

# Torah Weekly

7"בס

September 13-19, 2020  
24 Elul - 1 Tishrei, 5780

**Readings for Rosh Hashanah**  
**First Day:** First Torah:  
Rosh Hashanah 1: Genesis 21:1-34  
Second Torah:  
Rosh Hashanah 1: Numbers 29:1-6  
**Haftarah:** Samuel I 1:1 - 2:10  
**Second Day:** First Torah:  
Rosh Hashanah 2: Genesis 22:1-24  
Second Torah:  
Rosh Hashanah 2: Numbers 29:1-6  
**Haftarah:** Jeremiah 31:1-19

**ROSH HASHANA**

## 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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**Mr. Self Sacrifice** If sportswriters had followed Abraham's life, they no doubt would have dubbed him "Mr. Self-Sacrifice." As a young man, he spent 10 years in a dungeon for his religious beliefs. Later he was thrown *auto-da-fe* style into a blazing furnace for his public refusal to bow to the idolatrous king. He then dedicated his life to helping others. Though rich enough to live in an upscale oasis, he chose instead to make his home in a simple desert tent, providing the needy with food, shade and spiritual guidance. But it wasn't until the binding of Isaac that Abraham's faithfulness could truly be measured. We find that G-d actually begged Abraham, "Please pass this test — lest all you've done till now go for naught." Sometimes self-sacrifice is not as selfless as it's cracked up to be. In fact, it can be as profit-driven as a good business decision. Whether the perceived gain is eternal bliss or political propaganda, a famous death can look better than an obscure life. The profit outweighs the loss.

In the self-sacrifice business, however, the binding of Isaac was for Abraham a terrible investment. All of his eggs were in Isaac's basket. Abraham's mission was to spread goodness in the world, and Isaac was the only one capable of spreading that goodness to the next generation. Abraham dreamed of fathering a holy nation, and Isaac was the one through whom that nation was meant to come.

This was a balance sheet that was only losses! Without Isaac, *everything* goes down the drain. Yet Abraham was prepared to give up everything, if that's what G-d wanted him to do.

The balance sheet of life can be misleading. There are illnesses, tragedies, loss of life and wasted talents — and we wonder: If G-d is behind this, what could possibly be the point of all these "losses"?

With the binding of Isaac, Abraham teaches us to faithfully march ahead, focused on our goals and dreams. And in the end we see that what looked like a loss is really an immeasurable profit.

By Rabbi Boruch Cohen

## The Kabbalistic Spin on Rosh Hashanah

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews worldwide flock to their synagogues and beseech the Almighty to grant them, their families, and all of Israel a peaceful, happy and prosperous year. According to Jewish tradition, on Rosh Hashanah every creation passes before the Supernal Judge. He determines who will live and who will not, who will be prosperous and healthy and who will not. Everything which will occur in the coming year is decided on Rosh Hashanah.

Why is everything determined on an annual basis? Can't an eternal and infinite G-d plan a little further in advance? Would it not be more time- and energy-efficient to judge perhaps a hundred or a thousand years at once? Why is everything determined on an annual basis? Can't an eternal and infinite G-d plan a little further in advance? Rosh Hashanah commemorates the sixth day of Creation, the day when G-d formed Adam and Eve and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. An understanding of the dynamic of creation will explain the significance of Rosh Hashanah.

Certain things are taken for granted. For example, when we

turn on a sink faucet, we expect and assume that water will emerge from the tap. Or, a child in most households who opens the refrigerator expects to find food on its shelves. In truth, however, neither the water nor the food appear on their own. There is a well-staffed company which maintains the water pipes and pumps necessary to draw water from the reservoir into the residential home, and parents invest incredible energy to stock the refrigerator.

The same is true with creation. It seems that the world stands on its own. We assume that that which existed a moment ago will continue existing a moment later. But, in fact, the Creator is perpetually maintaining the cosmos. In the absence of the steady flow of divine energy, all would cease to exist, much as the water in the tap would stop flowing if the water company went under.

And every once in a while, or once a year to be more precise, G-d loses interest in His creation pastime. We were created because G-d desired to be a beneficent king, and consequently we, His subjects, came into being: creatures upon whom G-d could heap His otherwise unused infinite capacity for kindness. But at the onset of every year's Rosh Hashanah, G-d loses interest, as it were, in His finite and flawed subjects. He withdraws, becomes introverted, and we need to provide Him with an incentive to continue creating for one more year. This isn't because He has a short attention span and habitually loses interest in projects before they reach completion. Rather, this phenomenon is part and parcel of the master plan.

When G-d originally created this world, there was nothing which elicited that grand



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gesture. There was no on around yet to elicit anything; it was an act of pure kindness. But ultimately, “pure kindness” isn’t so kind after all. It leaves its beneficiary feeling unworthy of undeserved beneficence. That’s why G-d created a world wherein everything, even our existence itself, is rightfully earned. If the world will remain in existence for another year, it will be because *we* stimulated G-d’s desire to continue on course.

“Pure kindness” isn’t so kind after all. It leaves its beneficiary feeling unworthy . . . Thus, on Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of our creation, it is up to us to ensure that everything continues.

