

Torah Weekly

August 7-13, 2022
10-16 Av, 5782

Torah reading:
Va'etchanan: Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11
Haftarah: Isaiah 40:1-26

PARSHAT Va'etchanan

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).

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-0111
Fax: 412-521-5948
www.alephne.org
info@alephne.org



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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

"Your Money or Your Life"

Judaism's most famous prayer comes from this week's Parshah. *Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*. "Hear O Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is One" ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#)). "And you shall love the L-rd your G-d," the verse continues, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your *meod*."

Rashi, the great Biblical commentator, interprets this last phrase — "with all your *meod*" — to mean "with all your resources," i.e. your money. This, of course begs the question: if we have already been commanded to love G-d "with all your soul" — which the commentaries understand to mean that we should be prepared to give our very life for G-d— then why the rather mundane command about money? Surely, if we are prepared to give our life for G-d, then sharing our money is a small thing to ask?

[Rashi](#) explains that in fact there are individuals who value their money more than their lives. Such people need to be told to love G-d with all their money.

Jack Benny, the well-known American entertainer from long ago, used to joke self-deprecatingly about his frugality. Once, he told of walking down a New York street late at night when he suddenly felt cold, hard metal pointing into his back and a gruff voice barked, "Your money or your life!" When he didn't immediately respond, the gun at his back pressed deeper into his flesh and the voice from behind became more menacing, "Your money or your life!" Benny replied, "I'm thinking, I'm thinking."

There are actually quite a few real life situations today which prove that this is no joke. There is no shortage of people, from private contractors in Iraq to white farmers in Zimbabwe, who pursue business opportunities

and careers which place their lives in danger.

So the Torah insists that we must love G-d with all our heart, soul, life and resources — whatever it is that we value and cherish most, we should be prepared to dedicate in love to G-d.

I have spoken of this concept at *Pidyon Haben* ("Redemption of the First Born") ceremonies, where one finds a very strange dialogue between the father and the Kohen. By [Torah](#) law, every first born belongs to G-d, or to G-d's designated representative, the [Kohen](#). The Kohen therefore asks the father of the newborn child, "Which do you prefer: your first born son, or the five silver shekels you are obligated to give me for his redemption?"

Now what kind of absurd question is that? Is this "The Money or the Box"? Which normal father is going to give away his son when he can keep him for the small price of five silver coins? No one is waiting in breathless suspense for the father's answer.

In truth, however, it is a very serious question. The priestly minister of G-d asks of the father of this child: In your newborn son's future life, what will be of primary significance? Will it be the child or the shekel? Will you place high importance on finance or on family time? Will you raise this child with an emphasis on materialism or on more meaningful things? This is really a very good question after all — one which parents need to consider soberly before responding to.

How many workaholics do we know who are so busy making a living that they forget to live. Remember, no one was ever heard lamenting on their deathbed, "Oy, if only I'd spent more time at the office!"

So the [Shma](#) reminds us that whatever our core values may be, they should be directed to G-d and His service.

Even for those who aren't overly thrifty, money is an issue. The reality is that it's not cheap to be Jewish, certainly not to live Jewishly. Whether it's the higher price of kosher food and Jewish schooling, or the additional expenses of preparing for Passover, building a Sukkah, or acquiring *tefillin* and *mezuzahs*, all these things require a commitment from us financially. When we make that commitment with love and don't complain about the high cost of being Jewish, then we are observing the mitzvah of loving G-d with all our "*meod*" — our money and resources.

But don't worry. G-d loves us too.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

Cover Your Eyes

Two spouses don't seem to be able to relate to each other. Their values differ considerably; they don't see the world the same way. Is their relationship doomed to failure? Is there anything they can do to strengthen the bond and enhance their closeness?

In order for the relationship to survive, they must engage **Is their relationship doomed to failure?** in a fundamental exercise before they can begin to compromise or negotiate. The most important step, the one that will allow all further growth to occur, is for each to accept that the other has a legitimate perspective.

This does not mean that anybody needs to abandon their own values or point of view. But each must practice "closing their eyes" to their own perspective, and, at least for a moment, learn how to see the other person's reality. Then they can once again "open their eyes," get in touch with their own mind and heart, and, over time, learn how the different, and occasionally opposing perspectives, can not

only co-exist, but actually complement each other, leading to a far deeper and more interesting experience.

This is precisely what we do when we recite the Shema each morning and evening.

We are in a relationship with G-d; He is the groom and we are His bride. But make no mistake, the honeymoon is over. There are differences between us, and those differences run deep. From [G-d's](#) perspective, the only thing worth pursuing is a connection to G-dliness. He is the all-pervading reality. After all, the entire universe is dependent on His vitality for its very existence. Our perspective is different. As we see it, reality is the physical world from which we derive pleasure and joy.

In this week's portion, Moses reviews the history of that relationship.

At first, we fell in love with G-d's perspective. At our wedding—Sinai—G-d showed us a glimpse and in that moment we knew there was nothing else significant in the universe other than Him.¹

But the wedding ended and as the excitement faded we realized how vastly different G-d's perspective is to our own. We wondered, is this relationship viable?

Moses has the answer. He tells us to cover our eyes twice a day and recite the [Shema](#):

Hear, O Israel: The L-rd is our G-d; the L-rd is one.

We close our eyes because we need to put our own perspective aside and acknowledge that although we see not one Divine truth but a multiplicity of material needs and desires, there is another perspective. We acknowledge that we are able to close our eyes, remove ourselves—albeit momentarily—from our interpretation of reality, and appreciate that from the G-d perspective there is nothing but Divine unity, and that the entire universe is but an expression of that truth.

