

# Torah Weekly

ת"ב

March 6-12, 2022  
3-9 Adar 2, 5782

**First Torah:**  
Leviticus 1:1 - 5:26

**Second Torah:**  
Deuteronomy 25:17-19

**Haftarah:** Samuel 1 15:1 - 34

**PARSHAT VAYIKRA**

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 or 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.

## The Small Aleph

One of my favorite teachers in yeshivah was a wiry old man whom we called "Reb Yisroel." He was an old-world scholar, a brilliant mind from the shtetls of Eastern Europe, a man who knew the Talmud like the back of his hand, and whose searing wit would leave you panting in its wake.

But what was it that was so profound about his teaching methodology (at least for me)?

I'll be honest with you. While attending his official lectures, I wasn't tuned in. They were completely over my head, and I didn't appreciate them.

But what I did appreciate—and very much so!—were his one-on-one study sessions. You see, in the yeshivah-style setting, the preferred pedagogical method is for the young students to study much of the material in pairs in a large, cavernous hall. Only twice, or perhaps three times, a week, does the teacher collect his charges and school them in an official lecture. But the bulk of time is spent in that hall, sitting opposite a study partner, doing your best to hack at the study material.

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During this time, Reb Yisroel would call upon study pairs and invite them to his table to learn with him. Individually. No distractions.

I was privileged to experience this more than once, and it was absolutely mind-blowing.

Now, you would think that over the course of the study session we'd be opening many

books and foraging into all sorts of expansive areas of Talmudic academia.

Nope. Not at all.

What struck me, and deeply so, was that throughout the entire hour-long session, we didn't venture into a single text save for the Talmudic tome in front of us. Whatever was printed on that page—that's what we explored. Nothing else.

He would attack every word. He challenged us to explain it. Every. Single. Word. Nothing was trivial. If we couldn't translate, explain, and justify every tiny wrinkle of logic on the page, we were toast. He would drill down and demand meaning from every nuance.

He taught me to treasure every detail no matter how small, to never overlook the profundity that lies right in front of you. You need not run to distant texts and introduce "other" opinions to achieve depth. Nope. It's right there on the page. All you have to do is to care, be humble before the page, and look for it.

Moses, our nation's original teacher, was of like mind.

### A Small Aleph

The third book of the Torah, which the Romans liked to call "Leviticus," is called Vayikra in Hebrew, after the opening verse: "And He called to Moses, and G-d spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting ..." (Leviticus 1:1).

The words "And He called" are the translation of Vayikra.

Beyond the meaning of the actual word, there's a curious anomaly regarding how it's written in the actual Torah scroll. According to tradition, the last letter, the aleph, is smaller than all the other letters, and indeed, the entire Torah.

What is the significance of this anomaly?

The question is raised by many of the classic Torah commentaries (To name a few: *Rosh*, *Toldot Yitschak*, *Tzror Hamor*, *Keli Yakar*, *Shach Al Hatorah*.) and there is a similar theme to their answers. For example, one medieval scholar writes, "Out of his great humility, Moses distanced himself from any sort of prestige. He avoided the limelight to the extent that G-d had to actively call out to him. Thus, the aleph of the word Vayikra—and He called—is small." (Rabbi Abraham Saba, *Tzror Hamor* to Vayikra, loc cit.) But there's more to the small aleph.

There's No Such Thing as a "Small Matter"

In addition to being a simple letter in the Hebrew alphabet, the word aleph is an independent word with its own meaning. In fact, it has two meanings: "teaching/studying" as well as "general/minister."

With this dual meaning, we emerge with a new understanding of what Moses' humility drove him to do: to approach every Torah idea ("teaching") as if it was a big deal ("general/minister").

This is what humility does. When you're arrogant, or lulled into a sense of self-confidence, then you lack the wonder and the appreciation of a child. You learn new things, you study ancient texts and apply yourself to new sciences, yet you fail to completely apply yourself to the tiny details and subtle nuances that seem unimportant. "Oh, I know that already, I don't need to spend too much time figuring it out," you tell yourself. And so you gloss it over, not taking the time to properly appreciate and plumb its depths.

The humble man like Moses doesn't have such deficiencies. His complete lack of self, the absence of all "me," frees him to approach every study with the wonder and fascination of a small child. "I don't know anything; let me discover new things today and cherish them," he says.

In this mindset, there is nothing too small, too trivial, too stupid, or too familiar with which to waste my time. No! In this mindset, in this humility timezone, I don't know anything, and everything is just so downright wondrous. As such, I treasure everything I learn. I revel in it, turn it over, back and forth, mining it for whatever it's worth (and more!), and emerge with unprecedented goods.

### Treasure Everything You Learn

This is what Reb Yisroel taught me, and it's what Moses taught each one of us: be humble in your study! You don't know everything, and so you should learn to appreciate every detail.

It's certainly true when it comes to Torah study, and it's true in life. If you maintain the tenuous position that you've achieved peak knowledge (consciously or not), then you will miss all the treasures that lie right there on the page in front of you.

But if you take a cue from Moses, then you will discover so much depth, so many teaching moments, your mind will be blown. Constantly. (This essay is based on *Degel Machaneh Efraim* to *Vayikra*, 1:1).

