

Torah Weekly

April 12-18, 2020
18-24 Nissan, 5780
Torah: Shemini: Leviticus 9:1
- 11:47
Haftorah:
Samuel II 6:1-19
PARSHAT SHEMINI

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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The Torah Student's Fins and Scales "This you may eat from everything that is in the water, everything that has fins and scales... those you may eat" (Leviticus 11:9). The Talmud (Niddah 51b) says that a fish that has scales also has fins and there is no need to examine for them. However, there are fish that only have fins and they are unclean. What is the lesson we can derive from the signs of the kosher and non-kosher fish? Fish in their habitat — water — are analogous to scholars studying Torah. This is obvious from that which is related in Talmud in connection to the Roman government's decree against Torah study. When Pappas ben Yehudah saw Rabbi Akiva convening public assemblies to study Torah he asked him, "Akiva are you not afraid of the regime?" Rabbi Akiva replied with a parable: "Once a fox was walking alongside the riverbank and saw fish gathering from place to place, as they were fleeing something. When the fox inquired, 'From what are you running away?' They told him, 'From the nets people set up to catch us.' The fox said to them, 'Come up to dry land and we will dwell together just as our ancestors dwelled together.' The fish responded, 'You are a fool, for if in our habitat where our life is sustained we are afraid, all the more so we should be afraid for our existence if we leave our

habitat.' Likewise, Rabbi Akiva said, "If now when we study Torah which is our lifesaver, our existence is threatened, how much are we in danger if we would absent ourselves from Torah." (Talmud, Berachot 61b.) Scales serve as a protective garment to the fish and through the fins it swims from place to place. (see Rashi.) When one studies Torah it is expected of him to create innovative thoughts and explanations. It is also imperative that one who studies Torah have fear of Heaven. The Talmud compares Torah study with fear of Heaven to wheat which is stored with a preservative consisting of earth with a high salt content. Just as the grain will spoil quickly without the preservative, likewise, one studying Torah without fear of G-d, will easily forget, and his Torah study will be like a poisonous medicine for him. (Talmud, Shabbat 31a.) Thus, the fins represent the power to accomplish and reach new heights through innovative contributions to Torah, and the scales represent the essential ingredient of fear of Heaven, through which one's Torah study is preserved and becomes a source of "medicine that adds life." Consequently, if one possesses the quality of "scales," he is on the right track with his Torah study and will eventually enhance himself and the Torah with his "fins"—innovative thoughts which will be compatible to Torah truth.

Such an individual is considered pure and clean. But one who studies Torah and does not have "scales"—fear of Heaven—is unclean and unfit. His Torah study and fins —innovations—are contrary to G-d's desire and it does not merit him the spiritual source of life which Torah gives to those who study it. *By Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky Happy and Sad at the Same Time* Children's emotions are straightforward. When a child wants something, he wants it fully. When a child hates or fears something, the emotion fills her little heart completely. As we mature, however, our emotions become more complex. We want something, but at the same time, we are capable of realizing the downside of achieving it. We desire the piece of chocolate, but we detest its calorie count. We may dislike to work hard, but we feel satisfied when we are done. We can loathe and pity someone at the same time. We can love certain traits in someone while abhorring others. As we mature spiritually, our emotional complexity develops further. As the holy Zohar states, "Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart, and joy is lodged in the other." We may be saddened because of the state of our material being, but at the same time we can rejoice about the state of our spiritual soul. On what was the most emotionally intense day of his life, Aaron the High Priest was called upon to

