

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

July 30- August 8, 2023
12-18 Av, 5783

Torah Reading:
Eikev: Deuteronomy 7:12 - 11:25
Haftarah: Isaiah 49:14 - 51:3

PARSHAT EIKEV

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



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Me, You, and Us Who is more important, the Jew or the Jewish people? Is it Reb Yisroel or *am Yisroel*?

In last week's *parshah* we read the first chapter of the Shema. This week, we read the second. Yet there are so many similarities between the two. In fact, certain sentences are virtually identical. Why would the Torah, normally so cryptic, be so repetitious?

If one examines the text closely, a significant distinction between the two chapters becomes immediately discernible. The first chapter is in the singular and the second is in the plural. Teach [Torah](#) to your *son* in the first, and to your *children* in the second. Put *tefillin* on your *hand* in the first, and on your *hands* in the second.

But why the need for both? Why not use one or the other? Why a paragraph for each expression? The answer is that G-d speaks to the individual, but [G-d](#) also speaks to the community. He addresses the Jew, and also the Jewish People. The first paragraph of the [Shema](#) teaches us that each and every single individual is important, even critical, and G-d addresses every individual personally. The second paragraph reminds us that there is also a sum of all the parts; that together, individuals make up a community. And communities, too, are very important. In some ways, we acknowledge the supremacy of the individual; in others, community is supreme.

Yes, there is a tension at play here. The Talmud captures these seemingly conflicting notions when it examines why humankind was created differently from the animal

kingdom. As described in the first chapter of Genesis, animals were created in herds, while only one man and one woman were created initially. Says the [Talmud](#): This is to teach us that a) it was worthwhile for the Almighty to create the world for but a single individual, and b) so that no human being could boast that his or her pedigree is better than anyone else's. We *all* come from Adam and Eve, so you are no better than me, nor I than you.

Thus, from the very same event, the Torah teaches us this paradoxical lesson: on the one hand, the individual human being is king; while on the other, humanity reigns.

The paradox finds expression in Halachah (Torah law) as well. On the one hand, Torah law rules that we ought not to pay exorbitant ransom monies if an individual is taken hostage; this is to avoid rewarding and encouraging hostage taking, so as to safeguard the community as a whole: we may save this one individual, but in doing so we increase the danger to the community. On the other hand, Torah law rules that should a dangerous enemy demand that Jewish leaders hand over to them a particular individual lest they attack the entire community, it is not permitted to sacrifice even one individual for the sake of the community.

So we need both sections of the Shema. In Torah, both are paramount, the individual and the community.

Why do I focus on this theme today? Because in approximately five weeks time we will usher in the New Year, and the ongoing tension between the single and plural will manifest itself very blatantly. "Why must we pay to

pray?" some will demand. They will decry the shameless commercialism of organized religion. And, yes, a *shul* should have a heart. And our houses of prayer should not be allowed to become materialistic and mercenary, lest we lose the young, the poor and the idealistic. At the same time, individuals need to be sympathetic to the hard facts of congregational life. We cannot take for granted or take advantage of our established—and costly to maintain—infrastructures. The tension is sometimes tangible as we struggle to balance these two, seemingly exclusive, imperatives of Jewish life.

Statistics vary. In some communities, not more than 30% of Jews are officially affiliated. In others, the figure is much higher. The community must be sensitive, welcoming and embracing of every individual who seeks to belong. Still, individuals must be fair too. If everyone demanded a free ride, how would a congregation support itself?

Let us keep reciting both chapters of the Shema. Then we can look forward to healthy Jews and wholesome Jewish communities.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

No Free Rides

The age of 2 has notoriously been dubbed "The Terrible Twos" as toddlers begin to assert their independence. As if on cue, my sweet granddaughter has become adamant about doing things "all by herself."

One of her most popular refrains is "Self do it!" Her solution for tasks that she'd prefer to push off, such as bed time, is simply, "Mommy, go

away!”

But while one minute she is stridently trying to do things on her own, the next minute she'll eagerly snuggle up to have a book read to her. She will declare an appreciative “tank you” when I dress her doll after her own frustrating attempt, but will stubbornly refuse to hold my hand while climbing the staircase. The look of victory in her eyes after she reaches the top is priceless.

From about six months of age, the seed for independence is sewn and continues to grow, for some of us fiercely. Independence doesn't mean that we don't need others, but rather, that we contribute our fair share, our own efforts, to our relationships and life's circumstances.

In this week's Torah portion, we read the second paragraph of the Shema prayer, while last week's [Torah](#) portion contained the verses of its first paragraph.

We are obligated to recite the [Shema](#), a central prayer, every morning and evening. It contains fundamental beliefs about loving and serving G-d, learning and teaching Torah, and practicing mitzvot. Much of the second paragraph, however, seems to repeat the first, with a few important differences.

The second chapter speaks about the reward and punishment we will earn by following the commandments, whereas the first leaves this out entirely. In addition, the first chapter addresses the Jewish people in the second person singular (you), as individuals, while the second chapter speaks to us in the second person plural (you, collectively).

There are two aspects to cultivating our relationship with [G-d](#), and each is reflective in the respective paragraph of the Shema. The first is G-d's gift of connection to us, without which we would never be able to have a relationship with Him. The second is our efforts and struggles, using our finite capabilities—our intellectual and emotional selves—to reach higher and come closer to G-d.

Reward is only mentioned in the second paragraph because by definition, a reward is something that must be earned by our own merits, not bestowed as a gift. Only once we sweat for something can we really experience the joy of its accomplishment.

Moreover, by struggling to improve our moral character, we become fuller beings. In working on any new endeavor, we develop other parts of our personality—resilience, determination, empathy, generosity. We become not singular beings with one gift, but pluralistic, multidimensional beings.

The second chapter of the Shema teaches us that while the fruits of our labors may be less glorious and less brilliant, they are more real.

Just ask my 2-year-old granddaughter.

By Chana Weisberg

Sunday, July 30, 2023 --- 12 Av, 5783

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.

Monday, July 31, 2023 --- 13 Av, 5783

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.

Tuesday, August 1, 2023 --- 14 Av, 5783

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.

Wednesday, August 2, 2023 --- 15 Av, 5783

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. 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)

Thursday, August 3, 2023 --- 16 Av, 5783

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).

Shabbat, August 5, 2023 --- 18 Av, 5783

Western Lamp Extinguished (c. 578 BCE)

Every evening, the priest would kindle the seven lights of the menorah in the [Holy Temple](#). Miraculously, although six of the seven candles would burn out, the western lamp would remain lit until the following evening. During the reign of the idolatrous [King Ahaz](#) (father of the pious [King Hezekiah](#)), this miracle discontinued. The first time the western lamp was found to have extinguished was on 18 Menachem Av (or, according to other versions, 17 Menachem Av).