

# Torah Weekly

ת"בס

December 26, 2021 –  
January 1, 2022  
22 – 27 Tevet, 5782

Torah reading:  
Va'eira: Exodus 6:2 - 9:35  
Haftarah:  
Ezekiel 28:25 - 29:21

PARSHAT VA'EIRA

## 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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No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

## Prisoners of Patience

We keep hearing about tolerance. Be accepting of other people, of differences. Diverse cultures need to find ways of coexisting on a planet that keeps getting smaller. But there are times when too much tolerance can be detrimental. Like when the Jews were slaves in Egypt.

*And I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt* is the promise the Almighty told Moses to pass on to the Jewish people in this week's Parshah. One of my holy ancestors, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir of Gur (widely known by his work *Chiddushei HaRim*), once re-interpreted the Hebrew word for "burdens" - *sivlos* - to mean *patience* (as in *savlanut* in modern Israeli Hebrew today).

What he meant was that before the Children of Israel could be freed from Pharaoh, G-d had to first free them of their own inner bondage. Years of slavery and drudgery had left the Israelites so oppressed and so hopeless that they had sunk into a terrible tolerance, accepting their situation as final and unalterable. Freedom was unimaginable to them.

Some of us are too tolerant of intolerable situations and so long-suffering that we ourselves become insufferable. Before G-d can take us out of our personal "Egypt" we need to banish the slave mentality from our own headspace.

Some years ago I was doing marriage counseling for a couple who were experiencing domestic troubles. During one of our sessions, the wife confided that she would never suspect her husband of being unfaithful. When I asked her why, she said "he's too lazy, listless and lethargic. He would never have the energy to even attempt an affair. He has no ambition. He never gets angry no matter what I do. I can scream and shout, abuse him, send him to the dog house and he never says 'Boo!' I

can feed him bread and jam for dinner every night and he will never complain."

It pains me when I see many Jewish organizations in our community lowering the bar of and accepting inferior standards on so many levels. We seem to be plagued by a morass of mediocrity. We should always strive for excellence and insist on the highest standards — whether at work or in the synagogue. Patience and tolerance are virtues, but we have become too tolerant.

In order to become truly free we must first remove the shackles of servitude from our own mentality. We must stop being so patient and accepting of all that is oppressive in our lives - whether it be slavery, exile, discrimination, anti-Semitism or mediocrity in general. We can become masters of our own destiny if we want to. But the first step on the road to our own personal exodus is to lower our threshold for tolerance and break out of the prison of patience.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

## The Four Stages of Personal Growth

One sure way to make people avoid you is if you continue to live in the past and refuse to move on from a painful experience. Catching a cheating spouse will certainly garner sympathy, for example, but if it's been years and the infidelity is still an ongoing complaint, then your circle of friends may whittle down to like-minded whiners. Even the book of Ecclesiastes urges us to move on. "To everything, there is a season" can be seen as a biblical exhortation to "go with the flow."

Many Jews, however, recite daily the "Six Remembrances" — one of which is to **I already have enough on my plate** "remember the day when you went out of the land of Egypt all

the days of your life" (Deuteronomy 16:3). For starters, I already have enough on my plate in the morning. Besides, we do this anyway at great length during the Passover seder, so why ruminate about it daily?

In *Va'eira*, G-d tells Moses the four ways that He will redeem the Jewish people. So redemption is not a one-step process. Exiting the narrow spiritual confines of Egypt paves the way to go towards the expansiveness of connection and service to G-d. Leaving negativity is not an end unto itself, but a precursor to embracing positivity.

Nor is redemption a one-and-done event, but rather, an inquiry and reflection into the false mental constructs that enslave us for our entire lives. If you are having trouble making the positive changes you want to make, it may pay to look at each component of the four-step redemptive process as described in *Va'eira*:

1) **"I shall take you out from under the burdens."**

*Commit to Stopping.*

This refers to G-d stopping the hard labor. While the Ten Plagues occurred over a period of time, before the Jews leaving Egypt, the physical burden of slavery came to an end.

Select a negative behavior you want to shift that is challenging but doable. State your goal in the positive. For example, instead of saying you want to stop yelling at your kids, you would say that you want to show more patience and love.

And you have to genuinely full-out commit to stopping the unwanted behavior and not repeating it. (Of course, you won't be 100 percent perfect, but you can't merely be paying lip service to this either.)

If you find yourself, however, unable to stop repeating old patterns, honestly check whether you have placed a high-enough value on the change you want to see. How important it is, and what would be possible for you and your relationships if the troublesome issues were handled? What could you "be," "do" or "have" in your life if you made this change? How would you feel? Take the time to imagine this as being real for you.

**2) "I shall rescue you."**

*Avoid temptation and come up with an if/then strategy.*

This refers to G-d taking us out of the very land of Egypt.

If you can avoid the place or circumstances that tempt you, you should. Weight Watchers has a great saying to help people avoid buying groceries that contain forbidden food items: "Don't bring your enemies home with you." But seriously, the key to adopting any new behavior is having a strategy for dealing with what inevitably gets in the way. Take time to think about the obstacles that trip you up, both externally and internally. Think about the ways you give yourself permission not to honor your goals, and how you justify yourself. And then make a plan, such as, if that thing happens to derail you, then what will you do or say to yourself overcome it?

