

# Torah Weekly

ת"ב

September 5, - 11, 2021  
28- Elul, 5781 – 5 Tishrei 5782

Torah reading:  
Deuteronomy 31:1 - 30  
Haftarah: Hosea 14:2-10  
Micah 7:18-20

PARSHAT VAYEILECH

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.

**Tightrope of Life** In the days of communism's fierce grip on the Soviet Union, there lived a chassidic Jew named Reb Mendel Futerfas. Reb Mendel repeatedly put his life at risk with his efforts to promote Jewish education behind the Iron Curtain, and for some 14 years was incarcerated in prisons and labor camps for his "crime" of teaching Torah. While in the Siberian gulag, he spent most of his free time studying and praying, but he also interacted and conversed with other prisoners—some Jewish, some not. Among these prisoners was a circus performer whose claim to fame was his incredible skill as a tightrope walker.

Reb Mendel would often engage this man in conversation. Having never been to a circus, Reb Mendel was totally baffled by the man's profession. How could a person risk his life walking on a rope several stories above ground? (This was in the days before safety nets were standard practice.)

"To just go out there and walk on a rope?" Reb Mendel challenged incredulously.

The performer explained that due to his training and skill he did not need to be held up by any cables, and that for him it was no longer all that dangerous. Reb Mendel remained skeptical and intrigued.

After Stalin died, the prison authorities relaxed their rules somewhat, and the guards told the prisoners that they would be allowed to stage a makeshift circus on May Day. There was no doubt that the famous tightrope walker's act would be the highlight of the show. The tightrope walker made sure that his friend, Reb Mendel, was in the audience.

Everyone watched with bated breath as the tightrope walker climbed the tall pole to the suspended rope. His first steps were timid and tentative (after all, it had been several years), but within a few seconds it all came back to him. With his hands twirling about, he virtually glided across the rope to the pole at the other end, and then, in a flash, made a fast turn, reversed his direction and proceeded back to the other side. Along the way, he performed several stunts. The crowd went wild.

When he was done, he slid down off the pole, took a bow and went running straight to Reb Mendel.

"So?" he said. "Did you see that I was not held up by any cables?"

A very impressed Reb Mendel replied, "Yes. You're right. No cables."

"Okay. You're a smart man. Tell me, how did I do it? Was it my hands? Was it my

feet?" the man asked.

Reb Mendel paused for a moment, closed his eyes and replayed the entire act back on his mind. Finally he said, "It's all in your eyes. During the entire time, your eyes were completely focused and riveted on the opposite pole."

"Exactly!" said the performer. "When you see your destination in front of you and you don't take your eyes off of it, then your feet go where they need to go, and you don't fall."

The tightrope walker had one more question for Reb Mendel. "What would you say is the most difficult part of the act?"

Again Reb Mendel thought for a moment. "Most difficult was the turn, when you had to change direction."

"Correct again!" said the acrobat. "During that split second, when you lose sight of that first pole, and the other pole has not yet come into view, there is some real danger there. But . . . if you don't allow yourself to get confused and distracted during that transition, your eyes will find that pole, and your balance will be there."

This week's **Torah** reading, in which we learn about the events that transpired on the last day of Moses' life on earth, is called "And Moses went" (*Vayeilech Moshe*). The commentaries point out that even on the last day of his life, Moses was on the move—walking forward, achieving, growing—making the most of every precious moment of life.

Moses' message to us is that so long as we have a breath of life, there ought to be *vayeilech*—explorations of new horizons, journeys to new frontiers.

How do we walk this tightrope called "life" without stumbling? The answer is: by establishing clear and proper goals, and remaining focused on those goals like a laser beam. The Torah provides us with a roadmap to a meaningful and fulfilling way of life. It sets down goals, and defines purpose.

It is also noteworthy that this Torah reading is often read on the special Shabbat that serves as the bridge between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, referred to as "Shabbat Shuvah." On that Shabbat we also read a *haftarah* in which we hear the words of the prophets exhorting us, pleading with us, beckoning us to improve the quality of our lives; to even change direction, if need be.

When you know what your purpose and destination is, and you do not take your eyes off that pole, then you know where to put your feet. Even when things turn, and we momentarily lose sight of the pole, we need not despair. **Shabbat Shuvah** teaches us that a change of direction ought not to send us plummeting. On the contrary, we can and should shift gracefully with changes of circumstances, catch our balance, and let the next pole come into view.

