses make up a city, so do sentences form an essay. Just as cities make up a country, so do essays make up a book, etc.)* There are stone words and brick words. There are G-dly words and words of human convention. Words of Torah and prayer are stone words; words of mundane affairs, of human conventions, are bricks. There are times in our day that are devoted to bricks and times that are devoted to stones. The question is, which tower are we building? Do we invest in the bricks to afford time for the stones, or do we invest in the stones to gain G-d's blessing for our bricks? The answer to that question determines which tower we are building—the Tower of Babel or the Holy of Holies. Put more spiritually, one might say this. Every Jew has a G-dly soul and an animal soul. When we engage in worldly affairs, we use our animal soul. When we engage in G-dly affairs, we use our G-dly soul. The question is this: Can we recruit our animal soul to pray with us? And can we recruit our G-dly soul into our mundane affairs? Can we develop a faith and love for G-d to the point that even our selfish ego would want to pray and reach out to G-d? If we achieve this, we will have turned bricks into stones. That is the ultimate answer to the Tower of Babel. That is the ultimate Holy of

Holies, the ultimate exodus from Egypt, and the ultimate expression of our relationship with G-d. (This essay is culled from *Torah Ohr, Shemot 87b, elucidated in Sefer Hamarim, Taf Resh Nun Hei, pp. 100-107.*) By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

Sinai Or Sanctuary “And in the beginning, G-d was homeless, and so G-d asked His people to set Him up with some digs. Where does it say that? Well, nowhere, actually. But it does say that G-d instructed Moses to tell the people, “They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.”

Now the question is, was G-d really homeless? Wasn't He already dwelling with the people? Why, it was just the other week that we read of the revelation at Sinai, where G-d came down from heaven to earth. So why suddenly the need for a Sanctuary for Him? The answer is that there is a fundamental difference between Sinai and the Sanctuary. Sinai represents a revelation thrust upon the people from above. G-d initiated and activated that encounter. In this experience, the Jewish people were somewhat passive. All the thunder and lightning, physically and spiritually, came at them from on high. The Sanctuary, however, had to be built by the people themselves. They had to take the initiative. From the fundraising campaign to collect the raw materials needed for the sanctuary, down to the nuts and bolts of construction, the Mishkan was a human-made edifice. At Sinai the heavens opened for the greatest sound-and-light show on earth, leaving a nation mesmerized and awe-inspired. But they themselves were passive recipients of this unique, never-to-be-repeated gift from above. To build a Sanctuary took a whole building campaign. Men and women, young and old, everybody rolled up their sleeves. It took weeks and months of hard labor, meaningful contributions by every individual, planning and programming, designing and then actually building a holy house for G-d. We made it happen. And thereby, it was the people who brought G-d down to earth. Apparently it was important for the Jews to appreciate the value G-d attaches to self-help and to DIY projects of a spiritual nature. It is not good enough to sit around waiting for the extraordinary revelations, those once-in-a-lifetime supernal visits the good L-rd might bestow upon us. It is necessary for us to create the infrastructure, to take the building blocks in our hands and “make me a Sanctuary.” To put it simply, are we waiting for G-d, or is G-d waiting for us? Who makes the next move? I met a guy not long ago and, as often happens to rabbis, the discussion turned to religion. He was pretty blunt about it. “Not for me, rabbi,” he said. “If G-d wanted me to be religious, he'd have made sure I was born in Bnei Brak, or at least into a religious family here.” I told him he reminded me of the comedian who had a terrible fear of flying, and argued that “if G-d intended man to fly, he'd have given him wings—or at least made it easier to get to the airport!” So he says, “If G-d wanted me to be an angel, he'd have given me wings too.” The fact is, G-d did give us wings. That's what Sinai was all about. He gave us a dose of revelation, of spiritual shock-and-awe that has saturated us with an eternal capacity to fly high, to touch the divine. But those were just the tools; now we have to learn to fly. We may have been endowed with the potential to develop our connection to G-dliness, but after Sinai it's up to us to make it happen and to actually bring our innate power to the fore. True revelation is rare. While there certainly are those special moments when we witness the unmistakable presence of G-d in our lives, we cannot wait for lightning to strike. We need to build our personal sanctuaries for G-d in order to embrace Him and bring Him into our homes and families. The Rebbe of Kotzk was once asked by his teacher, “Where is G-d?” He answered, “Wherever you let Him in.” By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

*Passover order forms have been sent to the Chaplains and Rabbis. Please begin speaking with your Chaplain about Passover

February 23, 2020 --- 28 Shevat, 5780

Hasmonean Holiday (2nd century BCE)

On Shevat 28 (134 BCE?), Antiochus V abandoned his siege of Jerusalem and his plans for the city's destruction. This day was observed as a holiday in Hasmonean times. (Megilat Taanit)

February 26, 2020 --- 1 Adar, 5780

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.

February 26, 2020 --- 1 Adar, 5780

Passing of Ibn Ezra (1164)

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

February 26, 2020 --- 1 Adar, 5780

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).

February 26, 2020 --- 1 Adar, 5780

Ezekiel Foretells Egypt's Downfall (1989)

On this date, in the year following the Holy Temple's destruction, G-d tells Ezekiel to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, foretelling his downfall in the hands of the Babylonians.

February 28, 2020 --- 3 Adar, 5780

2nd Temple Completed (349 BCE)

The joyous dedication of the second Holy Temple (*Beit HaMikdash*) on the site of the 1st Temple in Jerusalem, was celebrated on the 3rd of Adar of the year 3412 from creation (349 BCE), after four years of work. The First Temple, built by King Solomon in 833 BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 423 BCE. At that time, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied: "Thus says the L-rd: After seventy years for Babylon will I visit you... and return you to this place." In 371 the Persian emperor Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple, but the construction was halted the next year when the Samaritans persuaded Cyrus to withdraw permission. Achashverosh II (of Purim fame) upheld the moratorium. Only in 353 -- exactly 70 years after the destruction -- did the building of the Temple resume under Darius II.

February 29, 2020 --- 4 Adar, 5780

Passing of R. Leib Sarah's (1791)

Adar 4 is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Leib Sarah's (1730-1791), a disciple of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. One of the "hidden tzaddikim," Rabbi Leib spent his life wandering from place to place to raise money for the