We go to the synagogue and proclaim, “Reign over the entire world in Your glory.” We “remind” G-d of His love for His chosen people, reaccept Him as our absolute King, and express our innermost desire to serve Him for yet another year. We “remind” Him of the enthusiasm He originally had when creating the world almost 6,000 years ago.

And when words fail us, due their inherent inability to communicate the deepest heartfelt feelings, we take a *shofar*, a medium whose simple weeping notes convey the wordless cry and request which emanates from the core of our souls—“Father, King, we need You and love You, and we know that the feelings are mutual!”

This Rosh Hashanah, as we congregate in the synagogues, let us bear in mind that what hangs in the balance in the coming year is more than our personal welfare. All of creation is counting on us. Let us wholeheartedly commit ourselves to G-d, and He will surely reciprocate by committing to grant all of us a beautiful and meaningful year.

*By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg*

**Sunday, September 13, 2020 --- 24 Elul, 5780**

**Passing of Chafetz Chaim (1933)**

Elul 24 is the yahrtzeit of the revered Torah scholar, pietist and Jewish leader Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) of Radin (Poland), author of *Chafetz Chaim* (a work on the evils of gossip and slander and the guidelines of proper speech) and *Mishnah Berurah* (a codification of Torah law).

**Preparations for Second Temple Construction Begin (353 BCE)**

Inspired by Haggai’s prophecy on the first of Elul (see entry for that date), Zerubavel son of She’altiel, ruler of Judah, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the High Priest, began the preparations for the construction of the Second Temple (Haggai 1:15). The actual construction began exactly three months later, on Kislev 24

**Monday, September 14, 2020 --- 25 Elul, 5780**

**Creation (3760 BCE)**

The 1st day of creation, on which G-d created existence, time, matter, darkness and light, was the 25th of Elul. (Rosh Hashanah, on which we mark "the beginning of Your works", is actually the 6th day of creation, on which the world attained the potential for the realization of its purpose, with the creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Rosh Hashanah is therefore the day from which the Jewish calendar begins to count the years of history; the 1st day of creation thus occurred on the 25th of Elul of what is termed -1 from creation.

**Jerusalem Walls Rebuilt (335 BCE)**

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem -- which had been in ruins since the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians 88 years earlier -- was completed by Nehemia on Elul 25 of the year 3426 from creation (335 BCE) as related in the Book of Nehemia (ch. 6).

**Tuesday, September 15, 2020 --- 26 Elul, 5780**

**Creation of Skies (3760 BCE)**

Today is the second day of Creation, when G-d created the skies. (Genesis 1:6-8)

**Wednesday, September 16, 2020 --- 27 Elul, 5780**

**Creation of Dry Land and Vegetation (3760 BCE)**

Today is the third day of Creation, when G-d exposed the dry land and created vegetation. (Genesis 1:9-13)

**Thursday, September 17, 2020 --- 28 Elul, 5780**

**Creation of Celestial Bodies (3760 BCE)**

Today is the fourth day of Creation, when G-d created the sun, moon, and stars. (Genesis 1:14-19)

**Friday, September 18, 2020 --- 29 Elul, 5780**

**Tzemach Tzedek Born (1789)**

The third Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1789-1866), was born on the 29th of Elul. Orphaned from his mother at age 3, he was raised by his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. Rabbi Menachem Mendel assumed the leadership of Chabad in 1827, upon the passing of his father-in-law and uncle, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch. Extremely active in communal affairs, he established and funded Jewish farming colonies which provided a livelihood for thousands of families. He also stood at the forefront of the battle against the "Enlightenment Movement" which, with the support of the Czarist regime, sought to destroy traditional Jewish life -- a battle which earned him no less than 22 (!) imprisonments and arrests. In the course of his lifetime, Rabbi Menachem Mendel penned more than 48,000 pages of Chassidic teachings and Halachic exegesis. He is known as the "Tzemach Tzedek" ("a sprouting of righteousness") after his work of Halachic responsa by that name.

**Creation of Creatures and Birds (3760 BCE)**

Today is the fifth day of Creation, when G-d created the animals of the sea and the birds. (Genesis 1:20-23)

**Shabbat, September 19, 2020 --- 1 Tishrei, 5781**

**Adam & Eve (3760 BCE)**

On Tishrei 1 -- the sixth day of creation -- "G-d said: 'Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...'" (Genesis 1:26). "G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (ibid., 2:7). "And G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and to keep it" (2:15). "And G-d said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet opposite him' ... G-d caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his sides, and closed up the flesh in its place. And G-d built the side which He had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. And the man said: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother, and cleaves to his wife; and they become one flesh" (2:18-24).

**Dove's 3rd Mission (2105 BCE)**

On the 1st of Tishrei, on the 307th day of the Great Flood, Noach dispatched a dove from the ark, for the third time. When the dove did not return, Noah knew that the Flood's waters had completely drained from the earth. On that day, Noah removed the roof of the ark; but Noah and his family, and all the animals, remained in the ark for another 57 days -- until the 27th of Cheshvan -- when the surface of the earth was completely dry and G-d commanded them to leave the ark and resettle and repopulate the earth.