

Torah Weekly

November 7- 13, 2021
3-9 Kislev, 5782

Torah reading:
Vayeitzei: Genesis 28:10 - 32:3
Haftarah: Hosea 11:7-12:14

PARSHAT VAYEITZEI

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).

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.

The Pressure Principle Do we need security and comfort to do well in life? Do we achieve more when we are relaxed and comfortable, or when we are challenged and provoked?

Jacob left Beer-Sheba and went to Charan (Genesis 28:10).

Beer-Sheba represented peace and tranquility. Charan stood for violence and immorality: it was the hub of tumult and turmoil, home of Laban, swindler and sheep-thief of note. Yet, ironically, it was there, in Charan, where Jacob raised his family, where the twelve tribes of Israel were founded.

Abraham had a wonderful son named Isaac, but he also fathered Ishmael. Isaac bore the pious Jacob, but also had a ruffian named Esau. Only Jacob is described as "select of the forefathers," because his children were all righteous: "his progeny was perfect."

Asks the Lubavitcher Rebbe: would not Beer-Sheba have made a better place for Jacob to have raised his children? Would not Beer-Sheba have been the ideal hothouse for the future Jewish people to be conceived and nurtured? Why, of all places, in Charan?

Says the Rebbe: the olive yields its best oil when pulverized. To produce gold, we need a fiery furnace where the intense heat on the raw metal leaves it purified and precious. Jacob did not have an easy life, but it made him a better man, and it made his children better children.

Many years ago, I met a young man who had just come out of military service in the South African army. I greeted him with the platitude, "So, Joe, did the army make you a man?" He said, "No, Rabbi, the army made me a Jew!" Apparently, he had encountered more than a fair share of anti-Semitism in the military, and it actually strengthened his resolve to live a Jewish life. Today he is the proud

father and grandfather of a lovely, committed Jewish family.

Life isn't always smooth sailing. But it appears that the Creator, in his vast eternal plan, intended for us to experience difficulties in life. Evidently, we grow from our discomfort and challenges, to emerge better, stronger, wiser and more productive people. There is always a purpose to pain. As our physiotherapists tell us (with such compassion that I want to hit them!), "No pain, no gain." It would seem that, like the olive, we too yield our very best when we are under pressure. (From personal experience—and my editor will confirm—I just can't get these sermonettes done until I see a deadline staring me in the face.) The simple fact is that we produce best under pressure.

One of the reasons we use a hard-boiled egg on the Seder plate on Passover is to remind us of the festival offering brought in the Holy Temple. But the truth is that any cooked food would do. So, why an egg?

One of my favorite answers is that Jews are like eggs. The more they boil us, the harder we get. We have been punished and persecuted through the centuries, but it has only strengthened us, given us courage, faith and hope. At every point in our history we have always emerged from the tzores (hardships) of the time stronger, more tenacious and more determined than ever.

Jacob raised a beautiful family in less than ideal conditions. Please G-d, we should emulate his example. Wherever we may be living and in whatever circumstances, may we rise to the challenge and live successful lives, and raise happy, healthy Jewish children who will build the future tribes of Israel.

I end with a little poem I wrote many years ago:

The tragedy of pain
is we overlook its aim

of leaving us humble and wise

Oh, how shallow
of man to wallow
in misery and never realize

That gold, so pure, is in fire
proved
and oil from olive by crushing
removed
'tis so with all things of worth

So differ from the rest
be strong in life's test
and make of ordeal, rebirth.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

The strength of Jacob

Modern day society has sprouted all types of gurus. We have experts on childcare and healthy eating, education and entertainment. Self-help books top best-seller lists every year. Is there any place for a rabbi in a society that has specialists to advise us on every area of our life? Does Judaism truly have something to say about every aspect of our life, or are the rabbis who claim to have an opinion on everything simply intrusive and controlling? Should rabbis just stick to teaching Torah?

"You, Jacob, are fine the way you are: a man raised in the 'old country' "Over three thousand years ago, our forefather Jacob was on the run. His brother Esau had tried to kill him so he had taken shelter with his uncle Laban, tending his crops, marrying his daughters and earning himself a comfortable living.

After suffering through Laban's continual machinations, Jacob heeded G-d's call that he go back home. He took his family and cattle and headed out for the Holy Land. Laban pursued Jacob and overtook him; only thanks to G-dly intervention was Jacob's life saved.

During their encounter, Laban

challenged Jacob on permission:
leaving without his

"These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle..."—Genesis 31:43

What was Laban saying? He had literally sold his daughters to Jacob, demanding that he work fourteen years for the privilege of marrying them. Jacob had worked another seven hard years for his herds of cattle. What demands could Laban have of him?

