

Torah Weekly

בס"ד

July 24-30, 2022
25 Tammuz – 2 Av, 5782

Torah Reading: Matot-Massei:
Numbers 30:2 - 36:13

Haftarah: Jeremiah 2:4-28;
Jeremiah 4:1-2

PARSHAT
MATOT-MAASEI

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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INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

The Power of Prayer

A fellow was boasting about what a good citizen he was and what a refined, disciplined lifestyle he led. "I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't gamble, I don't cheat on my wife, I am early to bed and early to rise, and I work hard all day and attend religious services faithfully." Very impressive, right? Then he added, "I've been like this for the last five years, but just you wait until they let me out of this place!"

Although prisons were not really part of the Jewish judicial system, there were occasions when individuals would have their freedom of movement curtailed. One such example was the City of Refuge. If a person was guilty of manslaughter (i.e., unintentional murder) the perpetrator would flee to one of the specially designated Cities of Refuge throughout Biblical Israel where he was given safe haven from the wrath of a would-be avenging relative of the victim.

The Torah tells us that his term of exile would end with the death of the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. The Talmud tells of an interesting practice that developed. The mother of the *Kohen Gadol* at the time would make a point of bringing gifts of food to those exiled so that they should not pray for the early demise of her son, to which their own freedom was linked.

Now this is very strange. Here is a man who, though not a murderer, is not entirely innocent of any negligence either. The rabbis teach that G-d does not allow misfortune to befall the righteous. If this person caused a loss of life, we can safely assume that he is less than righteous. Opposite him stands the High Priest of Israel, noble, aristocratic and, arguably, the holiest Jew alive. Of the entire nation, he alone had the awesome responsibility and privilege of entering the inner sanctum of the Holy Temple, the "Holy of Holies," on the holy day of Yom Kippur. Do we really have reason to fear that the prayers of this morally tainted prisoner will have such a negative effect on the revered and exalted High Priest, to the extent that the *Kohen Gadol* may die? And his poor mother has to go and *shlep* food parcels to distant cities to soften up the prisoner so he should go easy in his prayers so that her holy son may live? Does this make sense?

But such is the power of prayer—the prayer of any individual, noble or ordinary, righteous or even sinful.

Of course, there are no guarantees. Otherwise, I suppose, Shuls around the world would be overflowing daily. But we do believe fervently in the power of prayer. And though, ideally, we pray in Hebrew and with a congregation, the most important ingredient for our

prayers to be successful is sincerity. "G-d wants the heart," we are taught. The language and the setting are secondary to the genuineness of our prayers. Nothing can be more genuine than a tear shed in prayer.

By all means, learn the language of our Siddur, the prayer book. Improve your Hebrew reading so you can follow the services and *daven* with fluency. But remember, most important of all is our sincerity. May all our prayers be answered.

By Yossy Goldman

Just Passing Through

One of the viral videos that people were sending me a few years ago was an Israeli advertisement for GPS. The ad was set in the Sinai Desert with thousands of ragtag Jews following Moses and whining about the time they'd spent wandering around in circles on their lonely, 40-year march from Egypt. Suddenly, a miracle! Moses stretches forth his staff, and a GPS device appears in the sky to lead them directly to Israel.

It was reasonably clever and mildly funny, but no more so than any of the hundreds of other must-see YouTube clips that clog my inbox. I definitely wouldn't bother googling it, if I were you, because, besides for being out-of-date, it was also counter-factual.

The truth is that the Jews did not spend all those years traipsing aimlessly around the desert. Throughout the whole 40 years they only

made 42 journeys. Eleven of those were during the first year out of Egypt, with a further flurry of 11 journeys over the last year before entering Israel. That leaves a grand total of 19 trips over the intervening 38 years, hardly anyone's idea of a peripatetic existence. In fact, at one location they spent 19 years straight, enough time for an entire generation to be born, marry, and even have their own kids, all without ever needing to leave home.

If that's so, why have the "wandering Jews of the desert" become such an established figure in popular imagination?

There are guys in my congregation who travel more often for business every week than the entire nation did on average per year. Footballers expect to play in a different State every week of the season. I've met diplomats and army officers who've been posted to dozens of countries over a three-year tour of duty, and rabbis who've been through more jobs and life upheavals in their careers than Moses had throughout his.

My guess is that stability depends less on how often one is forced to uproot oneself than on one's sense of self-determination – the feeling that one has personal control over one's future. The Jews of the desert may have remained relatively undisturbed for years at a stretch, but they had no way of knowing, from one day to the next, how long they could expect to stay where they were.

At any time, with almost no warning, the Clouds of Glory that accompanied them on their travels could rise into the sky, signifying that they were about to leave. Every single day of their sojourn they would have found themselves staring up into the heavens above, watching and wondering what the morrow would bring.

