

Torah Weekly

February 13-19, 2022
12-18 Adar 1, 5782

Exodus 30:11 - 34:35

Haftorah: Kings 1 18:20-39

PARSHAT KI TISA

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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ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

G-d is Somewhere So you think you're the first guy out there looking for G-d? People have been searching for spirituality, exploring the metaphysical and generally searching for truth for millennia. Even the greatest prophet of them all, Moses himself, was preoccupied with seeking the Divine. Moses wanted to see G-d in all His glory.

"Please, show me Your glory," Moses appeals in the 33rd chapter of Exodus. The commentators understand this to mean that he wanted it all, the ultimate revelation. Others see it as a quest for understanding the infinite ways of G-d, like why the righteous seem to be perennial sufferers and the wicked seem to be laughing all the way to the bank.

Whatever the meaning, the Almighty places limits on Moses' understanding. "You will see My back," G-d responds, "but My face may not be seen."¹ Finite earthlings - even a Moses - can only perceive so much and no more. The face of G-d, the ultimate full picture, is beyond human comprehension.

A youngster was being given his lesson and he wanted to know, "Where is G-d?" The answer he received was, "G-d is everywhere." "That's the problem," said the child, "I want a G-d who is somewhere!"

"Everywhere" is abstract, theoretical and rather intangible. "Somewhere," on the other hand, is more defined, substantial and real. Yes, Judaism definitely believe that G-d is

everywhere. But even more important is the somewhere where G-d is to be found.

In Judaism we find a clearly developed infrastructure of life. There is a list of behaviors that are considered G-dly, and another list that may seem a lot more attractive but is deemed to be unG-dly. We know what G-d expects of us - and what He does not. It isn't left to what feels good or bad to us in our highly personal and very subjective mindsets. There are objective rules of right and wrong. Morality and ethics are in the province of G-d and are therefore non-negotiable. Oh, we can talk about it and debate the issues all night long but, ultimately, our moral code is Divine and absolute.

I was once asked regarding a certain person whether he was "a religious person." I remember how that question was a moment of personal insight for me. From the perspective of the questioner, the answer was a definite "yes": the person he was asking about was a believer, came to synagogue faithfully every week, and did charity work—the things that qualify a person to be called "religious" in the commonly accepted sense of the term. But in Judaism, the term "religious" carries different connotations. The most obvious one is Shabbat observance. Adhering to a kosher diet is another. The nitty-gritty do's and don'ts which the Torah instructs the Jew. Faith in general, attending Shul and helping out are all nice, but still somewhat superficial. They are in

the Everywhere category. Keeping Shabbat, though, is more in the Somewhere department. It is clearly defined and absolute. It goes beyond the surface-level feel good stuff. As Jews, we require a more precise definition of "religious." Practicalities not platitudes, action more than attitudes are the order of the day. G-d must be somewhere, not just everywhere.

In the final analysis, when we connect to G-d by doing His will we experience the greatest revelations.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

Shining Soul of Failure

G-d is my cheerleader.

As I go through my day, I believe that G-d is counting on me, urging me to make good choices, because—more than anyone—G-d knows I have the strength to do the right thing.

Sure, G-d presents me with moral struggles, but as a rule, He doesn't set me up for failure.

But it *has* happened.

Yes. I know of one occasion on which G-d presented us with a test which He knew we would fail.

And, strange as it may sound, it was actually done out of Divine love . . . But let me start at the beginning.

The Jews were liberated from Egypt, and then spent seven weeks of introspective self-betterment to prepare themselves for receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

When they finally gathered at Sinai, they were in an elevated frame of mind, spiritually evolved, and prepared for the most incredible event in all of history: G-d's giving of the Torah

It was an incredibly real experience. The Jews perceived the world's Divine purpose with unparalleled clarity, and genuinely embraced the Divine.

But that's what makes it so difficult to understand what happened next. A mere forty days after the Great Experience, the Jews collaborated to fashion a Golden Calf, saying, "This is your god, O Israel . . . who brought you up from Egypt."

Sounds insane.

After such an interface with the Divine, how could they have transferred their loyalty to an idol?

It's an age-old question, and the Talmud responds by telling us that the Jews were, in fact, above this unseemliness. They shouldn't have made that mistake.

So what happened?

G-d set them up. G-d gave them the "perfect storm," bringing together a precise collusion of human weakness and incredibly alluring self-interest so that they would make the wrong choice.

It was a set-up.

But the critical question is: why?

Because they needed to taste failure, and they needed to experience the beauty that comes from turning failure into growth. It was the only way to complete the Sinai experience.

When G-d gave us the Torah, He was giving us a picture of reality as it is meant to be. To me, the Torah is like the top of a jigsaw puzzle box. It gives you a vision that helps you put life's objects and experiences—the "puzzle pieces"—in their respective places.

We got that at Sinai. But we needed a crucial element to bring real meaning to the picture.

The experience of failure. And the experience of choosing to grow from our mistakes.

Because Torah is life.

And that's life.

By Rabbi Mendy Herson

Purim Katan ("Minor Purim")

In regular years, the 14th of Adar is Purim, the festival that celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's evil decree in the year 3405 from creation (356 BCE). In a leap year -- which has two Adars -- Purim is celebrated in Adar II, and the 14th of Adar I is designated as Purim Kattan, the "Little Purim."

There are no special observances, however, associated with Purim Kattan, other than the omission of Tachnun ("supplications") from the daily prayers and a prohibition against fasting or holding eulogies on this day.

The Code of Jewish Law cites an opinion that one should increase in festivity and joy, but rules that there is no obligation to do so; "Nevertheless, a person should increase somewhat in festivity... for 'One who is of good heart is festive always' " (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 697:1).

February 14, 2022 --- 13 Adar 1, 5782 Passing of R. Yehudah the Pious (1217)

R. Yehudah HaChassid—the pious—was held in high esteem for his piety and saintliness. He authored *Sefer Chassidim*, a collection of ethical and halachic teachings that is widely studied to this day. The kabbalistic instructions included in his so-called "testament" are accepted and practiced in many communities.

February 15, 2022 --- 14 Adar 1, 5782 Moses' Brit (1393 BCE)

According to tradition, Moses was born on the 7th of Adar I, today was the 8th day of his life and the day on which he was circumcised in accordance with the Divine.

February 16, 2022 --- 15 Adar 1, 5782 Ezekiel Foretells the Downfall of Israel's Enemies (1991)

On this date, in the year following the Holy Temple's destruction, G-d tells Ezekiel to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and for the Jewish nation's other enemies, foretelling their ultimate downfall.

February 18, 2022 --- 17 Adar 1, 5782 Code of Jewish Law Completed (1565)

Rabbi Yosef Caro published the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law. This concise codification of all Jewish law which is germane today was an extension of his *Beit Yosef* commentary (see entry for the 11th of Elul).

The *Shulchan Aruch* is divided in to four sections: *Orach Chaim* details the laws pertaining to daily life, lifecycle events, and holidays. *Yoreh De'ah*. laws which a practicing rabbi must be proficient in, such as complex nuances of the kosher laws, laws of mikvah, and laws of slaughtering. *Even Ha'ezer*, laws of marriage, divorce, reproduction, and the like. *Choshen Mishpat*, monetary and judicial laws; required study for a member of a rabbinical court.

To this very day, the *Shulchan Aruch* serves as the primary halachic guide for Jewish life.