**3) "I shall redeem you."**

*Look under the hood.*

This refers to the deeper levels of our mental schema. It's one thing to take a Jew out of Egypt, but quite another to take Egypt out of the Jew. The Jewish people had to be rebuilt from the ground up, to unlearn the internal constructs of slavery, "upgrade their operating system" and understand what it means to be truly holy.

If you are having real difficulty in realizing your goals, then you may need to get to the root of the hidden beliefs and fears that are blocking you. Unless you tune into the whispers of your inner voices, you can get very frustrated and not even know why. So having trouble with making a positive change doesn't mean you are a loser or incapable of doing so, but that you need to figure it out. And I stand for the proposition that it's all "figure-outtable."

**4) "I shall take you to Me for a people."**

*Step into your higher purpose.*

Freedom is not the same as a "free for all." G-d's purpose in taking us out of Egypt was to give us the Torah, and create a new relationship between man and G-d.

On my desk sits a framed quote by Henry David Thoreau: "Be not simply good; be good for something." As you incorporate a new positive change in your life, it's not a stand-alone idea. If your goal was to be more loving in a relationship, then see how many different ways you can make a person feel cherished by you. Look for the means to broaden and share your process and purpose. Allow it to evolve into higher and higher goals. Create a vision. Live with purpose. Make a difference.

*By Hanna Perlberger*

**Sunday, December 26, 2021 --- 22 Tevet, 5782**

**Purim of the Curtains (1623)**

After a respected Jew was falsely accused of stealing the royal curtains from the governor's palace, the entire Jewish community of Prague was in mortal danger. After miraculous intervention, the real culprit confessed to the crime, sparing the Jews of the city. To commemorate this event, "Purim of the Curtains" was instituted to thank G-d for the miraculous salvation.

**Monday, December 27, 2021 --- 23 Tevet, 5782**

**Portuguese Expulsion (1496)**

Following the death of King Joao of Portugal in 1494, his son King Manuel I ascended the throne. When his legitimacy as heir to the throne was challenged, Manuel wished to marry Princess Isabel of Spain, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, in order to solidify his position. As a precondition to the marriage, the Spanish monarch demanded that Portugal expel its Jews—many of whom were refugees from the 1492 Spanish Expulsion who found refuge in the neighboring country of Portugal. Manuel agreed, and five days after the marriage agreement was signed, on Tevet 23 (5257), he issued a decree giving Portugal's Jews eleven months to leave the country.

Appreciating the Jews' economic value, Manuel was unhappy with the potential loss of this economic asset, and devised a way to have the Jews stay in Portugal—but as Christians. Initially, he instructed the Jews to leave from one of three ports, but soon he restricted them to leaving from Lisbon only. When October of 1497 arrived, thousands of Jews assembled there and were forcibly baptized. Many Jews stayed and kept their Jewish faith secret; they were called Marranos or Crypto-Jews.

Over the next 350 years, the infamous Inquisition persecuted, tortured and burned at the stake thousands of hidden Jews throughout Spain, Portugal and their colonies for continuing to secretly practice the Jewish faith.

**Tuesday, December 28, 2021 --- 24 Tevet, 5782**

Passing of R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1812)

The founder of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), passed away on the eve of the 24th of Tevet, 5573, at approximately 10:30 pm, shortly after reciting the Havdalah prayer marking the end of the Shabbat. The Rebbe was in the village of Peyena, fleeing Napoleon's armies, which had swept through the Rebbe's hometown of Liadi three months earlier in their advance towards Moscow. He was in his 68th year at the time of his passing, and was succeeded by his son, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch.

**Safed Earthquake (1837)**

A devastating earthquake struck northern Israel, killing four thousand Jews in Safed and between 700 to 1000 Jews in Tiberias. Many of the survivors migrated to Hebron, rejuvenating the developing Chabad community established there 10 years earlier by the second Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch.

**Wednesday, December 28, 2021 --- 24 Tevet, 5782**

**Chovot Halevavot published (1559)**

*Chovot Halevavot*, the classical work on Jewish ethics, was authored by Rabbi Bachya ben Yosef ibn Paquda (the first "Rabbeinu Bechaye") on or before 1161, and translated into Hebrew from the original Arabic by the famed translator R. Judah ibn Tibbon in 1167. It was first published on the 25th of Tevet of the year 5319 from creation (1559).

**Shabbat, January 1, 2022 --- 25 Tevet, 5782**

**Birth and Passing of Shimon (1567-1447 BCE)**

According to sources cited in *Seder Hadorot*, Tevet 28 is both the birthday and the day of passing of Shimon the son of Jacob; other sources place the date as Tevet 21.

**Sadducees Ejected From Sanhedrin (81 BCE)**

Shimon ben Shetach successfully completed the expulsion of the Sadducees (a sect which denied the Oral Torah and the authority of the Sages) who had dominated the Sanhedrin (Supreme Court), replacing them with his Torah-loyal disciples, on the 28th of Tevet of the year 3680 from creation (81 BCE).

**Rebbetzin Chana Born (1879)**

Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson (1879 (O.S.) - 1964), mother of the Lubavitcher Rebbe of satined memory, was born on Tevet 28.