

Torah Weekly

April 18-24, 2021
6-12 Iyar, 5781

Torah Reading:
Leviticus 16:1 - 18:30
Haftarah:
Samuel I 20:18-18:30

PARSHAT ACHAREI

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.

Getting High

“Rabbi, what does Jewish law say about getting high?”

That is one of the most frequently asked questions by young people today. Ever since the legalization of marijuana in many states, conscientious youth have wondered whether Torah considers it as Kosher as these state laws do, especially when it is used to have a spiritual experience.

While there is much to say on the matter, I want to put forth only one angle of the issue.

Torah believes in humanity in a way that humanity has not yet come to appreciate. While skeptics see the Torah's restrictions and commandments an insult to human intelligence and man's capacity to figure things out on his own, the truth is the exact opposite. Torah sees in us far deeper greatness than we have ever imagined. We imagine that we can be perfectly fine creations even without the Creator's guidance. Leaving the absurdity of the notion aside, there is a greater error being made here: the assumption that G-d created us to remain on the side of creation, when in fact G-d created us with the capacity to join Him on the Creator side, to be full partners with Him in creation.

A few days ago, a woman explained her reluctance to

have her baby boy circumcised. “If G-d had wanted the boy circumcised, He would have made him that way.” This sense of awestruck helplessness, as if there is no possibility that we might improve on the way G-d made the world – as if that is not the entire point of our being here in the first place – is terribly misplaced. Surely she would agree that one must attempt to cure those G-d has made ill; one must clothe those G-d has impoverished; one must educate those G-d creates ignorant (everyone).

We often underestimate ourselves in this way. G-d created the entire universe and everything in it. But when it came to us, He did much more than that. He invested not only His creative energy in us but His very essence in us. This is why, as a byproduct, we have Divine qualities such as true free choice and many of us have a (confused) belief that just like G-d, we have no Creator (G-d forbid.)

These are symptoms of the fact that G-d invested Himself in us and challenges us to partner with Him, not just worship Him. The Mitzvot that He has us do are G-dly acts that are as much a part of the Creation story as the original statement, “Let there be light!” G-d created an incomplete universe and leaves the completion in our hands. The Torah is the how-to guide, but the G-dly soul He breathed into us from

deep within Himself is what makes it possible for us to finish what G-d started.

This awareness of our own exalted natures should give pause to anyone who believes that in order to reach spiritual heights, we need mind-altering substances like marijuana. The mind and the heart are the seat of the G-dly soul. Someone in possession of a G-dly soul has no need to be in possession of marijuana. Sure it might make things easier and more effortless but such shortcuts are an insult to our own capabilities, they cheat us out of the opportunity to reveal – with hard work and mental and emotional exertion - the deepest elements of Divinity present within ourselves, and they cheat G-d out of the fulfillment of His master plan: that we, in all our humanity, be His partners in Creation.

This is one of the reasons for G-d's disappointment with Nadav and Avihu, two sons of Aharon Hakohen, who entered the Holy Temple under the influence of alcohol. Considering their immense G-d-given potential for holiness, the fact that they felt they needed a foreign substance to get there was catastrophic. They felt it would bring them closer to G-d; it would deaden their physical senses and open up their senses to the Divine. But it is specifically via those

physical senses that G-d envisioned us getting close to Him, thereby bringing those senses – and the physical world at large – close to Him with us. For such is the depth of the soul's power, that it can even reveal the Divinity that G-d embedded in the physical flesh and senses and make them holy.

So is using marijuana to be more spiritual a Kosher endeavor? I'll leave the Halachic verdict to the Halachic authorities. But one thing is for sure: we can do better than that. We must do better than that. We are not here for experiences. We are here with a job. And that job demands that we dig into the deepest, loftiest parts of our raw, unaltered selves. When we do that, we will discover treasures of the kind we never imagined.

By Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel

Ethics: Chapter 1 In preparation for the festival of [Shavuot](#), we study one of the six chapters of the Talmud's *Ethics of the Fathers* ("Avot") on the afternoon of each of the six Shabbatot between Passover and Shavuot; this week, being the first Shabbat after Passover, we study Chapter One. (In many communities -- and such is the Chabad custom -- the study cycle is repeated through the summer, until the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah.)