And then we open our eyes, able to create a relationship that fuses the two. As Moses continues in the Shema:

And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart. And you shall teach them to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for ornaments between your eyes. And you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

Despite our differences, or rather, specifically *because of* our differences, we can experience a deep and meaningful relationship. We are able to connect the words of the Torah, the unity and love of G-d, to our daily life. Our material pursuits are sanctified because we use them as a conduit for holiness. Our day-to-day tasks—when we walk on the road, lie down in the evening, rise in the morning, in the cities we create and the homes which we build—are imbued with spiritual meaning and Divine holiness

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, August 7, 2022 --- 10 Av, 5782

The Romans set the Temple aflame on the afternoon of Av 9 (see yesterday's [Today in Jewish History](#) and it continued to burn through Av 10. For this reason, some of the mourning practices of the "Nine Days" are observed through the morning hours of Av 10.

Birth of Issachar (1565/1564 BCE)

Issachar, the son of [Jacob](#) and Leah, ninth of the [Twelve Tribes](#), was born on 10 Menachem Av in Haran. He lived to the age of 122. The tribe of Issachar was well-known for their Torah scholarship, producing many members of [the Sanhedrin](#), [the Jewish Supreme Court](#).

Monday, August 8, 2022 --- 12 Av, 5782

Salvation of Baghdad Jewry (1733)

In 1733, the Persian conqueror Nader Shah Afshar laid siege to Ottoman-held Baghdad. Knowing that Persian rule would not bode well for them, the Jewish community prayed for an Ottoman victory. On 11 Menachem Av, an Ottoman force led by Topal Osman Pasha drove away the Persian forces and the siege was lifted. The Jewish community commemorated this day each year, refraining from reciting the penitential prayers of *tachanun*.

Tuesday, August 9, 2022--- 12 Av, 5782

Nachmanides' Disputation (1263)

By order of King James I of Aragon (Spain), [Nachmanides](#) (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, 1194-1270) was compelled to participate in a public debate, held in the king's presence, against the Jewish convert to Christianity, Pablo Christiani. His brilliant defense of Judaism and refutations of Christianity's claims served as the basis of many such future disputations through the generations.

Because his victory was an insult to the king's religion, Nachmanides was forced to flee Spain. He came to Jerusalem, where he found just a handful of Jewish families living in abject poverty, and revived the Jewish community there. The synagogue he built in the Old City is in use today, and is perhaps the oldest standing synagogue in the world.

770 Acquired (1940)

On this date in 1940, the building at [770 Eastern Parkway](#) in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York was purchased by Agudas Chassidei Chabad (the Chabad-Lubavitch community) to house the living quarters, study and office, Yeshivah, and synagogue of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi [Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn](#) (1880-1950), who had arrived in New York (following his rescue from Nazi-occupied Warsaw) five months earlier. It also served as the headquarters of his son-in-law and successor, [the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson](#), and continues to be the center of Chabad-Lubavitch's global network of institutions of Jewish education and outreach.

Wednesday, August 10, 2022 --- 13 Av, 5782

Passing of R. Nassan Nata Schapiro (1633)

R. Nassan Nata Schapiro was a saintly scholar who was proficient in both [Talmud](#) and [kabbalah](#). He served as rabbi of Cracow, and authored *Megaleh Amukos*, a kabbalistic Torah commentary.

Thursday, August 11, 2022--- 14 Av, 5782

R. Schneur Zalman Settles in Liadi (1801)

The first Rebbe of Chabad, [R. Schneur Zalman](#) (known as the Alter Rebbe), served as preacher in the town of Liozna (in present-day Belarus) from 1783 until 1801. In that year, R. Schneur Zalman was [imprisoned for a second time](#) in Petersburg, due to trumped-up charges presented by his opponents to the government. After his release, he relocated to Liadi (also in Belarus), where he continued leading his followers and teaching the [philosophy of Chabad](#). He remained in Liadi until 1812, when he and his family fled eastward from the oncoming French forces of Napoleon.

Under the leadership of R. Schneur Zalman's son, [R. DovBer](#), in 1814 the seat of the Chabad movement was transferred to the town of Lubavitch (in Russia near the Belarussian border). It remained there for over 100 years, until 1915, when the fifth Chabad Rebbe, [R. Sholom DovBer](#), fled from Lubavitch to Rostov in face of the advancing German army during World War I.

Friday, August 12, 2022 --- 15 Av, 5782

End of Dying in Desert (1274 BCE)

In wake of the incident of [the "Spies,"](#) in which the generation that came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership demonstrated their unpreparedness for the task of conquering and settling the Holy Land, G-d decreed that entire generation would die out in the desert (see "Today in Jewish History" for [Av 8](#) and [Av 9](#)). After 38 years of wandering through the wilderness the dying finally ended, and a new generation of Jews stood ready to enter the Holy Land. It was the 15th of Av of the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE)

Shabbat, August 13, 2022 --- 16 Av, 5782

Sir Moses Montefiore (1885)

Sir Moses Montefiore was a religious philanthropist who worked tirelessly on behalf of his brethren worldwide, and especially in the [Land of Israel](#). He dispensed large sums toward charitable causes and founded numerous establishments and institutions. Sir Montefiore traveled far and wide to visit Jewish communities and interceded on their behalf before rulers such as Queen Victoria, Czar Alexander the Second, the Ottoman Sultan, and the pope. He lived to the ripe old age of 100, passing away on 16 Menachem Av 5645 (1885).