

Torah Weekly

December 19-25, 2021
15-21 Tevet, 5782

Torah reading:
Shemot: Exodus 1:1 - 6:1
Haftarah:
Isaiah 27:6 - 28:13; Isaiah 29:22-23

PARSHAT SHEMOT

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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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Great Expectations

We never really know why things happen. Do we always deserve everything life throws at us, good or bad? Allow me to share a message from this week's Parshah which may shed a little light on the mysteries of life and our higher destinies.

This is the Parshah that describes the beginning of bondage for the Jewish people in Egypt. Moses experiences his first official Divine revelation at the Burning Bush. There he is charged with the formidable mission to confront the Pharaoh and demand that he "Let My people go." Moses is full of questions and repeatedly seeks G-d's reassurances.

In one exchange at the Bush, Moses asks, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt? Rashi interprets the first part of the question as Moses doubting his own qualifications to suddenly become a player in the king's court. In his typical humble way Moses didn't see himself worthy of challenging the mighty monarch of Egypt. The second part of the verse is explained by Rashi to be questioning the worthiness of the Jewish People. What have they actually done to deserve such a miraculous redemption?

To which the Almighty answers, firstly, have no fear and have no doubts, I will be with you. And secondly, this is your sign that I have sent you: when you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain.

Now it's very nice to know that this mountain was, in fact, Mount Sinai and that the Burning Bush encounter occurred on that very same mountain. But wherein lies G-d's answer to Moses' second question? He asked "who am I?" so G-d replied to the point and said don't worry "I will be with you." But to the question of by what merit did Israel deserve

redemption we don't see any answer. That they "will serve G-d on this mountain" doesn't seem relevant to the discussion at all.

Here it is that we find a fascinating insight into the intriguingly infinite ways of Providence. G-d was saying that it was not necessarily for what they had done in the past that he was ready to redeem the Jewish people, but for what He anticipated for them in the future. On this very mountain they would receive His Torah; they would become His chosen messengers to be a light unto the nations; they would be the moral standard bearers for the entire world. Never mind what they did or didn't do in the past. G-d had big plans for this nation and it would all begin with the impending Exodus.

What a powerful message for all of us. Sometimes, the kindness G-d does for us is not because of what we've been but rather what it would enable us to become. It's not for what we have already done but for what we still will do.

I know a man who in mid-life experienced a near fatal coronary. Fortunately, his life was saved by the prompt medical intervention of paramedics and surgeons. When I visited him in hospital he was overwhelmed by one idea: his indebtedness to G-d, the Healer of all flesh. "Rabbi," he said, "I was a goner. What did I do to deserve this gift of life?"

So I shared with him the Rashi mentioned above and told him it might not be something he had done in the past but something he would still do in the future. Perhaps G-d gave him a new lease on life for a reason. Not only to enjoy more years with his family but to do something significant for G-d, for His people, for the world.

The Almighty's confidence proved justified. The man went on to deepen his personal

spiritual commitments and also made a meaningful contribution to Jewish communal life.

So should any of us be the beneficiaries of a special blessing from Above, instead of patting ourselves on the back and concluding that we must have done something wonderful to be thus rewarded, let us rather ask ourselves what G-d might be expecting us to do with this particular blessing in the future. How can we use it to further His work on earth? Special blessings carry with them special responsibilities.

May each of us successfully develop all the potential G-d sees in us and use it for our own moral development and to somehow better the world around us. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

What Are You Needed

For The sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Y. Schneerson, recounted the following story some 64 years ago:

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Chabad rebbe, had a disciple who was also a great philanthropist. Two causes that were particularly dear to him were supporting the Jewish community in the Land of Israel and ransoming captives.

This wealthy chassid had already married off his children and begun pledging dowries for his less-affluent relatives, when the wheel of fortune turned, and his finances suffered.

He was forced to borrow money, and at the end he was left penniless. Overwhelmed and pursued by creditors, he did what any chassid would do: he traveled to his rebbe and unburdened his heavy heart.

After listening intently to his complaints, Rabbi Schneur Zalman addressed him: "You speak about what you need, but say nothing of what you are needed for!"

In this week's Torah portion, the first one of the book of Exodus, we read about the beginning of the harsh Egyptian exile. But with the disease comes the cure: in the same portion we read about the birth of Moses, the man who was to lead the Jewish people out of their bondage.

It was not necessarily for what they had done in the past that G-d would redeem the Jewish people, but for what He anticipated for them in the future...

One of the first things we hear about Moses is how he helps another person. Emerging from a sheltered existence as a member of Pharaoh's household, he sees an Israelite slave being cruelly beaten by an Egyptian, and rescues him.