But Laban was arguing a finer point. "The children belong to me," says Laban. "You, Jacob, are fine the way you are: a man raised in the 'old country' whose natural habitat is the tents of [Torah](#) learning and prayer. But what do you want of the children? They belong to another generation, another world. They must be raised in the spirit of the times, equipped to earn a living and a place in society. Do you truly expect them to negotiate modern life with nothing but your ancient tomes? You are a good man Jacob, but leave the children to me..."

"The cattle are *my* cattle, Jacob. I wouldn't dream of interfering with your spiritual life, Rabbi—I'll be the first to admit that I'm no authority on religion. By all means, consult your sacred books on how to keep the Shabbat or how to light your Chanukah candles. But when it comes to business affairs, do you think that the stock market conforms to the standards of the Code of Jewish Law? That you can retain both your competitive edge and your talmudic ethics? You'll be eaten alive out there. Reserve your piety for the synagogue and study hall, but do yourself a favor—leave the cattle to me, okay?"

Jacob refuted Laban then, as we must refute the Laban inside us and the Labans in society now. Judaism has something to say on every aspect of our lives, and its teachings must be as relevant to us as it was to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob thousands of years ago.

By Rabbi Eli Pink

Reminder:

Please assist the Rabbi / Chaplain at your institution, work with them to ensure that you will be able to celebrate the holiday of Chanukah, by lighting the candles.

We at Aleph Institute have candles and candelabras for your institution at no charge.

Sunday, November 7, 2021 --- 3 Kislev, 5782

Kamenitz-Podolsk Talmuds Saved (5518/1757)

As a result of the libelous slander of the Frankists (followers of Sabbatai Zevi, the archbishop of Kamenitz decreed that all Hebrew books of the communities in his jurisdiction should be burned. On this day, he suffered a miraculous downfall and the decree was annulled. (*Imrei Pinchas*, 2003 ed., vol. 1, pp. 496–498)

Pnei Yehoshua Saved (5463/1702)

The explosion of some barrels of gunpowder that had been caught on fire resulted in the collapse of a number of nearby buildings, placing Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk in mortal danger. In distress, he pledged that if he would survive, he would commit himself to studying the Talmud and its commentaries. He was miraculously saved, and went on to author his classic Talmudic commentary, *Pnei Yehoshua*. (Introduction of the author to the above work)

Temple Cleared in Chanukah Miracle (3622/-139)

After overcoming the Greek forces, the Hasmoneans cleared the Temple from the idolatrous images that had been erected there. (*Megilat Taanit* ch. 9)

Monday, November 8, 2021 --- 4 Kislev, 5782

Zechariah Foretold Messianic Era (3410/-352)

A delegation from Babylonia put forth a query to the prophet Zechariah, asking whether the fast of the Ninth of Av was still in effect, now that the Second Temple had been built. In response, Zechariah transmitted G-d's message that it was not fasting that was most important, but to uphold justice, truth, kindness and compassion.

Zechariah also foretold what will occur to the fast days in the Messianic era: "So says the L-rd of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month [the seventeenth of Tammuz], the fast of the fifth month [the ninth of Av], the fast of the seventh month [the third of Tishrei], and the fast of the tenth month [the tenth of Teves] will be to the House of Judah for rejoicing, happiness, and festivals." (*Zechariah 7-8*)

Purim Teveryah (5503/1743)

After a three-month-long unsuccessful battle and siege waged by Suleiman Pasha, governor of Damascus, against the sheikh of Tiberias, the governor finally left the city. To mark their salvation and the numerous miracles that had occurred throughout the siege, the Jews of Tiberias, led by the venerable R. Chaim Abulafia (1660–1744), established this date as a yearly festival of rejoicing and praise to G-d. (*Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, Esther 9:28*)

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 --- 5 Kislev, 5782

Maharsha (1631)

Kislev 5 is the yahrtzeit (date of the passing) of Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (1555-1631), known by the acronym "Maharsha". Rabbi Shmuel authored a highly regarded and widely used commentary on the Talmud and its primary commentaries, Rashi and Tosfot.

Shabbat, November 13, 2021 --- 9 Kislev, 5782

Birth & Passing of R. Dovber of Lubavitch (1773; 1827)

Kislev 9 is both the birthday and day of passing of Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch, son of and successor to the founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. Rabbi DovBer was known for his unique style of "broadening rivers" -- his teachings were the intellectual rivers to his father's wellspring, lending breadth and depth to the principles set down by Rabbi Schneur Zalman.

Born in Liozna, White Russia in 1773, Rabbi DovBer was named after Rabbi Schneur Zalman's mentor and teacher, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch, who had passed away on Kislev 19 of the previous year. Rabbi DovBer assumed the leadership of Chabad upon his father's passing in 1812. In 1813 he settled in the town of Lubavitch, which was to serve as the movement's headquarters for the next 102 years. In 1826, he was arrested on charges that his teachings threatened the imperial authority of the Czar, but was subsequently exonerated.

Rabbi DovBer passed away on his 54th birthday in 1827, a day before the first anniversary of his liberation.