

Torah Weekly

September 27- October 3, 2020
9-15 Tishrei, 5781

First Torah: Leviticus 22:26 - 23:44
Second Torah: Numbers 29:12-16
Haftarah: First Day of Sukkot: Zachariah 14:1-21
Second Day of Sukkot: Kings I 8:2-21

SUKKOT

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).

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

Say No to Drugs

And All Other Artificially Induced Highs...

Rabbi Mendel Futterfas was imprisoned in a Siberian labor camp for the crime of assisting his coreligionists in escaping the USSR in the dark post-World War II days. Many of his fellow inmates were professionals and intellectuals from the upper-crust of society, imprisoned because of the ostensible "threat" they constituted to Soviet ideology.

This group often wondered how Mendel maintained his cheerful demeanor despite the sub-human conditions which pervaded the camp. When they posed the question to him, he instantly replied:

"You are all dejected because your incarceration prevents you from materializing your life's goals. My goal in life is to serve G-d. And that—I can do wherever I may be!"

Aside for the damage caused to the body by illegal or other mind-altering substances and excessive consumption of alcohol, as well as their potential for wreaking damage on relationships and careers, they also invariably disappoint those who turn to them in order to fill a void in their lives. In the end, they solve nothing; they only offer a temporary escape from melancholic feelings and/or one's sense of inadequacy and lack of accomplishment. Indeed, even at the moment one is experiencing an artificial high, the problems don't disappear. Even if one succeeds in momentarily removing all worries from the conscious mind, they always lurk in the sub-conscious—never allowing the person to find complete solace. As a wise person once said, "People

imagine they can drown their troubles in drink; little do they know that their troubles float..."

But "escapism" isn't relegated to the world of hallucinogenics. On a deeper level, most of our supposed sources of happiness are—to a certain extent—a subtle form of escapism. They are an escape from who we are; an attempt to find happiness from without, instead of finding true happiness within. While we chase transient possessions in our pursuit of happiness, we imagine that the reason for our emptiness and lack of happiness is our failure in achieving our goals. Happiness and utopian bliss are certain to wash over our lives once we've earned our first few million... If only we knew that it is all an exercise in futility. I once saw a quote from mega-millionaire Hollywood icon Jim Carrey, saying that he wishes that everyone had what he did—just so that they could see how meaningless it all is!

Happiness comes not from possessions. While one can find a certain measure of happiness in one's accomplishments, such happiness is also incomplete. For our accomplishments will never fully meet our satisfaction. Ultimate happiness is happiness with who we are, contentment with our very identity.

During the High Holidays—and specifically on Yom Kippur—we connect with our innermost core, the essence of the Jewish soul which is eternally and unconditionally connected to G-d. It is precisely because of this unconditional bond that G-d annually grants us a full-hearted forgiveness, despite our behavior in the previous year. During [Yom Kippur](#),

however, the atmosphere is too somber and intense, and we are too involved in serious repentance, for us to savor and appreciate what transpires during those awesome moments. It takes a few days for our incredible fortune to sink in: *Connection to G-d is who we are!* And because this is our very identity, absolutely nothing can alter it—attempting to disconnect a Jew from G-d would be akin to attempting to transform a cow into a horse!

"Fortunate are we! How good is our portion, how pleasant is our lot, and how beautiful our heritage!"

So for seven days we forget about all else. We leave behind our home and possessions—and all other imaginary sources of happiness—and go out into a flimsy non-weatherproof hut. We sing, rejoice and say *l'chaim*; we're happy because we finally focus and what's really important in life—our own selves!

By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg

It Takes All Kinds

"It takes all kinds." That, essentially is the message of the mitzvah of the "Four Kinds" — the *etrog* (citron), *lulav* (palm frond), *hadass* (myrtle) and *aravah* (willow) — over which we recite a blessing on the festival of Sukkot. In the words of the Midrash:

The etrog has both a taste and an aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have both Torah learning and good deeds....

The date (the fruit of the lulav) has a taste but does not have an aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who

have [Torah](#) but do not have good deeds....

