

Torah Weekly

March 22-28, 2020
26 Adar- 3 Nissan, 5780
Torah: Vayikra: Leviticus 1:1-5:26
Haftorah:
Isaiah 43:21 - 44:23
PARSHAT VAYIKRA

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).

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-0111
Fax: 412-521-5948
www.alephne.org
info@alephne.org



ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Am I Only Human?
Chassidic teaching elaborates on the dual and dueling forces within us. On the one side is the human soul; instinctive, practical and obsessed with survival. In the other corner is the G-dly, transcendent soul; no personal agenda, completely committed to executing G-d's will.

Despite the common overlap of interests – most things that are good for the individual are good for G-d – chassidic teaching does not tolerate a "live and let live" coexistence. Being human or even humane won't cut it. We are not "only human," we are part G-dly; and our infinite side won't rest on good enough. We must outdo the preprogrammed natural kindness of humanity; we must add value beyond the factory-installed equipment we came with. We must be G-dly, not earthly. An animal does what it does, it makes no choices, it makes no mistakes, and in fact it "makes" nothing at all. Lions eat zebras and raccoons knock over garbage pails. We can be annoyed but never angry with them; they simply do what they do. We must never be raccoons. We must never settle for doing what we do simply because we are so programmed. To be sure, our propensities are often fine and upstanding, yet if they are just our natural tendencies then we have not "done" anything. Grass grows and angels praise G-d—because they have no alternative, they are hardwired to do so. We must do more, infinitely more. It is not sufficient to passively allow the principal capital, our inborn skills, to just increase at the standard rate, that doesn't justify the risk G-d

took of entrusting a part of Him within us. The Book of Leviticus begins with the laws of sacrifices. G-d demands that we surrender to Him our animal, our innate instincts; that we live consciously, making strides that outpace the inevitable. This is a personal message in the sacrificial procedure. "A man who offers from among you an offering to G-d..." refers to more than surrendering our bad habits, it means doing more than can "reasonably" be expected; it means aligning with our G-dly, infinitely productive side. Avodah (service), one of the pillars upon which the world stands (Ethics 1:1), includes the sacrificial process and its personal parallel, the duty to stretch beyond the intuitive. When the serial failure suddenly succeeds, when father and son turn the page on thirty years of estrangement, they have done the unpredictable; they have surrendered their animal, their well worn trends, to G-d. They experience the miraculous, they serve G-d instead of their survival instinct and they are free. The trajectory had them headed for repetitive failure and now they have exceeded the conventional, they have caused G-d's presence to be evident in the world. 2, 4, 6 does not dictate that 8 must follow. We can achieve the undreamed of, past (disastrous) performance is not a guarantee of future (calamitous) results. So we need not be "only human"; boring automatons, destined to repeat our patterns till the end of our days. We can change our patterns when we surrender the animalistic

impulses we dutifully follow, when we offer them on the altar and follow its smoky residue up to the heavens. It's scary out there beyond the known, the comfortable and the familiar, it is always easier to stay with the "same old same old," yet that's where value is added and a dwelling place for G-d is made. *By Rabbi Baruch Epstein*

Got Salt? The Torah seems to have an obsession with salt. Among the various laws and details of the sacrifices in our Parshah, we find the following commandment: And you shall salt every one of your meal offering sacrifices with salt, and you shall not omit the salt of your God's covenant from [being placed] upon your meal offerings. You shall offer salt on all your sacrifices. (Leviticus 2:13) (On a side note, this is the source of the custom of dipping our bread into salt.) The commandment to place salt on every sacrifice is repeated three times. Why so much emphasis? Furthermore, why is it called "the salt of your G-d's covenant"? Since when did salt enter into a covenant with G-d? First, a Talmudic teaching: Raba said, when man is led in for Judgment he is asked: Did you deal in business with integrity? Did you fix times for Torah study? Did you engage in procreation? Did you hope for salvation? Did you engage in the dialectics of Torah? Have [you delved deeply enough into your studies to the degree that] you deduced one principle from another? [He may have answered in the affirmative to all of the above.] Nonetheless, only if the fear of the Lord is his