By Rabbi Aharon Loschak

## Parshat Zachor

This being the Shabbat before Purim, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the Amalekite's plot to destroy the Jewish people, the weekly Parshah is supplemented with the **Zachor** reading (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) in which we are commanded to remember the evil of Amalek and to eradicate it from the face of the earth.

"Parshat Zachor" is the second of four special readings added during or immediately before the month of Adar (the other three being "Shekalim", "Parah" and "Hachodesh").

**Summary of the Torah reading:** *Remember what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt.*

*That he encountered you on the way and cut off those lagging to your rear, when you were tired and exhausted; he did not fear G-d.*

*And it shall come to pass, when the L-rd your G-d has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the L-rd your G-d is giving you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget.*

**Sunday, March 6, 2022 --- 3 Adar II, 5782**

### 2nd Temple Completed (349 BCE)

The joyous dedication of the second Holy Temple (*Beit HaMikdash*) on the site of the 1st Temple in Jerusalem, was celebrated on the 3rd of Adar of the year 3412 from creation (349 BCE), after four years of work.

The First Temple, built by King Solomon in 833 BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 423 BCE. At that time, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied: "Thus says the L-rd: After seventy years for Babylon will I visit you... and return you to this place." In 371 the Persian emperor Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple, but the construction was halted the next year when the Samaritans persuaded Cyrus to withdraw permission. Achashverosh II (of Purim fame) upheld the moratorium. Only in 353 -- exactly 70 years after the destruction -- did the building of the Temple resume under Darius II.

### Passing of R. Mordechai Jaffe (the Levush) (1612)

R. Mordechai Jaffe served as the rabbi of numerous communities in Poland and Lithuania. Among his more well-known works are *Levush Malchus*, a halachic code following the order of R. Jacob ben Asher's *Arbaah Turim*, and *Levush HaOrah*, a super-commentary to R. Shlomo Yitzchaki's Torah commentary. R. Mordechai served as the head of the "Council of Four Lands," the government-sanctioned Jewish organization entrusted with dealing with Jewish communal affairs. In addition to Talmud and Jewish law, R. Mordechai was also well-versed in both Kabbalah and astronomy.

**Monday, March 7, 2022 --- 4 Adar II, 5782**

### Maharam's Body Ransomed (1307)

The tragic saga of the imprisonment of Rabbi Meir ben Baruch ("Maharam") of Rothenburg came to a close when his body was ransomed, 14 years after his death, by Alexander ben Shlomo (Susskind) Wimpfen.

"Maharam" (1215?-1293) was the leading Torah authority in Germany, and authored thousands of Halachic responsa as well as the *Tosaphot* commentary of the Talmudic tractate *Yoma*. In 1283 he was imprisoned in the Ensisheim fortress and held for a huge ransom, but he forbade the Jewish community to pay it (based on the Talmudic ruling that exorbitant sums should not be paid to free captives, as this would encourage the taking of hostages for ransom). For many years Maharam's disciple, R. Shimon ben Tzadok, was allowed to visit him in his cell and recorded his teachings in a work called *Tashbetz*.

Even after the Maharam's passing in 1293, his body was not released for burial until it was ransomed by R. Alexander, who was subsequently laid to rest at his side.

### Passing of R. Leib Sarah's (1791)

Adar 4 is the yaahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Leib Sarah's (1730-1791), a disciple of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. One of the "hidden tzaddikim," Rabbi Leib spent his life wandering from place to place to raise money for the ransoming of imprisoned Jews and the support of other hidden tzaddikim.

### Roman Ghetto Abolished (1798)

In 1555, Pope Paul IV segregated the Jews of Rome in a walled quarter surrounded by gates that were locked at night. The ghettoed Jews were then subjected to various forms of degradation as well as restrictions on their personal freedoms.

During the French Revolution, Italy was conquered by Napoleon Bonaparte. On the 4th of Adar (Tuesday, February 20, 1798) the Ghetto was legally abolished. It was reinstated, however, as soon as the Papacy regained control.

**Tuesday, March 8, 2022 --- 5 Adar II, 5782**

### Moses' Last Day of Leadership (1273 BCE)

Moses passed away on the 7th of Adar. Following G-d's instruction that Joshua should succeed him and lead the Jewish nation into the Land of Israel, Moses transferred leadership duties to Joshua on the day before he passed away. Thus the fifth day of Adar was the last day of Moses' leadership.

### Passing of R. Shmuel Abba Schapiro of Slavuta (1864)

R. Shmuel Abba Schapiro and his brother R. Pinchas managed the famed printing press of Slavuta, in what is now Ukraine. In 1835, they were falsely accused of arranging the murder of one of their workers (who had committed suicide). As a result, the government ordered the closing of all Russian Jewish printing presses (save for one press in Vilnius), and the brothers were incarcerated and flogged.

The brothers' tremendous piety and fear of Heaven followed them to their cells. It is related that while walking through the two rows of soldiers who were administering the flogging, R. Shmuel Abba's *kippah* (skullcap) fell off of his head, and he refused to proceed until it was returned, although he received additional blows as a result.

A miniature Torah scroll was smuggled into their cell during their incarceration to enable the brothers to study. This unique scroll later gifted to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who would dance with it every year on Simchat Torah.

R. Shmuel Abba passed away on 5 Adar in the year 5624 from Creation (1864). Books printed in the Slavuta press remain prized collectors' items to this day.