exhibit extraordinary emotional maturity. It was the apex of his career. The Mishkan, the portable Temple, was finally complete, the seven day inauguration period had passed, and for the first time, Aaron was performing the priestly service, causing G-d's presence to descend. As the verse states: And fire went forth from before the L-rd and consumed the burnt offering and the fats upon the altar, and all the people saw, sang praises, and fell upon their faces. (Leviticus 9:24.) And yet, just a few short moments later, Aaron suffered the greatest tragedy of his life, when two of his sons died: And Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before the L-rd foreign fire, which He had not commanded them. And fire went forth from before the L-rd and consumed them, and they died before the L-rd. (Leviticus 10:1-2.) Moses turned to his brother Aaron and instructed him to put his personal pain aside. This was a joyous day to G-d. Aaron and his remaining two sons were to serve as representatives of all the people, and therefore they were called upon to experience the Divine joy. And here is where the story gets complicated. Moses found out that one of the offerings that was meant to be eaten by Aaron and his sons was burned. Moses was furious. He asked Aaron: "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the holy place? For it is holy of holies, and He has given it to you to gain forgiveness for the sin of the community, to effect their atonement before the L-rd!" (Leviticus 10:17.) Moses was asking, "Why haven't you eaten the offering? How could you have placed your personal mourning ahead of G-d's joy?" Aaron responded by explaining to Moses that the correct thing to do was to eat some of the offerings (the ones that were unique to that day) and to burn one (the one that would be offered on a regular basis). The verse concludes that "Moses listened, and it pleased him." Aaron taught Moses an important lesson: It is relatively easy for the spiritual seeker to ignore himself and devote himself completely to the Divine reality. That, however, is not G-d's will. The correct spiritual path, argued Aaron, is to be spiritually mature enough to experience both perspectives. Aaron understood that a relationship with G-d does not mean suppressing our own sense of reality; it means being able to balance and experience G-d's reality as well as our own. It means being able to burn some of the offerings as an expression of personal pain, yet eat other offerings as an expression of Divine joy. By

Rabbi Menachem Feldman

IN JEWISH HISTORY

April 12, 2020 --- 18 Nissan, 5780

R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson born (1878)

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson (1878-1944), was born on the 18th of Nissan in the town of Podrovnah (near Gomel) to his parents, Rabbi Baruch Schneur and Rebbetzin Zelda Rachel Schneerson; his great-great grandfather was the 3rd Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch. In 1900 Rabbi Levi Yitzchak married Rebbetzin Chanah Yanovski, whose father, Rabbi Meir Shlomo, was the rabbi of the Russian city of Nikolaiyev. In 1902, their eldest son, Menachem Mendel, later to be known as The Lubavitcher Rebbe, was born. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak lived in Nikolaiyev until 1909, when he was appointed to serve as the Rabbi of Yekatrinoslav (today, Dnepropetrovsk). In 1939 he was arrested by the communist regime for his fearless stance against the Party's efforts to eradicate Jewish learning and practice in the Soviet Union. After more than a year of torture and interrogations in Stalin's notorious prisons, he was sentenced to exile to the interior of Russia, where he died in 1944.

April 12, 2020 --- 18 Nissan, 5780

Pharaoh Becomes Aware of Escape (1313 BCE)

Following the Jewish nation's grand exodus from Egypt (see Jewish history for the 15th of Nissan), Pharaoh, who only gave official permission for the Jews to leave for three days, was informed by secret agents whom he sent together with the Jews that they had no intention of returning. Pharaoh decided to mobilize his army and pursue the Jews, with the intention of bringing them back to Egypt. This led to the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

April 14, 2020 --- 20 Nissan, 5780

Passing of R. Hai Gaon (1038)

R. Hai Gaon was the last of the Geonim, the brilliant Talmudic scholars who headed the great schools of Babylonia during the five centuries following the compilation of the Talmud. Son of R. Sherira Gaon, R. Hai was one of the greatest authorities of his time, and his decisions and guidance were sought after by Jewish communities across the world. R. Hai served at his post as Gaon for forty years. He passed away on 20 Nissan 4798 (1038), at the age of 99.

April 15, 2020 --- 21 Nissan, 5780

Red Sea Splits (1313 BCE)

On the eve of the seventh day after the Exodus, the Children of Israel found themselves trapped between the Egyptian army and cavalry pursuing them from behind and the waters of the Red Sea before them. G-d commanded Moses: "Speak to the Children of Israel, that they should move forward!" Nachshon ben Aminadav of the tribe of Judah was the first to jump into the sea; the water split, and "the children of Israel walked across on the dry land in the midst of the sea." All that night, a pillar of fire intervened between the Egyptians and the Israelites. When the Egyptians followed, the waters returned to their natural state and place and drowned them. The Children of Israel sang the "Song at the Sea" in praise and gratitude to G-d.

April 16, 2020 --- 22 Nissan, 5780

Encirclement of Jericho (1273 BCE)

Shortly after crossing the Jordan River and entering the Land of Canaan, the Jews set their sights on conquering the walled and heavily fortified city of Jericho. Following Joshua's instructions, on the 22nd of Nissan the Israelites encircled Jericho. The Israelites marched around the city walls, led by the priests who carried the Holy Ark, and sounded the *shofar* (ram's horn). This performance was repeated for seven days. On the seventh day, the walls of the city collapsed.