By Rabbi Moshe Bryski

## Letter for Rosh Hashanah

*To the Sons and Daughters of  
Our People Israel, Everywhere,*

*G-d bless you*

*Greetings and Blessing:*

*On the eve of Rosh Hashanah I extend my prayerful wishes to my brethren, every Jew and Jewess in the midst of our people Israel, the time hallowed traditional blessing of "Shono toivo umesuko"—a good and sweet year.*

*The celebration of Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the year, has been ordained by our Torah to take place on the anniversary of the Creation, but not on the first day of Creation. It has been*

made to coincide with the sixth day of Creation, the day when Man was created.

The significance of this day, and of this event, is not in the fact that a new creature was added to Creation, a creature one plane higher than the rest of the animal kingdom, as the animal is superior to plant, and plant to mineral.

The significance lies in the fact that the new creature—Man—was essentially different from the others.

For it was man who recognized the Creator in and through Creation, and, what is more, brought about the elevation of the entire Creation to that recognition and thus to the fulfillment of its Divine design and purpose. Since such recognition and appreciation of the Creator is the ultimate purpose of the Creation.

One of the main distinguishing features which set Man apart from all other creatures, is the free choice of action which the Creator bestowed upon him.

Man can use this special Divine gift in two opposing directions he may, G-d forbid, choose the way leading to self-destruction and the destruction of everything around him; or, he can choose the right way of life, which would elevate him and the Creation with him to the highest possible perfection.

And to help us recognize and choose the right path, we were given the [Torah](#), which is Divine and eternal, hence its teachings are valid for all times and in all places.

It is not possible for man to make his choice unaided, merely by virtue of his intellect, for the human intellect is limited. The intellect can only serve to discover and bring forth that inner absolute intuition and faith in things which lie beyond and above the realm of the intellect; the faith and intuition which are the heritage of every Jew, therewith to illuminate his entire being and to guide him in his daily living to a life inspired by Torah and Mitzvoth.

On Rosh Hashanah man stands not only before the Divine Judgment, but also before his own.

The verdict of his own judgment, with regard to the future, must be: that he takes upon himself to fulfill his duty, that is, to work for the fulfillment—in himself and in his surroundings—of the call:

“Come, let us worship, bow down and kneel before G-d our Maker,” a call for absolute submission to G-d first sounded by the first man, Adam, on the day of his creation, on the first Rosh Hashanah.

This can be attained only through a life inspired and guided by the Torah.

And that he must once and for all abandon the opposite road, which can only lead to destruction and doom.

Let no one think: who am I and what am I to have such tremendous powers of building or destruction.

For we have seen—to our sorrow—what even a small quantity of matter can do in the way of destruction through the release of atomic energy. If such power is concealed in a small quantity of matter—for destructiveness, in denial of the design and purpose of Creation, how much greater, is

the creative power entrusted to every individual to work in harmony with the Divine purpose, for in this case one is also given special abilities and opportunities by Divine Providence to attain the goal for which we have been created: the realization of a world in which

“Each creature shall recognize that Thou didst create him, and every breathing soul shall declare: ‘G-d, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His reign is supreme over all.’”

With the blessing of

Kesivo vachasimo toivo,

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Tuesday, September 7, - 1 Tishrei, 5782**

**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).

**Thursday, September 9, 2021, --- 3 Tishrei, 5782**

**Assassination of Gedaliah (423 BCE)**

Tishrei 3rd is a fast day mourning the assassination of the Jewish royal Gedaliah ben Achikam, governor of the Land of Israel for a short period following the destruction of the First Temple. Gedaliah's killing spelled the end of the small remnant of a Jewish community that remained in the Holy Land after the destruction. They soon fled to Egypt. (According to many opinions, the assassination of Gedaliah occurred on Rosh Hashanah, but the commemoration of the event is postponed to the day after the festival).

**Friday, September 10, 2021 --- 4 Tishrei, 5788**

**Passing of R. Yoel Baal Shem (1713)**

R. Yoel Baal Shem was a saintly rabbi and miracle worker who led the Society of Hidden [Tzaddikim](#) (righteous men) after the passing of its leader, R. Eliyahu Baal Shem. He was succeeded by R. Adam Baal Shem, who was in turn succeeded by R. Israel [Baal Shem Tov](#).

**Shabbat, Septmeber 11, 2021 --- 5 Tishrei, 5782**

**Rabbi Akiva martyred (134)**

The great Talmudic sage, [Rabbi Akiva](#), was taken captive by the Romans on Tishrei 5 of the year 3894 from creation (134 CE). His subsequent torture and execution is recalled in the stirring [Eleh Ezkarah](#) poem of the Yom Kippur service.

**Birth of Naftali**

Naftali, the son of [Jacob](#) and [Bilhah](#), sixth of the [Twelve Tribes](#), was born on the 5th of Tishrei. He lived to be 133 years old.