You can just imagine the sense of impermanence this would have caused. You'd never feel confident enough to set down roots, plant a vegetable patch, or start some home improvements. Here today, where to tomorrow? It was a wholly itinerant existence, one that could produce no guarantees.

And that's precisely the lesson that our time in the desert was meant to teach us: There are no guarantees in life, and nothing is forever. No one ever guaranteed you permanent residence, and past performance is no indication of future returns. The only one constant is that wherever we travel in life, we are led by G-d. He is directing our footsteps.

Wherever I go, it's at G-d's say so. How long I stay here depends entirely on Him. The choice left to me is how I utilize the time that I have been allotted, and what inspiration and memories I leave behind me when I'm gone. Life is truly a journey, and it is my responsibility to make sure that my efforts help others enjoy the trip.

By Elisha Greenbaum

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, July 24, 2022 --- 25 Tammuz, 5782

Passing of Rabbi Aharon Berachia of Modina (1639)

Rabbi Aharon Berachia ben Moshe of Modina (? - 1639) was an Italian Kabbalist and a student of Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano. At the request of the Burial Society at Mantua, he instituted rites for them. The author of many Kabbalistic works, he is perhaps best known for his work *Ma'abar Yabbok*, which contains mystical dissertations on purity and holiness. He also wrote additional prayers to be offered for the sick and the dead, as well as a code of conduct for their treatment. Many of the prayers recited at the gravesites of the deceased were composed by him.

Tradition has it that an angel called a "maggid" would come and study with him, similar to the angel that would visit Rabbi Yosef Caro.

Monday, July 25, 2022 --- 26 Tammuz, 5782

Frankists Vanquished (1759)

The Frankist sect was created by Jacob Frank, who claimed to be the reincarnation of the false Messiah Shabbetai Zvi. In the mid-1700's, he sought to create a new religion that would incorporate both Judaism and Christianity, leading to the formation of the Frankist sect, centered in Poland.

In 1759, the bishop of Lvov arranged for a debate between the Frankists and three prominent Jewish leaders: R. Israel of Mezhibuzh (the Baal Shem Tov), R. Chaim Rappaport, and R. Yitzchak Dovber Margulies. The four-day debate ended with a resounding victory for the rabbis, and the date was instituted as a day of rejoicing, celebrating the successful halt of the Frankists' evil influence. (*Hatamim*, pp. 550, 558. See also *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 19, p. 81)

Tuesday, July 26, 2022 --- 27 Tammuz, 5782

Third expulsion from France (1322)

After having been allowed back into France in the year 1315 (after the expulsion in 1306 by Philip IV), the Jews were once again expelled from France by Charles IV, who thus broke the pledge made by his predecessors in 1315 that the Jews would be able to stay in France for at least 12 years.

Wednesday, July 27, 2022 --- 28 Tammuz, 5782

Passing of "Yismach Moshe" (1841)

Tammuz 28 is the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (1759-1841) of Uhely, Hungary, author of *Yismach Moshe* and patriarch of the Hungarian Chassidic dynasties.

Passing of Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1886)

Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (1804-1886) was born in Uzhhorod (Ungvar) in the Carpathian region of the Habsburg Empire (now Ukraine). When he was eight years old, Shlomo's father, Rabbi Yosef, passed way, and Ungvar's chief rabbi, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Heller, assumed legal guardianship of Shlomo. In 1830, he abandoned his work as a wine merchant and accepted the position of Rabbi of Brezovica (Brezevitz). In 1849, he returned to Ungvar to serve as a rabbinical judge. Realizing that the average Jew required a basic knowledge of practical halachah, Rabbi Ganzfried compiled the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, an abbreviated digest of Jewish law. To this day, the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* remains a classic halachic work, and it has been translated into many languages.

In addition to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, he authored many works including *Keset HaSofer*, a halachic primer for scribes, and *Pnei Shlomo*, a commentary on the Talmud.

Thursday, July 28, 2022 --- 29 Tammuz, 5782

Passing of Rashi (1105)

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as "Rashi", passed away on the 29th of Tammuz of the year 4865 from creation (1105 CE).

Rashi was born in Troyes, France, in 1040. His commentaries on the Torah, Prophets and Talmud are universally accepted as the most basic tool for the understanding of these texts for schoolchild and scholar alike. Numerous commentaries have been authored on his commentary. In his famed "Rashi talks", the Lubavitcher Rebbe repeatedly demonstrated how Rashi's "simple meaning of the text" style unfolds many layers of meaning, often resolving profound difficulties in the text and presenting new, innovative interpretations with a simple word choice or rephrasing of a Midrashic passage.

Friday, July 29, 2022 --- 1 Av, 5782

Passing of Aaron (1274 BCE)

Aaron the first High Priest, brother of Moses and Miriam, passed away at age 123 on the 1st of Av of the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE). This is the only *yahrzeit* (date of passing) explicitly mentioned in the Torah (Numbers 33:38).