

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

July 5 - 11, 2020
13-19 Tammuz, 5780

Torah: Pinchas: Numbers
25:10 – 30:1

Haftarah:
Jeremiah 1:1 - 2:3

PARSHAT PINCHAS

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).

Common Denominator

This week's parshah tells of the census taken of the Jewish people. A census places everyone on an equal footing. Somebody on the highest spiritual levels is counted equally to somebody on a "lower" level, with nobody taking priority over anybody else. The reason for this is not simply to make it easier to count. There is a common denominator which applies across the entire nation. On the surface, we each appear different—each with different skills and talents which make us "individuals." Some are more creative, some more analytical, some are more intellectual, and so on. Each person has his or her own particular quality which makes them unique. When we are looking at these external qualities, we cannot say that everyone is equal. Quite the opposite—what makes a person special and unique are those personal qualities which each person possesses in different measure. This only applies, however, to our external makeup. Each of us possesses another quality, one which surpasses any of our "individual" qualities. Each of us is created in the image of G-d. Each of us possesses a soul which is an "actual part of G-d," as unlimited as G-d himself is. Our soul is our real being. When we shed the outer layers, the soul is what remains at our core and essence. In this regard, each of us is equal. How can somebody be higher or lower than somebody else when we are dealing with spirituality, with infinite qualities? It is good to be aware of our revealed qualities and to use our talents for good purposes. We must not forget, however, that there is something higher, something

more esoteric which drives each and every one of us. In particular, when we feel tempted to look down on somebody else because of their apparent "station in life," we must remember that really each of us is equal. *By Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg*

G-d Is in the Details

Buying a house in Brooklyn? Fuhgedaboutit. Recently my friend shared with me her woes regarding her foray into the Brooklyn, New York, housing market. She and her husband live with their growing family in a modest rental apartment. For years they worked hard and saved money, and they finally reached a point where they were ready to begin house-hunting. In the interim, though, their neighborhood suddenly became one of the hottest real-estate markets in the country. The cost of housing shot up 500%, and homeownership is no longer on the table for them. It is simply out of their reach. She became quite despondent as she described all the efforts they made over the years to reach that ultimately elusive goal of owning a home. She felt defeated, as if she had spent ten years of her life chasing a futile dream. It's an all-too-common story, a struggle that many families face. And it forces us to rethink some basic assumptions. What does it mean to have a good life, a successful life? How do we handle life when it doesn't bring us everything we hoped for? For some people, it's a house; for others, it may be a job, a life partner or another important relationship. It's that one aspect of life where satisfaction eludes them, where they feel trapped, unable to fully enjoy the abundance in the other areas of their life. The Talmud teaches: "It is not the place that honors the man,

but the man who honors the place." (Ta'anit 21b.) We are not defined by our circumstances. It is what we *do* with our circumstances that defines us. In Parshat Pinchas, we read about the apportioning of the land amongst the tribes of Israel, which was determined by lottery. The name of a tribe would be drawn, along with a slip of parchment delineating the borders of that tribe's share. Rashi, in his commentary on the Torah, adds a mystifying detail: The lot itself would speak, announcing, "I, the lot, have come up with these borders for this tribe." Generally, G-d does not break the rules of nature without good cause. In this case, having the lot itself speak seems like a completely unnecessary miracle. The main goal was to divide and settle the land—why did the method matter so much, to the point that the lot itself called out the results? Conquering and settling the Land of Israel is a metaphor for the purpose of our entire existence—to transform the world in which we live into a dwelling place for G-d. We are each given our own portion in the world to transform, and each task has its time when it will be completed. There are many steps in this process, and some seem to be only a means to an end. However, since each step serves the overall purpose of making the world into a dwelling place for G-d, it reflects G-d's will and cannot be dismissed as a minor detail. Just as the lottery, a seemingly insignificant "means to an end," deserved its own miracle, likewise every detail of our life's mission is necessary and important. Life can feel very disjointed at times, with conflicting demands and inevitable disappointments. The key to maintaining our balance is to realize that while

