

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

May 21-27, 2023
1-7 Sivan, 5783

Torah Readings for Shavuot

First Day:

First Torah:

Exodus 19:1 - 20:23

Second Torah:

Numbers 28:26-31

Haftarah: Ezekiel 1:1-28; Ezekiel 3:12

Second Day:

First Torah:

Deuteronomy 14:22 - 16:17

Second Torah:

Numbers 28:26-31

Haftarah: Habakkuk 2:20 - 3:19

PARSHAT NASO

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).

Wanted: Self-Centered, Short-Sighted, Childish People

Rabbi Meir said: When the Jews stood before Sinai to receive the Torah, G-d said to them: "I swear, I will not give you the Torah unless you provide worthy guarantors who will assure that you will observe its laws."...

The Jews declared, "Our children will serve as our guarantors!"

"They truly are worthy guarantors," G-d replied. "Because of them I will give the Torah."

(Midrash Rabba, Song of Songs 1:4)

Of the many childish qualities which set apart the "maturity challenged" youth from their adult counterparts, two are very stark and blatant.

1) A child's entire focus is on the here and now. The past is a non-existent bygone, and the future—an even more non-existent dream. The younger the child, the more non-existent is all but the present.

For example: On Sunday morning, the average adult wakes up and thinks about his goals for the day ahead—be they taking care of responsibilities or chores, or indulging some desires and hobbies which are reserved for weekends. Only after creating some

semblance of a plan does the day begin in earnest.

A child, on the other hand, wakes up and his first thought is: "What do I do now? Do I jump on Mom's head to wake her up? Or can I more wisely utilize Mom's sleep time by climbing the china closet to purloin some of the sweets she's hidden there?" The day ahead is completely irrelevant; all that matters is living in the moment.

This is also why every child-raising book speaks of the importance of immediate consequences – positive or negative – for youngsters' actions. This is for two reasons: a) the warning of a future [i.e. non-existent] reward or punishment will not impact what the child will do in the [very real] present. b) If the consequence is delayed, the child can't comprehend why he's receiving a very real punishment/reward for an abstract act which has been relegated to the annals of immaterial history.

Interestingly, I've noticed that young children refer to any prior date as "yesterday," and anything which will occur in the future, no matter how distant, is part of "tomorrow." How far in the past or future is unimportant; "yesterday" is code word for "completely irrelevant past", and "tomorrow" is code word for "utterly irrelevant future"...

2) Every child considers himself to be the very cog around which the world revolves; the sole purpose of every G-d-created being is to serve him. Every game and latest gadget was invented with him in mind, and how dare Mom and Dad – who were also put on Earth to serve him – deny him his birthright! And when they do capitulate to his whimpering and moaning and buy the toy, the nerve of them to suggest that he share it with a sibling!

The importance of global upheavals and momentous scientific discoveries pale in comparison to a lollypop. If it doesn't affect him, it just doesn't matter.

This is why children must be trained to feel and express gratitude. Not because they are naturally unappreciative, but because they fail to understand why, for example, they must be grateful to parents who are just performing their duty. Thanks is due to a creature who has a life and aspirations of its own who selflessly chooses to forgo his own benefit to help another. This certainly does not apply to the parent whose life's purpose is to cater to his every wish. Thanking a parent is akin to showing appreciation to the school bus which transports him to school!

These two childish qualities clearly have serious downsides. Thankfully,

people mature—for wherein people living in a world remained exclusively focused on themselves without consideration for others would be unimaginable. And the human would still be living in caves if he lacked the capacity to plan for the future. However, there is much to be learned from the child's perspective.

"Do not say 'When I will have free time I will study,' for perhaps you will never have free time" (Ethics 2:4). How much more would each of us accomplish if we were childishly eager to utilize the present moment to its utmost, instead of delaying important goals for an imaginary future? Furthermore, how many people's ambitions are hampered because they dwell in the non-existent past—frightened into inaction by past failures, or lacking motivation because they rest on the laurels of prior achievements?

"Every person is obligated to say, 'The world was created for me'" (Sanhedrin 37a). You are not an insignificant cosmic speck; *you* are the reason why the world was created. G-d Himself waits for you to fulfill the purpose of creation by studying some more Torah and observing yet another mitzvah.

Perhaps this is why G-d enthusiastically accepted the children as guarantors for the Torah. The message is plain: Torah is intended for "childish" people who realize that 1. there's no time like the present, and 2. you are the one chosen to do it!

By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg

Sunday, May 21, 2023 --- 1 Sivan, 5783

Encampment at Sinai (1313 BCE)

On the 1st of Sivan of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), six weeks after their [exodus](#) from Egypt, the Children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in the Sinai [Desert](#) and camped at the foot of the mountain "[as one man, with one heart](#)" in preparation for the receiving of the [Torah](#) from G-d. On this day, however "Moses did not say anything to them, because of their exhaustion from the journey."

Korach Swallowed (1312 BCE)

Korach, who led a rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, met his end when, miraculously, "the ground split beneath them... And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korach, and all their possessions" (Numbers 16:31-32).

Friday, 26 May, 2023 --- 6 Sivan, 5783

Torah Given (1313 BCE)

On the 6th Sivan of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), seven weeks after the Exodus, G-d revealed Himself on Mount Sinai. The entire people of Israel (600,000 heads of households and their families), as well as the souls of all future generations of Jews, heard G-d declare the first two of the Ten Commandments and witnessed G-d's communication of the other eight through Moses. Following the revelation, Moses ascended the mountain for 40 days, to receive the remainder of the Torah from G-d.

At Sinai, G-d rescinded the "decree" and "divide" (*gezeirah*) that had been in force since the 2nd day of creation separating the spiritual and the physical into two hermetic worlds; from this point on, "the higher realms could descend into the lower realms, and the lower could ascend to the higher." Thus was born the "mitzvah" -- a physical deed that, by virtue of the fact that it is commanded by G-d, brings G-dliness into the physical world.

Passing of King David (837 BCE)

David, a descendent of Judah the son of Jacob as well as of Ruth, a Moabite convert to Judaism, was anointed King of Israel by Samuel in 878 BCE. All future legitimate kings of Israel were David's descendents, as will be Moshiach (the messiah), who will "restore the kingdom of David to its glory of old." David fought many wars, defeating Israel's enemies and securing and expanding its borders. He conquered Jerusalem, purchased the Temple Mount from its Yebusite owner, and prepared the foundation for the Holy Temple (which was built by his son, King Solomon). David served as the head of the *Sanhedrin* and the foremost Torah authority of his generation; he is also the "sweet singer of Israel" who composed the Book of Psalms that for 28 centuries has embodied the joys, sorrows and yearnings of the Jewish people.

King David passed away on the 6th of Sivan of the year 837 BCE, age 70.

Passing of Baal Shem Tov (1760)

In 1734, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov ("BeSHT", 1698-1760), who up until that time had lived as a hidden tzaddik, began to publicly disseminate his teachings. While adding nothing "new" to Judaism, he re-emphasized truths and doctrines that had been buried under the hardships of exile: the immense love that G-d has for every Jew, the cosmic significance of every mitzvah a person performs, the divine meaningfulness that resides in every blade of grass, in every event, and in every thought in the universe. He spoke to the downtrodden masses and to the aloof scholars, giving meaning to their existence, and thus joy, and thus life. Many disciples came to imbibe the "inner soul" of Torah from him, and the new movement came to be known as "Chassidism."

Rabbi Israel passed away on the 6th of Sivan of 1760, and was succeeded (one year later, on the first anniversary of his passing) by his disciple, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch.