

Torah Weekly

September 25-October 1, 2022
Elul 29, 5782- Tishrei 6, 5783

Torah: Vayelech:
Deuteronomy 31:1-30
Haftorah: Micah 7:18-20

PARSHAT VAYELECH

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).

Judaism and Capitalism

At its core, Judaism is about unity: the unity of the one G-d, the universe and the unity of all people created in the image of G-d. And yet, Judaism also gives the ordinary man an irrevocable right to his own property—as we see in the Torah's division of the Land of Israel to tribes and families, as well as in the command to celebrate the Jubilee year (where all property is returned to its original owners every 50 years). The idea of land ownership by definition creates separation and division within society, contradicting the ideal of unity. How is it possible for us to live with these opposing ideals in our philosophy and practice?

On the last day of his life, Moses is well aware of this seeming contradiction between the individual's right to personal property and the notion of unity. His people are about to transition from life in the desert, where there is no ownership of land, to an agrarian life in Israel, where for the first time, they are to become landowners. Moses knows he has one final opportunity to teach his people how to balance these opposing ideals. That is why, on the last day of life, he commands his beloved nation:

At the end of [every] seven years, at an appointed time, in the Festival of Sukkot. . . when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord, your God, in the place He will choose, you shall read this Torah before all Israel, in their ears.

Assemble the people: the men, the women, and the children, and your stranger in your cities, in order that they hear, and in order that they learn and fear the Lord, your God, and they will observe to do all the words of this Torah.

And their children, who did not know, will hear and learn to fear the Lord, your God, all the days that you live on the land, to

which you are crossing the Jordan, to possess.

In these verses Moses is describing a way to instill the fundamental message of unity into the hearts and minds of a people who will spend most of their time, energy and effort working their land. This is done through two commandments: Shemittah, the sabbatical year during which we are forbidden to work the land for an entire year, and Hakhel, the gathering in the Temple after the sabbatical year, when the people are headed back to work for the next six years.

During the Shemittah year, the seventh year, every land owner takes a year-long break from working the land, devoting his time to spiritual pursuits. During that year, all produce that grows in the field is legally ownerless, and anyone is free to enter any orchard or field to enjoy its produce. This mitzvah serves as a powerful reminder to the people that there is more to life than amassing wealth, that their true essence is the soul not the body, and they have to devote time to feeding the soul, just as they devote time to feeding the body.

And then, at the end of the long sabbatical, just as everyone is anxious to get back to working the land, comes the mitzvah for all the nation to gather in the Temple to hear the words of the Torah. Moses is telling the people that if they want to be able to juggle the blessings of private property and the unified existence that is the core truth of Judaism, then before they get back to the field, they have to reenact the giving of the Torah at Sinai. They have to gather together—men, women and children—as at Sinai, when all the children of Israel stood around the mountain "as one person with one heart," united around the words and teachings of the Torah. Moses understood that the children, the future generations, also need to

experience this powerful feeling of unity which comes through the unifying teachings of the Torah, rather than through material blessings, which can sometimes cause division.

Through these commandments, the people learned that although they may each possess property and material wealth, they are not defined, and should therefore not define themselves, by their material possessions and achievements. Moses was telling each individual: "Although your house may be nicer than your neighbor's, you are still one. You are one, because your soul, the core of who you are, is one with your neighbor's soul. The material possessions that divide you are nothing more than an external garment. They are not who you are, and therefore cannot separate you from your friend."

And then there is us.

We, whose bodies did not stand at Sinai, who did not stand shoulder to shoulder with the entire nation of Israel at the reading of the Torah in the Temple, we too must meditate on this message each year, when the story of Moshe's last day on this earth is read in the Torah. We must close our eyes and imagine standing with all our brothers and sisters at the foot of Sinai, listening to the words of G-d and taking the message of Sinai to heart.

If, with all our differences, we can define ourselves as souls sent to this world for a spiritual purpose; if the society we create values the individual for his or her spiritual essence, then we can have a unified society. Our homes, fields, cars and retirement accounts may look different, but we know that we are one, "like one person with one heart."

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman
When G-d Goes Into Hiding Our history has not always been rosy. We have experienced tranquility, peace,

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and spiritual greatness, yet we have also experienced terrible

exile, destruction, and persecution. Indeed, on the last day of Moses' life, G-d tells him what will befall the people when they abandon G-d: And the L-rd said to Moses: Behold, you are [about to] lie with your forefathers, and this nation will rise up and stray after the deities of the nations of the land, into which they are coming. And they will forsake Me and violate My covenant which I made with them. "And My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them, and they will say on that day, 'Is it not because our G-d is no longer among us, that these evils have befallen us?' These harsh words were not merely to warn the Jewish people of the consequences for abandoning their destiny. Perhaps more importantly, the purpose was to ensure that the people would correctly interpret and respond to the difficult exile.