The [hadass](#) has an aroma but not a taste; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have good deeds but do not have Torah....

The Arava has no taste and no aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who do not have Torah and do not have good deeds....

Says G-d: "Let them all bond together in one bundle and atone for each other."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that the [Midrash](#) is not just saying that "all are part of the Jewish people" or "all are precious in the eyes of G-d" or even that "all are necessary"; it says that they "all atone for each other." This implies that each of the Four Kinds possesses something that the other three do not, and thus "atones" and compensates for that quality's absence in the other three.

In other words, it's not just that it takes all kinds to make a people — it also takes all kinds to make a person. And [Sukkot](#) is the time when we bond with each other so that the other's qualities should rub

off on ourselves.

The *etrog* says: "I am perfect. I balance learning and doing in flawless equilibrium. In my life, knowledge and action do not overwhelm or displace one the other, but rather fulfill and complement each other." This is something we all need to say, at least once in a while. We all need to know that we possess the potential for such harmonious perfection, and that we each have those moments in our lives when we attain it.

The *lulav* says: "I am utterly devoted to the pursuit of wisdom, awareness and self-knowledge. Doing is also important, but my first priority is to know G-d and (thereby) my truest self, even if this means withdrawing from involvement with the world." This is something we all need to say, at least once in a while. We all need to know that there is the potential for such consummate knowledge in us, and that we each have those moments in our lives when we attain it.

The *hadass* says: "What our world needs is action. Knowledge of G-d and self-awareness are worthy goals, but I have a job to do. I need to build a better world — enlightenment may have to wait." This is something we all need to say, at least once in a while. We all need to know that our mission in life is to "make the physical world a home for G-d", and that there are times when the need for action takes precedence over everything else.

The *aravah* says: "I have nothing. I am nothing." This is something we all need to say, at least once in a while.

By Yanki Tauber

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, October 9, 2022 --- 14 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of R. Israel Hopstein, the Maggid of Kosnitz (1814)

R. Israel of Kosnitz was a disciple of a number of great chassidic Rebbes, including [R. DovBer of Mezeritch](#). A famed miracle worker, he authored the work *Avodat Yisrael* and was one of the disseminators of Chassidism in Poland.

Monday, October 10, 2022 --- 15 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of R. Yosef Shlomo Delmedigo (1655)

R. Yosef Shlomo was a rabbi, philosopher, and physician. A prolific author, he was proficient in many sciences in addition to Talmudic studies. He is known as "the Yashar from Candia," *Yashar* being an acronym for Yosef Shlomo Rofei (Hebrew for *doctor*), and Candia (Crete) being his place of birth. Among his more famous works are *Sefer Eilim*—on mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences—and *Matzref Lechachmah*, a defense of [Kabbalah](#).

Tuesday, October 11, 2022 --- 16 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of R. Moshe Zacuto (1697)

R. Moshe, known by the acronym *Ramaz*, was an Italian rabbi and Kabbalist, well-known for his erudition and piety. A scion of Portuguese hidden Jews, he authored numerous works, many of them on [Kabbalah](#), as well as a number of liturgical hymns.

Thursday, October 13, 2022 --- 18 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1810)

Passing of the famed Chassidic rebbe, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Ukraine (1772-1810). A great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, he championed a unique path of divine service that entails simplicity, joy, and solitude. He left no successor, but his teachings remain influential more than 200 years after his passing.

Friday, October 14, 2022 --- 19 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of Vilna Gaon (1797)

Passing of the famed Talmudist and Kabbalist, Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania (1720-1797), known as the "Vilna Gaon." Rabbi Eliyahu was the leading figure in the opposition to the [Chassidic movement](#) in its early years.

Shabbat, October 15, 2022 --- 20 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of R. Heshel of Cracow (1663)

R. Heshel was a Polish scholar known for his sharpness and depth of knowledge. Although most of his writings are not extant, his influence is greatly felt until today, as many of the classic Halachists of his day were his students, such as [R. Shabtai Katz](#) (the Shach) and [R. David HaLevi](#) (the Taz). Many stories are told about his quick-wittedness even as a young child.