treasure is it well. If not, it is not well for him. This may be compared to a man who instructed his agent, "Take up a *kor* (a large measurement) of wheat into the loft." The agent went and did so. When he returned, the master asked him, "Did you mix in a *kab* (small measurement) of *chumtin* (a preservative)"? When the agent replied in the negative, the master said, "Then it would've been better had you not carried it up in the first place." (Talmud Shabbat 31a) A person may have done many wonderful things in his life; he may have been honest in business, learned a great deal of Torah, created a family, hoped for the Messiah etc., but this still does not guarantee him passage into the next world. There is one more criterion that is of absolute importance: fear of heaven. If one does not possess fear of heaven, "all is not well." The wheat in this analogy is a reference to Torah and good deeds. This may be seen in its very name. The Hebrew word for wheat is *chittah* (חִטָּה), which has the numerical value of 22. This is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, from which the Torah is composed. The *chumtin* represents the fear of heaven, without which all our Torah and good deeds are useless. But what exactly is this preservative? Rashi translates it as "salty soil." We now have the key to the mystery of salt. In addition to being a commandment to literally place salt on the offerings, our verse carries a profound lesson in the service of G-d. Salt adds flavor to a dish that might otherwise be tasteless or bland. Our fear of heaven is the salt and flavoring for G-d's "food": the Torah and mitzvahs we serve Him on a daily basis. They can be tasteless and bland, and that's not the way G-d wants it. He wants us to add salt. The salt is *kavanah*, the intense mental concentration with which we study Torah and perform mitzvahs, and the excitement and passion that it generates. G-d repeats the instruction to place salt on every sacrifice three times because it is of utmost importance. Every bit of Torah we study and every mitzvah we perform must be infused with the passion and excitement we feel when we recognize that we are doing the will of G-d. That is why salt is called "the covenant of G-d." It is important to do good, to learn Torah, to pray and to perform mitzvahs. But quality counts. Our divine service must be done with passion and a sense of G-dly awareness, otherwise our offerings will be bland and tasteless. That's why G-d reminds us, "Do not omit the salt." *By Rabbi Sholom Kesselman*

March 22, 2020 --- 26 Adar, 5780

Passing of Sarah Schenirer (1995)

Viewing the dire lack of formal Jewish education provided to Jewish girls in her native Poland, Sarah Schenirer founded the first Bais Yaakov girls' school in Krakow in 1917. Despite some initial opposition, the Bais Yaakov school network quickly expanded throughout Poland and beyond. Today, there are hundreds of Bais Yaakov schools worldwide, attended by tens of thousands of students.

March 23, 2020 --- 27 Adar, 5780

Passing of Zedekiah (397 BCE)

Zedekiah was the last king of the royal house of David to reign in the Holy Land. He ascended the throne in 434 BCE, after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia (to whom the kingdom of Judah was then subject) exiled King Jeconiah (Zedekiah's nephew) to Babylonia. In 425 BCE Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonian rule, and Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem (in Tevet 10 of that year); in the summer of 423 BCE the walls of Jerusalem were penetrated, the city conquered, the (first) Holy Temple destroyed, and the people of Judah exiled to Babylonia. Zedekiah tried escaping through a tunnel leading out of the city, but was captured; his sons were killed before his eyes, and then he was blinded. Zedekiah languished in the royal dungeon in Babylonia until Nebuchadnezzar's death in 397 BCE; Evil Meroduch -- Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor -- freed him (and his nephew Jeconiah) on the 27th of Adar, but Zedekiah died that same day.

March 23, 2020 --- 27 Adar, 5780

Rebbe Falls Ill (1992)

On the 27th of Adar I, 5752 (Monday, March 2, 1992), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, suffered a disabling stroke while praying at the gravesite of the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch. On the same date two years later, the Rebbe lost consciousness following another stroke; three months later, on the 3rd of Tammuz 5754 (June 12, 1994), the Rebbe's soul ascended on high, orphaning a generation.

March 25, 2020 --- 29 Adar, 5780

Jews Commanded 1st Mitzvah (1313 BCE)

Shortly before sundown on the 29th of Adar, G-d commanded Moses regarding the mitzvah of sanctifying the crescent new moon and establishing a lunar calendar. This is the first mitzvah the Jews were given as a nation. Moses had difficulty envisaging the moon's appearance at the exact moment of its monthly rebirth. After the sun set, G-d showed Moses the crescent new moon of the new month of Nissan, showing him the precise dimensions of the moon at the moment the new month is to be consecrated. For the generations that followed, each new month was ushered in when two witnesses testified before the *Sanhedrin* (rabbinic supreme court) that they had seen the *molad*, the new moon. In the 4th century CE, Hillel II foresaw that the Jews would no longer be able to follow a Sanhedrin-based calendar. So Hillel and his rabbinical court established the perpetual calendar which is followed today -- until Moshiach will come and reestablish the Sanhedrin.

March 26, 2020 --- 1 Nissan 5780

Creation of man (in thought) (3761 BCE)

The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a) cites two opinions as to the date of G-d's creation of the universe: according to Rabbi Eliezer: "The world was created in Tishrei" (i.e., the sixth day of creation--the day on which Adam and Eve were created--was the 1st of Tishrei, celebrated each year as Rosh Hashanah); according to Rabbi Joshua, "The world was created in Nissan." As interpreted by the Kabbalists and the Chassidic masters, the deeper meaning of these two views is that the physical world was created in Tishrei, while the "thought" or idea of creation was created in the month of Nissan.

March 26, 2020 --- 1 Nissan 5780

The Patriarchs (1813-1506 BCE)

According to the Talmud, the three Patriarchs of the Jewish people-- Abraham (1813-1638 BCE), Isaac (1713-1533 BCE) and Jacob (1653-1506 BCE)--all were born and passed away in the month of Nissan.

March 27, 2020 --- 2 Nissan 5780

Passing of Rashab (1920)

The fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneersohn ("Rashab"), was born in the White Russian town of Lubavitch in 1860. After the passing of his father, Rabbi Shmuel (in 1882), he assumed the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch.