

# Torah Weekly

June 4-10, 2023  
15-21 Sivan, 5783

Torah Reading:  
Behaalotecha: Numbers 8:1 -  
12:16  
Haftarah: Zachariah 2:14 - 4:7

## PARSHAT BEHAALOTECHA

### 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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## Pain or Privilege?

Okay, I admit it. I'm not sure how I would have behaved if I were in the position of the Jews back in the wilderness. We always criticize their lack of faith in G-d and the rough time they gave Moses. Even as G-d was providing them with the most incredible miracles — bread from heaven and water from rocks — they were busy moaning and groaning throughout. But would I have acted differently? Who knows? You think it was easy to live in a desert, even with all the miracles in the Bible?

I suppose a lot depends on a person's attitude and perspective in life.

Recently, I heard a powerful insight in the name of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the outstanding authorities in Jewish law of our time (he passed away in 1986). He was speaking of the generation of Jewish immigrants to the United States who spawned what became known as the "lost generation." Why was it that the children of parents who were religious, or at least traditional, moved so far away from the Judaism of their parental homes? Rabbi Moshe argued that it could be summed up in one simple question of attitude. Did those parents convey to their children that Judaism was a burden or a boon, a pleasure or a pain?

Was the constant refrain these children heard at home, *Oy*, it's hard to be a Jew! or *Ahh*, it is good to be a Jew! Was being Jewish in those early days in America something to sigh about, or

something to celebrate and sing about? Whether children grew up hearing that Judaism was a pain or a privilege would determine whether they embraced it happily or escaped from it at the first opportunity. According to Rabbi Moshe, on that hinged the success or failure of an entire generation.

Indeed, we know of many Jews who survived the Holocaust and because of their horrific experiences perceived being Jewish as a death sentence, G-d forbid. There were those who sought to run as far away as possible from Europe. Many found their way to Australia and became "closet Jews." Some never even told their children that they were Jewish.

It was for this reason that the late Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Immanuel Jacobowitz argued that while Holocaust education was important, there was a danger in over-emphasizing the Holocaust in Jewish Day Schools. We want our children to see that Judaism is a blessing, not a curse. Our Jewishness should not be dark and depressing, but bright and joyous.

I remember having a discussion with a group of businessmen some years ago where we were trying to put together a slide show to promote one of our local institutions. We were looking for a particularly powerful scene. One prominent doctor suggested that, for him, the single most powerful scene in Jewish life was the Rabbi walking into the house of mourning carrying his bag of prayer books. To him, that may have been powerful, but

for me — as a rabbi — I'd never heard anything as depressing. What am I, the Angel of Death?

The Jews in the wilderness had their own issues. We should try and learn from their mistakes and be more faithful and trusting in the leadership of the Moses of our own time. But beyond that, let us not whine and whimper about the challenges of Jewish life. Let us convey to our children that Judaism is a joy and a privilege. Then, please G-d, they will embrace it for generations to come.

*By Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

## Thoughts While Stuck in a Traffic Jam

"Fifteen days left!" That was a note on the fridge of a hard-working teacher, counting down till the end of her school year. My children, too, are doing a similar countdown.

How often do we will away time? Caught in a traffic jam, we fume about how long it is taking us to arrive at our destination. In a doctor's waiting room, we tap impatiently while awaiting our turn. Though our tapping and fuming doesn't make the time go any faster, it expresses how we want to move on to "the more important stuff."

As women, especially, we enthusiastically await life's *next* milestones—the baby finally sleeping through the night, speaking her first words, walking his first steps, beginning that first day at school—only to wake up one day to an empty home,

wondering where the time went. We can't wait to graduate, earn our degrees and begin our first job. Then, we're eager for the next, better job opportunity until we find ourselves pondering when we will finally save enough to retire.

Interestingly, when recording the life of righteous people, like Abraham and Sarah, the Torah uses the phrase, "*zekeinim, baim bayomim—they were old, they entered many days.*" If they were old, isn't it obvious that they lived many days? The wording implies, however, that living many days isn't necessarily *entering* our days. We can will away our time, looking for the *next* prospect, or we can live in the moment, *entering* each of our days by experiencing them fully.

Similarly, in this week's [Torah](#) portion, we learn about how the Jewish people journeyed in the desert.