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we may not be able to control the outcome, we are able to control our actions. Only *we* can choose how we are going to proceed on this journey, and how we are going to face the challenges that beset us. We may not want to put in so much effort; we may feel ready to move on. But if we find ourselves stuck in one place, that's a sign that there's still work to be done where we are. A chassid who lived in Russia once came to the Tzemach Tzedek, the third Chabad rebbe, and asked him for permission to settle in Israel, so that he could further his spiritual development. The Tzemach Tzedek answered him, "*Mach doh Eretz Yisroel*. Make this place Israel." The Tzemach Tzedek was not dismissing the chassid's aspiration to live in Israel. But with this response he was saying, "Why are you rushing off to Israel? Have you already accomplished everything that you need to do here? Have you transformed your own surroundings into a place that exudes holiness?" The Rebbe related a story with a similar theme: A group of young men were at a chassidic gathering with the fifth Lubavitcher rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab, who was preparing to say a chassidic discourse. Before he said the discourse, the chassidim sang a traditional preparatory melody. As they were very eager to hear the discourse, they sang the melody rather hastily. The Rebbe Rashab was not pleased with this, and he told them, "A chassid is a *pnimi*, an inwardly focused person. Wherever he is, whatever he does, he is completely there at that moment. He does not view one matter as a mere preparation for another matter. Rather, each thing that he is involved with gets his full attention." There are many times when we look around and feel that we would be much better off somewhere else, living under different conditions. And that may be true. But sometimes the key to reaching that other place, wherever it may be, is completing all that needs to be done in the here and now. We need to utilize every moment to its fullest, and this in itself creates the changes that carry us into the next stage. As Jewish people, we have been awaiting the redemption for a very, very long time. And the long wait has worn us down, made us very impatient, maybe even a bit skeptical. But if we are still here, that means we still have more to do here, and we need to do it with full concentration and focus. In this way, we can bring the redemption into the here and now, until it becomes part of our reality. Then G-d will grant us the hoped-for blessings in full—peace in our homes, our lives and the entire world.

By Chaya Shuchat

Sunday, July 5, 2020 --- 13 Tammuz, 5780

R. Yosef Yitzchak Freed (1927)

On the 13th of Tammuz of 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, received the documents authorizing his release from a sentence of exile to Kastroma in the interior of Russia. The Rebbe was actually notified of his release on Tammuz 12, but since that day was a legal holiday, the Certificate of Release freeing him to travel home was issued only the next day. Thus both the 12th and 13th of Tammuz are celebrated as a "festival of liberation" by the Chabad-Lubavitch community.

Tuesday, July 7, 2020 --- 15 Tammuz, 5780

Passing of R. Chayim ben Attar (1743)

Passing of the famed Torah scholar and mystic Rabbi Chayim ben Attar (1696-1743), author of the *Ohr HaChayim* commentary on the Torah. Born in Morocco, he also lived and taught in Algiers, Italy, Acco and Jerusalem, where he settled a year before his passing. Many stories are told of his holiness and greatness, and of the repeated unsuccessful attempts by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov to reach the Holy Land and meet with him in the belief that together they could bring the Moshiach and the final redemption.

Passing of R. Aryeh Leib, Author of Shaagas Aryeh (1785)

R. Aryeh Leib was an outstanding scholar known for his diligence in study and penetrating analysis. He served as rabbi of Metz and authored *Shaagas Aryeh*, a collection of analytical discourses on the laws of *Orach Chaim* (daily life and the festivals). This classic work enjoys much fame and is indispensable for any serious student who desires to plumb the depths of Jewish law.

In addition to *Shaagas Aryeh*, R. Aryeh Leib authored *Turei Even* and *Gevuras Ari*, in-depth commentaries to a number of Talmudic tractates.

Wednesday, July 8, 2020 --- 16 Tammuz, 5780

Golden Calf Made; Hur Killed (1313 BCE)

In the year 2448 from Creation (1313 BCE), Tammuz 16 was the 40th day following the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and the people of Israel wrongly expected Moses' return from the mountain (he would actually return on the following day). When their leader failed to return, they demanded from Aaron: "Make us a god that shall go before us". Hur (Moses' nephew, the son of Miriam and Caleb) tried to stop them and was killed by the mob. Aaron fashioned a calf of molten gold.

Thursday, July 9, 2020 --- 17 Tammuz, 5780

Moses Breaks Tablets (1313 BCE)

The Talmud (Taanit 28b) lists five tragic events in Jewish history that occurred on Tammuz 17, on account of which a fast was instituted on this day. The first of these occurred in 1313 BCE, forty days after the Giving of the Torah on Sivan 6. Upon descending Mount Sinai and witnessing Israel's worship of the Golden Calf (see "Today in Jewish History" for yesterday, Tammuz 16), Moses smashed the Tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments which he was carrying down from the mountain.

Jerusalem Walls Breached (69 CE)

The other three national tragedies mourned on Tammuz 17 are connected with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and their destruction of the Second Temple in the year 69 CE:

--The walls of the besieged city of Jerusalem were breached.

--The Roman general Apostomus burned the Torah and,

--placed an idol in the Holy Temple.

The fighting in Jerusalem continued for three weeks until the 9th of Av, when the Holy Temple was set aflame.

Friday, July 10, 2020 --- 18 Tammuz, 5780

Golden Calf Destroyed (1313 BCE)

Moses destroyed the Golden Calf, and re-ascended Mount Sinai to plead G-d's forgiveness for the Jewish people. (Exodus 32:20; Talmud Taanit 30b.)