The natural response to the "many evils and troubles" would be for the people to believe that G-d "is no longer among us." Yet, as G-d told Moses, that conclusion would be categorically incorrect:

And I will hide My face on that day, because of all the evil they have committed, when they turned to other deities.

We are here as Jews today, because generations of Jews understood this truth: That the exile is not the absence of G-d's love and presence, but merely a concealment of His grace. "I will hide My face on that day," says G-d, and the Jewish people understood that hiding is by no means an abandonment. They felt G-d's presence even in the most difficult circumstances.

And then came the mystics, who understood that all existence is dependent upon G-d, and that there is no place devoid of Him. When they looked at darkness, they understood that although G-d's presence is not revealed, His essence is still present. They understood that the most powerful message in the verse "And I will hide My face on that day," is not that G-d will hide, but that even within the concealment, He is very much present.

Every year, this portion is read in proximity to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when we engage in introspection, and seek atonement and spiritual betterment, looking back at the moments of joy and inspiration, but also the darkness and hurt of the past year. The Torah teaches that specifically in the moments of concealment lies the potential to reach the deepest part of ourselves. When we feel no inspiration, no excitement, no enthusiasm, we must understand that the concealment is a tool to encourage us to reach deeper within ourselves, to get in touch with our own core. Doing so will allow us to discover that within the concealment we can access the deepest Divine strength, and, ultimately, transform the darkness into light.

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, September 25, 2022 --- 29 Elul, 5782

Tzemach Tzeddek Born (1789)

The third Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch (1789-1866), was born on the 29th of Elul. Orphaned from his mother at age 3, he was raised by his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Shneur Zalman on Liadi. Rabbi Menachem Mendel assumed the leadership of Chabad in 1827, upon the passing of his father-in-law and uncle, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch. Extremely active in communal affairs, he established and funded Jewish farming colonies which provided a livelihood for thousands of families. He also stood at the forefront of the battle against the "Enlightenment Movement" which, with the support of the Czarist regime, sought to destroy traditional Jewish life -- a battle which earned him no less than 22 (!) imprisonments and arrests. In the course of his lifetime, Rabbi Menachem Mendel penned more than 48,000 pages of Chassidic teachings and Halachic exegesis. He is known as the "Tzemach Tzeddek" ("a sprouting of righteousness") after his work of Halachic responsa by that name.

Monday, September 26, 2022 --- 1 Tishrei, 5783

Adam & Eve (3760 BCE)

On Tishrei 1 -- the sixth day of creation -- "G-d said: 'Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...'" (Genesis 1:26). "G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (ibid., 2:7). "And G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and to keep it" (2:15). "And G-d said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet opposite him' ... G-d caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his sides, and closed up the flesh in its place. And G-d built the side which He had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. And the man said: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother, and cleaves to his wife; and they become one flesh" (2:18-24).

1st Sin & Repentance (3760 BCE)

On the very day he was created, man committed the first sin of history, transgressing the divine commandment not to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden, and mankind became subject to death, labor and moral confusion. But on that day the first man and woman also repented their sin, introducing the concept and opportunities of teshuvah ("return") into the human experience.

Binding of Isaac; Sarah's Passing (1677 BCE)

Abraham's supreme test of faith -- his binding of Isaac in preparation to sacrifice him as per G-d's command -- occurred on the 1st of Tishrei of the year 2084 from creation (1677 BCE), and is recalled each Rosh Hashanah with the sounding of the shofar (ram's horn -- a ram was sacrificed in Isaac's stead when an angel revealed that the command to sacrifice Isaac was but a divine test); the Torah's account of the event is publicly read in the synagogue on the 2nd day of Rosh Hashanah. On the day of Isaac's binding, his mother, Sarah, passed away at age 127, and was subsequently buried in the Machpelah Cave in Hebron.

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 --- 3 Tishrei, 5783

Assassination of Gedaliah (423 BCE)

Tishrei 3rd is a fast day mourning the assassination of the Jewish royal Gedaliah ben Achikam, governor of the Land of Israel for a short period following the destruction of the First Temple. Gedaliah's killing spelled the end of the small remnant of a Jewish community that remained in the Holy Land after the destruction. They soon fled to Egypt. (According to many opinions, the assassination of Gedaliah actually occurred on Rosh Hashanah, but the commemoration of the event is postponed to the day after the festival).

Shabbat, October 1, 2022 --- 6 Tishrei, 5783

Rebbetzin Chana (1964)

Tishrei 6 is the yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson (1879-1964), mother of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.