*"Whether it was for two days, a month or a year, that the cloud lingered to hover over the Sanctuary, the children of Israel would encamp and not travel, and when it departed, they traveled. At the L-rd's bidding they would encamp, and at the L-rd's bidding they would travel."* ([Numbers 9:22-23](#))

Sometimes, they camped for weeks at a location; other times they remained for just a day. At every location, the Levites assembled the Sanctuary, including the wall sections, pillars, tapestries, furnishing and every one of its hundreds of foundation sockets. Several thousand Levites were needed for this formidable task.

Was it really necessary to assemble and disassemble the entire structure if they were to remain for only *one day* at a particular location?

The Rebbe explains that this teaches us that every one of our "stations" in life is significant. At times, we may feel that we are just at a waiting point, at a stage before the next, more meaningful phase. But every day, every moment—somehow, even those caught at the long supermarket checkout line—can be *entered into* and transformed into an opportunity for growth.

At every juncture, we need to assemble our own Sanctuary by finding a way, at this moment, to join heaven and earth.

By Chana Weisberg

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, June 4, 2023 --- 15 Sivan, 5783**

**Birth and Passing of Judah (1565 and 1446 BCE)**

Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, was born in Charan on the 15th of Sivan, of the year 2196 from creation (1565 BCE). He passed away on the same date 119 years later, in Egypt. Judah took the leadership role both in selling Joseph into slavery and in the brothers' later attempts to find him and free him, and to protect Benjamin. On his deathbed, Jacob conferred the leadership of Israel upon Judah, proclaiming: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the legislator from between his feet, until Shiloh (the Moshiach) comes..." The royal house of David, as well as many of the great sages and leaders of Israel throughout the generations of Jewish history, trace their lineage to Judah.

Judah had five sons: Er and Onan, who died without children; Shelah; and his twins from Tamar, Peretz and Zerach. Their descendants formed the Tribe of Judah, the most populous and prestigious of the twelve tribes of Israel.

**6th Lubavitcher Rebbe arrested (1927)**

Shortly after midnight of the 15th of Sivan of 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), was arrested by agents of the GPU (Soviet Secret Police) and Yevsketzia ("Jewish section" of the Communist Party) for leading the underground network of rabbis, teachers and emissaries working to preserve and disseminate Jewish learning and observance throughout the Soviet Empire.

**Monday, June 5, 2023 --- 16 Sivan, 5783**

**Passing of Rebbetzin Freida (1813)**

Rebbetzin Freida was the daughter of the Alter Rebbe, R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi. She was especially dear to her illustrious father, and he would frequently deliver chassidic discourses specifically for her. In fact, when her brother R. DovBer, who later became the Mittlerer Rebbe, wanted to hear Chassidut, he would sometimes ask her to make a request, whereupon he would hide and listen.

Rebbetzin Freida passed away a few months after her father, and was interred in Haditch, Ukraine, immediately adjacent to R. Schneur Zalman.

**Tuesday, June 6, 2023 --- 17 Sivan, 5783**

**Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat (2105 BCE)**

Seven months after the beginning of the Great Flood, and 17 days after the waters covering the earth began to subside, the Ark sheltering Noah, his family, and members of all animal species came to rest on the (still submerged) summit of Mount Ararat.

**Hasmonean Victory (circa 140 BCE)**

The Hasmonean fighters recaptured Migdal Tzur from the Greek enemy and proclaimed this day a holiday (Talmud, Megilat Taanit).

**Wednesday, June 7, 2023 --- 18 Sivan, 5783**

**Spanish Expulsion Rescinded (1967)**

The Spanish cabinet approved a bill which granted religious freedom to Spain's Jews as well as other religious minorities. Since 1492 it had been officially forbidden to practice Judaism in Spain -- though this law had not been enforced for many years before its official abolishment.

**Thursday, June 8, 2023 --- 19 Sivan, 5783**

**Passing of R. Yehuda ibn Attar (1733)**

R. Yehuda ibn Attar (1655–1733), who served as rabbi in Fez, is regarded as one of the greatest leaders among Moroccan Jewry. A saintly and pious man, he was known as a miracle worker and was revered by the local Jews and Muslims alike. He refused to accept a salary from the community, working as a goldsmith instead.

It is related that he was once thrown into a lion's den and miraculously survived unharmed (*Shem Hagedolim*). This protagonist of this story is often said to be—apparently in error—R. Yehuda's kinsman, [R. Chaim ibn Attar](#).

**Friday, June 9, 2023 --- 20 Sivan, 5783**

**Martyrs of Blois (1171)**

The 20th of Sivan is the anniversary of the first blood libel in France. On this date in 1171, tens of Jewish men and women were burned alive in the French town of Blois on the infamous accusation that Jews used the blood of Christian children in the preparation of matzot for Passover.