Bless New Month This Shabbat is [Shabbat Mevarchim](#) ("the Shabbat that blesses" the new month): a special prayer is recited blessing the [Rosh Chodesh](#) ("Head of the Month") of the upcoming month of [Iyar](#), which falls on Sunday and Monday of the following week.

Prior to the blessing, we announce the precise time of the molad, the "birth" of the new moon (Molad times are on the Aleph Calendar, for Iyar 5782 it is 5/1/2022 5:20 (1 *chelek*) AM).

It is a Chabad custom to recite the entire book of [Psalms](#) before morning prayers, and to conduct [farbrengens](#) (chassidic gatherings) in the course of the Shabbat.

Shavuot Sunday and Monday June 5 - 6 mark the Jewish Holy days of Shavuot, on this day the Torah was given on Mount Sinai. This day is a work proscription day (work on these days are prohibited). Please send a request to your Rabbi or Chaplain at the institution requesting guidance with the accommodations.

Sunday, April 24, 2022 --- 23 Nissan, 5782

Crusade Mourned in Cologne (1147)

The Jewish community of Cologne, Germany, designated the 23rd of Nissan as a day of fasting and mourning to commemorate the Jews of Cologne massacred in 1147 during the Second Crusade.

Monday, April 25, 2022 --- 24 Nissan, 5782

The First Shabbat Celebrated (1313 BCE)

Two days after the Jews crossed the Red Sea (see Jewish History for the [21st of Nissan](#)) they arrived in Marah. There they received several commandments; one of them was to observe the Shabbat. The first Shabbat was observed on the 24th of Nissan.

Tuesday, April 26, 2022 --- 25 Nissan, 5782

Passing of R. Chaim Halberstam of Sanz (1876)

R. Chaim Halberstam served as rabbi of Sanz, Poland, and was the founder of the Sanz Chassidic dynasty. His halachic responsa and Torah expositions were published under the name Divrei Chaim. He passed away on 25 Nissan in the year 5636 (1876).

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 --- 26 Nissan, 5782

Passing of Joshua (1245 BCE)

Joshua (1355-1245 BCE), who assumed the leadership of the people of Israel after [Moses'](#) passing and led them into the Holy Land, passed away on Nissan 26. He passed away at the age of 110, in the 28th year of his leadership. He was buried in his own estate in Timnat-Serach, in Mount Ephraim.

Thursday, April 28, 2022 --- 27 Nissan, 5782

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943)

In the summer of 1942, about 300,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw to Treblinka. When reports of the mass murder in the killing center leaked back to the Warsaw ghetto, an organized resistance began forming, which managed to smuggle a modest cache of arms into the ghetto. On the 14th of Nissan of 1943, the remaining 35,000 Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto (from an original 450,000) staged an organized uprising and drove back the Nazis with a rain of bullets when they came to begin the final removal of all Jews. The Jewish resistance lasted 27 days. A heroic stand was made in an underground bunker under 18 Mila Street, where hundreds of fighters, including the 24-year-old leader of the uprising, Mordechai Anilevitch, met their death. Although the Ghetto was burned to the ground by Iyar 3, a few stray survivors hid in the rubble and fired at the Nazis for two months longer. In tribute to the uprising, the Israeli government designated the 27th of Nissan as its official "Holocaust and Bravery Day," and in many Jewish communities the day is observed as an annual [Holocaust](#) remembrance day. But because of the halachic prohibition to conduct eulogies and other mournful events in the festive month of Nissan, the chief rabbinat of Israel, and many Jewish communities, observe instead the [10th of Tevet](#) as a day to mourn and remember the six million, which include many whose yahtzeit (date of passing) remains unknown.

Friday, April 29, 2022 --- 28 Nissan, 5782

Jericho's Wall Collapses (1273 BCE)

On the seventh day of the encirclement of Jericho (see Jewish History for the [22nd of Nissan](#)), the Jews, accompanied by the Holy Ark, circled the city seven times. After the blowing of the *shofar*, the walls miraculously crashed and sank, leaving the city open and unprotected. Jericho was easily conquered, becoming the first fortified Canaanite city to fall to the Children of Israel in their conquest of the Promised Land.