

# Torah Weekly

ת"ב

January 9 - 15, 2022  
7 - 13 Shevat, 5782

Torah reading:  
Exodus 13:17 - 17:16  
Haftarah:  
Judges 4:4 - 5:31

PARSHAT BESHALACH

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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**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

**Tradition** How important is tradition in Judaism? I don't just mean for the Fiddler on the Roof — I mean for me, you, and all the rest of us. How strong is the need for tradition in the spiritual consciousness of Jews today?

Despite the effects of secularism, I would venture to suggest that there is still a need inside us to feel connected to our roots, our heritage, and our sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

But for vast numbers of our people, tradition alone has not been enough. And that applies not only to the rebellious among us who may have cast aside their traditions with impunity, but also for many ordinary, thinking people who feel that to do something just because "that's the way it has always been done" is simply not good enough.

So what if my grandfather did it? My grandfather rode around in a horse and buggy! Must I give up my car for a horse just because Zayde rode a horse? And if my Bobba never got a university degree, that means that I shouldn't? So, just because my grandparents practiced certain Jewish traditions, why must I? Perhaps those traditions are as obsolete as the horse and buggy?

There are many Jews who think this way, and who will not be convinced to behave Jewishly just because their grandparents did.

We need to tell them why their grandparents did it. They need to understand that their grandparents' traditions were not done just for tradition's sake, but there were very good reasons why their forebears practiced those traditions. And that those very same reasons and rationales still hold good today.

Too many young people were put off tradition because some cheder or Talmud Torah t

eacher didn't take their questions seriously. They were silenced with a wave of the hand, a pinch of the ear, the classic When you get older, you'll understand, or the infamously classic Just do as you're told.

There are answers. There have always been answers. We may not have logical explanations for tsunamis and other tzorim, but all our traditions are founded on substance and have intelligible, credible underpinnings. If we seek answers we will find them in abundance, including layers and layers of meaning, from the simple to the symbolic to the philosophical and even mystical.

This week's Parshah features the Song of the Sea, sung by Moses and the Jewish people following the splitting of the sea and their miraculous deliverance from the Egyptian armies. In its opening lines we find the verse,<sup>1</sup> This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him; the G-d of my fathers, and I will exalt Him.

The sequence is significant. First comes my G-d, and only thereafter the G-d of my fathers. In the Amidah, the silent devotion which is the apex of our daily prayers, we begin addressing the Almighty as Our G-d and the G-d of our fathers... Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Again, our G-d comes first. So it is clear that while the G-d of our fathers — i.e. "tradition" — most definitely plays a very important role in Judaism, still, an indispensable prerequisite is that we must make G-d ours, personally. Every Jew must develop a personal relationship with G-d. We need to understand the reasons and the significance of our traditions, lest they be seen as empty ritual to be discarded by the next generation.

Authentic Judaism has never

shied away from questions. Questions have always been encouraged and formed a part of our academic heritage. Every page of the Talmud is filled with questions — and answers. You don't have to wait for the Passover Seder to ask a question.

When we think, ask, and find answers to our faith, then the traditions of our grandparents become alive, and we understand fully why we should make them ours. Once a tradition has become ours, then the fact that this very same practice has been observed uninterruptedly by our ancestors throughout the generations becomes a powerful force that can inspire us and our children for all time.

*By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

## Pure Passion

"Follow your passion."

"Pursue your passion."

"Be true to your passions."

Motivational quotes often focus on the power, the beauty and the strength of passion.

But is passion always pure? Is it always positive and constructive?

Hardly.

In the public arena, we've seen promising figures implode before our very eyes. The detonator? Often it's undisciplined, selfish passion.

Passion can also be a problem in quiet, private lives.

**Passion is a double-edged sword** A simple example: Passion for one's career is a recipe for success in business. But if passion equals total devotion — to the exclusion and detriment of other priorities — it can be a counter-productive element in one's life.

Passion is a double-edged sword: it can be the energy that catapults

us to freedom from sleepwalking through life; or it can be the powerful force, the gravitational pull, which keeps us in a self-destructive cycle.

In chassidic terms, we can call the latter form of passion a conceptual "Egypt."

The Hebrew word for Egypt (Mitzrayim) is closely related to – and contains the exact same letters as – the word for “constraints” (metzarim). So the Torah's narrative of the Jews' exodus from Egypt isn't just a historical account. The Exodus is also an ongoing personal saga, the story of our individual struggles to rise above the constraints in our lives.

If we want to be free, we need to define what dimensions in life are keeping us down. And the first place we should examine is our passions.

We each need to ask ourselves:

What animates me? What perks me up and gets my blood pumping? What thoughts come to mind when nothing else is taking up my brain space?

In other words: Where do I find passion? And what do I do on auto-pilot?

This self-analysis can be very revealing.