There are times in our lives when it may be challenging to think about anyone other than ourselves, but the message of Rabbi Schneur Zalman to the anonymous chassid rings true: You speak about what you need, but say nothing of what you are needed for!

Often, the best response to adversity is to break out of our comfort zones and extend a helping hand to another person with love and gratitude for all the good that we have. *By Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer*

Be Prepared for the 15 Shevat

The 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar—celebrated this year on Monday, January 17, 2022—is the day that marks the beginning of a “new year” for trees. Commonly known as Chamishah Oser Bishvat, this day marks the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle.

We mark the 15th of Shevat by eating fruit, particularly from the kinds that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

Please try and secure from the commissary the necessary items, it is a month away.

We will learn more about this holiday, as it gets closer.

Monday, December 20, 2021 --- 16 Tevet, 5782-

Salvation of Baghdad Jewry (1638)

On this date, Murad IV, sultan of the Ottoman Empire, recaptured Baghdad from the Persian Shah after a forty-day siege. The Jews of Baghdad, who had suffered under the Shah's tenure, celebrated this day each year to praise G-d for rescuing them from Persian rule. According to legend, the Jews assisted in the capture by secretly conveying a message to the Sultan about a breach in the wall through which his forces could enter the city.

Tuesday, December 21, 2021 --- 17 Tevet, 5782

1st NY Synagogue (1728)

In 1684, a group of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who fled the Inquisition, held a Rosh Hashanah service in New Amsterdam, thereby founding congregation Shearith Israel ("Remnant of Israel"). On this 17th of Tevet in 1728, the congregation purchased a lot in Lower Manhattan to erect the first synagogue in New York.

Toldot Aaron (1754)

Rabbi Aaron Zelig ben Joel Feivush of Ostrog, Russia, author of *Toldot Aaron*, passed away on Tevet 17 of the year in 5515 from creation (1754).

Maggid of Dubne (1841)

Tevet 17 is also the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yaakov Wolf Krantz (1740-1804), the Maggid (preacher) of Dubna, particularly known for the parables (meshalim) he employed in his sermons and writings.

Wednesday, December 22, 2021 --- 18 Tevet, 5782

Huna Killed (469)

The Exilarch ("Reish Galuta") of Babylonian Jewry, Huna Mori bar Mar Zutra, was executed in Pumpadita by order of the Persian emperor on the 18th of Tevet of the year 4229 from creation (469 of the common era). Also killed on that day was Rav Mesharshia bar Pekod (the third Jewish leader who was arrested with them, Rav Ameimar bar Mar Yenuka, was executed two months later).

B'nei Yissachar (1841)

The 18th of Tevet the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Shapiro of Dynov (1783?-1841), author of the Chassidic work *B'nei Yissachar*.

Thursday, December 23 2021 --- 19 Tevet, 5782

Judah Touro (1854)

The 19th of Tevet is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of American Jewish philanthropist Judah Touro (1775-1854).

Passing of R. Aryeh Leib Heller, Author of Ketzot Hachoshen (1812)

R. Aryeh Leib Heller was the rabbi of the city of Stryi, in what is now Western Ukraine. His works—*Ketzot Hachoshen*, *Avnei Milu'im*, and *Shav Shemateta*—are known for their clear, logical analysis of Talmudic texts and ideas, and are staples that are studied in yeshivas throughout the world.

Friday, December 24, 2021 --- 20 Tevet, 5782

Passing of Maimonides (1204)

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Talmudist, Halachist, physician, philosopher and communal leader, known in the Jewish world by the acronym "Rambam" and to the world at large as "Maimonides", passed away in Egypt on the 20th of Tevet in 1204 (4965). Join the Maimonides Study Cycle, to learn more, write to our office.

Printing of Talmud (1483)

The first volume of the Babylonian Talmud, the tractate *Berachot*, was printed in Soncino, Italy, on the 20th of Tevet of the year 5244 from creation (1483)

Shabbat, December 25, 2021 --- 21 Tevet, 5782

Shimon Born (1567 BCE)

Shimon, the second son of Jacob and Leah and the progenitor of the Israelite tribe of Shimon, was born on Tevet 21 (according to another opinion, on Tevet 28), of the year 2194 from creation (1567 BCE), nine years after Jacob's arrival in Charan.

Purim Ancona (1690)

On December 23 (21 Teves), 1690, strong earthquakes rattled the city of Ancona, Italy, causing numerous structures to collapse and placing its inhabitants in mortal danger. Miraculously, the Jewish quarter was spared, suffering the collapse of only one house. In commemoration of this event, the local Jewish community established that date as a day of celebration and song, while the previous day—20 Teves—would be marked yearly by fasting and charity (Or Boker, p. 48a).