

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

July 19-25, 2020
27 Tammuz- 4 Av, 5780

Torah: Devarim:
Deuteronomy 1:1 - 3:22

Haftarah:
Isaiah 1:1-27

PARSHAT
MATOT-MASSEI

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).

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

Too Much Sinai Thirty-seven (See Seder Olam Rabbah, Devarim, ch. 10.) days before his passing, on the first day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, Moses began his final series of talks to his beloved people—words of rebuke, inspiration and hope. In this first talk, he related the story of their leaving Mount Sinai after being for almost a year. At that point, before the sin of the spies, they were headed straight for the land of Israel. Moses stated: The L-rd our G-d spoke to us in Horeb (Sinai), saying, “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and journey, and come to the mountain of the Amorites and to all its neighboring places, in the plain, on the mountain, and in the lowland, and in the south and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites, and the Lebanon, until the great river, the Euphrates River.” (Deuteronomy 1:6-7) G-d said, “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain.” In other words, “Enough already, you’ve had too much of Sinai.” This seems quite strange. Wasn't the revelation at Sinai the most important event in our history, the foundation of our religion and the basis of all of the Torah? How can one have “too much” of Sinai? What can be better or more spiritually uplifting than camping at the foot of Sinai? Sinai was a great place to be. The revelation at Sinai was the most formative experience of our people. But there came a moment when dwelling at Sinai became a distraction. “You’ve been here too long,” said G-d. “It’s time to face the real world.” It was time to take the Sinaic inspiration and bring it to day-to-day life in the land of Israel. Rashi, the primary commentary of the Torah, offers a homiletic

interpretation of the verse: I have given you much greatness and reward for your having dwelt at this mountain: you made the Mishkan, the Menorah, and the [other] furnishings; you received the Torah; you appointed a Sanhedrin for yourselves, and captains over thousands and captains over hundreds. (Rashi to Deuteronomy 1:6) Rashi interprets the verse to mean, not that the Jewish people had spent too much time at Sinai, but rather, they had achieved much at Sinai. But what about the most important achievement? What about experiencing the Divine revelation? Moses himself spends a good chunk of next week's portion describing the revelation at Sinai: For ask now regarding the early days that were before you, since the day that G-d created man upon the earth, and from one end of the heavens to the other end of the heavens, whether there was anything like this great thing, or were the likes of it heard? Did ever a people hear G-d's voice speaking out of the midst of the fire as you have heard, and live? (Deuteronomy 4:32-33.) When Moses told the Jewish people to pack their bags and depart the camp at the foot of Mount Sinai, the people were surely unhappy. They certainly preferred to remain in spiritual paradise, and they must have feared the possibility of losing inspiration, vision and spiritual resolve. Moses reassured them. He told them not to worry. He told them that after all the time spent at Sinai, they certainly had the tools to continue their journey to the Promised Land. Therefore, when Moses enumerated the achievements at Sinai, he mentioned not the revelation itself, but rather the Menorah, the study of Torah and the court system. These were symbols, not of an earth-

shattering, awe-inspiring experience, but of a Divine wisdom being implemented into daily life. Moses understood that Sinai was spiritual bliss, but to fulfill the purpose of creation, to connect heaven and earth, the Jewish people needed to follow specific steps, they needed to introduce measured, consistent spirituality into their lives. Moses taught an important lesson. Yes, the occasional spiritually intense moment is critical. Yes, once a year we need to experience a Yom Kippur, a day on which we are like angels in heaven. But that it is not enough. The question we ask ourselves is, not how often do we feel as spiritual as we do on Yom Kippur, but rather, what specific action will we take today to ensure that our life is imbued with the light of the Torah's teachings? (Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot, vol. 24, Devarim, *sichah* 2) By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

Memory On the Shabbat prior to Tisha B'Av, the Jewish national day of mourning, we will hear the famous Haftarah (reading from the Prophets) of *Chazon*, the "Vision of Isaiah." And on Tishah B'Av itself, we will recall the destruction of our Holy Temple nearly 2,000 years ago by fasting and mourning and the other observances of the day. But why remember? The world cannot understand why we go on about the Holocaust—and that was only 60 years ago! For over 19 centuries, we have been remembering and observing this event and it has become the saddest day in our calendar. Why? Why not let bygones be bygones? It's history. What was was. Why keep revisiting old and painful