I think we'll find that, instinctively, self-gratification is what grabs our passion. And, unchecked, that's where our passion will inevitably lead.

"Leaving Egypt" means proactively taking the reins of our passions, and guiding them to a productive, meaning-centered place.

So if we want to weaken our personal Pharaoh's grip, if we *really* want to leave our Egypt, we need to watch our passions.

Document them for ourselves.

And then measure them against what's truly important in life.

Our inner Moses awaits.

*By Rabbi Mendy Herson*

## NEW YEAR FRUIT

Monday January 17, 2022 is Chamishah Osar BiShevat ("the 15th of Shevat") which marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees." This is 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.

Legally, the "New Year for Trees" relates to the various tithes that must be separated from produce grown in the Holy Land. We mark the day by eating fruit, particularly from the "Seven Kinds" that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates). On this day we remember that "Man is a tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) and reflect on the lessons we can derive from our botanical analogue.

**Wednesday, January 12, 2022 --- 10 Shevat, 5782**

### Passing of the Rashash (1777)

Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, known by his name's acronym, the *RaShaSH*, was born in Yemen, and as a young man immigrated to Israel. He was quickly recognized for his piety and scholarship, especially in the area of Jewish mysticism, and was appointed to be dean of the famed Kabbalistic learning center in the Old City of Jerusalem, the *Yeshivat ha-Mekubbalim*.

He authored many works, mostly based on the teachings of the great kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Ari. Rabbi Sharabi's most famous work is a commentary on the prayerbook, replete with kabbalistic meditations.

His mystical works are studied by kabbalists to this very day. He is also considered to be a foremost authority on Yemenite Jewish traditions and customs.

### Passing of Rebbetzin Rivkah (1914)

Rebbetzin Rivkah Schneerson was born in Lubavitch in 1833; her maternal grandfather was Rabbi DovBer, the 2nd Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. In 1849 she married her first cousin, Rabbi Shmuel, who later became the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe. For many years Rebbetzin Rivkah, who survived her husband by 33 years, was the esteemed matriarch of Lubavitch, and Chassidim frequented her home to listen to her accounts of the early years of Lubavitch. She is the source of many of the stories recorded in the talks, letters and memoirs of her grandson, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe). The Beth Rivkah network of girls' schools, founded by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak in the 1940's, is named after her.

### Yahrzeit of R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1950)

The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, passed away on Shabbat morning, the 10th of Shevat, of the year 5710 from creation (1950)

Lubavitcher Rebbe assumes leadership (1951)

At a gathering of Chassidim marking the first anniversary of the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the late Rebbe's son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, delivered a Chassidic discourse (*maamar*) entitled *Basi LeGani* ("I Came into My Garden"), signifying his formal acceptance of the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

**Thursday, January 13, 2022 --- 11 Shevat, 5782**

### Birth of the "Chafetz Chaim" (1838)

Birth 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).

**Friday, January 14, 2022 --- 12 Shevat, 5782**

### Warsaw Ghetto Insurgency Begins (1943)

On January 18, 1943, the Germans began their second deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, which led to the first instance of armed resistance. The deportation was halted within a few days; only 5,000 Jews were removed instead of 8,000 as planned. The Nazis retreated, only to return three months later, at which time the Warsaw uprising started in earnest.

### Passing of R. Chaim Kapusi (1631)

R. Chaim Kapusi was one of the leading sages of Egypt in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. He passed away at the age of ninety, on 12 Shevat in the year 5391 from Creation (1631).

It is related that R. Chaim once became blind, and the townsfolk spread rumors attributing his condition to bribery, as the verse states, "Bribery blinds the eyes of the wise." Hearing this, R. Chaim got up before the entire congregation and announced: "If it is true that I have accepted bribery, may my eyes retain their sightlessness. But if it is not true, may my vision be restored!" Miraculously, his vision returned immediately, and he proceeded to identify the congregants by name (*Shem Hagedolim*).

**Shabbat, January 15, 2022 --- 13 Shevat, 5782**

### Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah Schneersohn (1942)

Wife of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson, and mother of the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah (1860-1942) lived through the upheavals of the first half of the 20th century. She fled the advancing front of World War I from Lubavitch to Rostov, where her husband passed away in 1920 at age 59. In 1927, she witnessed the arrest of her son by Stalin's henchmen the night he was taken away and sentenced to death, G-d forbid, for his efforts to keep Judaism alive throughout the Soviet empire. After Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's release, the family resettled in Latvia and later, Poland; in 1940, they survived the bombing of Warsaw, were rescued from Nazi-occupied city, and emigrated to the United States. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah passed away in New York on the 13th of Shevat of 1942.

### Auschwitz Liberated (1945)

On January 27, 1945, the Russian army arrived in Auschwitz, the most infamous of the Nazi death camps, and liberated some 7,000 survivors—those left behind as unfit to join the evacuation "Death March."