visions? They say that Napoleon was once passing through the Jewish ghetto in Paris and heard sounds of crying and wailing emanating from a synagogue. He stopped to ask what the lament was about. He was told that the Jews were remembering the destruction of their Temple. "When did it happen?" asked the Emperor. "Some 1700 years ago," was the answer he received. Whereupon Napoleon stated with conviction that a people who never forgot its past would be destined to forever have a future. Jews never had history. We have memory. History can become a book, a museum, and forgotten antiquities. Memory is alive. And memory guarantees our future. Even amidst the ruins, we refused to forget. The first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. As they led the Jews into captivity, the Jews sat down and wept. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept remembering Zion." What did we cry for? Our lost wealth, homes and businesses? No. We cried for Zion and Jerusalem. "If I forget thee 'O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning. If I fail to elevate Jerusalem above my foremost joy, then let my tongue cleave to its palate." We were not weeping for ourselves or our lost liberties but for the heavenly city and the Holy Temple. Amidst the bondage, we aspired to rebuild; amidst the ruins we dreamt of returning. And because we refused to forget Jerusalem, we did return. Because we refused to accept defeat or accept our exile as a historical fait accompli, we have rebuilt proud Jewish communities the world over, while our victors have been vanquished by time. Today there are no more Babylonians and the people who now live in Rome are not the Romans who destroyed the Second Temple. Those nations became history while we, inspired by memory, emerged revitalized and regenerated and forever it will be true that *Am Yisrael Chai* — the people of Israel lives! I remember hearing a story of a Torah scholar and his nephew who were in the Holocaust. In the concentration camp, they studied the Talmud together. They were learning the tractate *Moed Katan*, a part of the Talmud that, ironically, discusses the laws of mourning. And when the time came that the uncle saw himself staring death in the face, he said to his nephew, "Promise me that if you survive you will finish studying this book of *Moed Katan*." Amidst the misery, desolation and tragedy, what thought preoccupied his mind? That the Talmud should still be studied. This was his last wish on earth. Was it madness, or is it the very secret of our survival? Only if we refuse to forget, only if we observe Tisha B'av, can we hope to rebuild one day. Indeed, the Talmud assures us, "Whosoever mourns for Jerusalem, will merit to witness her rejoicing." If we are to make it back to Zion, if our people are to harbor the hope of being restored and revived, then we dare not forget. We need to observe our National Day of Mourning. Forego the movies and the restaurants. Sit down on a low seat to mourn with your people; and perhaps even more importantly, to remember. And, please G-d, He will restore those glorious days and rebuild His own everlasting house. May it be speedily in our day. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

Sunday, July 19, 2020 --- 27 Tammuz, 5780

Third expulsion from France (1322)

After having been allowed back into France in the year 1315 (after the expulsion in 1306 by Philip IV), the Jews were once again expelled from France by Charles IV, who thus broke the pledge made by his predecessors in 1315 that the Jews would be able to stay in France for at least 12 years.

Monday, July 20, 2020 --- 28 Tammuz, 5780

Passing of "Yismach Moshe" (1841)

Tammuz 28 is the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (1759-1841) of Uhely, Hungary, author of *Yismach Moshe* and patriarch of the Hungarian Chassidic dynasties.

Passing of Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1886)

Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1804-1886) was born in Uzhhorod (Ungvar) in the Carpathian region of the Habsburg Empire (now Ukraine). When he was eight years old, Shlomo's father, Rabbi Yosef, passed away, and Ungvar's chief rabbi, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Heller, assumed legal guardianship of Shlomo. In 1830, he abandoned his work as a wine merchant and accepted the position of Rabbi of Brezovica (Brezevitz). In 1849, he returned to Ungvar to serve as a rabbinical judge. Realizing that the average Jew required a basic knowledge of practical halachah, Rabbi Ganzfried compiled the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, an abbreviated digest of Jewish law. To this day, the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* remains a classic halachic work, and it has been translated into many languages. In addition to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, he authored many works including *Keset HaSofer*, a halachic primer for scribes, and *Pnei Shlomo*, a commentary on the Talmud.

Tuesday, July 21, 2020 --- 29 Tammuz, 5780

Passing of Rashi (1105)

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as "Rashi", passed away on the 29th of Tammuz of the year 4865 from creation (1105 CE). Rashi was born in Troyes, France, in 1040. His commentaries on the Torah, Prophets and Talmud are universally accepted as the most basic tool for the understanding of these texts for schoolchild and scholar alike. Numerous commentaries have been authored on his commentary. In his famed "Rashi talks", the Lubavitcher Rebbe repeatedly demonstrated how Rashi's "simple meaning of the text" style enfolds many layers of meaning, often resolving profound difficulties in the text and presenting new, innovative interpretations with a simple word choice or rephrasing of a Midrashic passage.

Wednesday, July 22, 2020 --- 1 Av, 5780

Passing of Aaron (1274 BCE)

Aaron the first High Priest, brother of Moses and Miriam, passed away at age 123 on the 1st of Av of the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE). This is the only *yahrzeit* (date of passing) explicitly mentioned in the Torah (Numbers 33:38).

Ezra Arrives in Israel (348 BCE)

Following their long journey from Babylon (see Jewish history for the 12th of Nissan), Ezra and his entourage arrived in the land of Israel to be near the newly built second Holy Temple in Jerusalem. A relatively small group came together with Ezra, the majority of Jews, including great Torah scholars, choosing to remain in Babylon due to the harsh conditions that were then prevailing in Israel.

Friday, July 24, 2020 --- 3 Av, 5780

Passing of R. Shimshon of Ostropolle (1648)

R. Shimshon of Ostropolle was a saintly individual who was greatly revered both in his lifetime and beyond. It is told that an angel called a *maggid* would come and reveal secrets of Torah to him, and that he merited revelations from Elijah the Prophet. He himself records kabbalistic insights that were revealed to him in dreams. R. Shimshon authored *Dan Yadin*, a kabbalistic commentary, as well as numerous other unperished works. Additionally, many of his interpretations that were preserved orally have been collected and published.