

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

5-11 November 2023
21-27 Cheshvan, 5784

Torah: Chayei Sarah
Genesis 23:1 - 25:18
Haftarah: Kings I 1:1-31
PARSHAT CHAYEI
SARAH

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).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Tehilim: The Power of Prayer

As our brethren continue this monumental struggle, to defend themselves from the horrors brought to them, by blood thirty terrorists whose only mission was to maim kill and hurt as many Jewish men women and children as they could. We are reminded that we can all contribute to this mission, no we cannot all be fighting in the battle field but we can contribute to the battlefield by continuing to pray, by continuing to study the Torah, by continuing to be a source of light, support and guide for those around us.

In that fashion, doing those actions we are more then contributing, in a real and effective way.

Jewish men women and children around the world, have taken upon themselves to say Tehilim – Psalms, some are completing the entire book of psalms daily, others over the course of a week.

Over the generations, the saying of Tehilim has been the tested and proven way, in Jewish communities to contend with the horrors and the evil of the day.

Chasidic masters have often expressed their understanding of the transformative power of Tehillim. Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk taught that the recitation of Tehillim creates spiritual channels that connect the individual to the Divine.

Tehillim is recited at all

occasions and at the life cycle events in Judaism's practice and ritual. Tehillim is joyous and song-filled; it is also sober and realistic. It comes to comfort us in our hour of need and to console us in the midst of our sense of loss, pain and grief.

Tehillim is not just something you say, it's something you do. You say it when you want someone to get better, for example, but it's got to transform you as well. Every passuk (verse) is a tool that teaches you how you should treat others in life or how you should treat yourself.

One who regularly recites Tehillim eliminates all types of misfortunes and terrible tragedies from himself, his household, his family and his whole generation, and brings upon them every form of shefa, good blessings and successes" (Pele Yoetz).

By Moishe Mayir Vogel

As Chanukah is approaching, please work with your Rabbi / Chaplain to ensure that you have the necessary items (candles, dreidel etc.) so you can light the candle every night of Chanukah.

Those items will be shipped by Aleph Institute to your institution, at no cost to you or the institution.

Be Like Eliezer, the Ultimate Emissary

In all of Genesis, who is the character that we can most identify with? It is not one of our three Patriarchs or four Matriarchs, nor one of their children or relatives.

That character, in whom we see our own story, is none It can be hard to identify with our patriarchs and matriarchs other than the hero of this week's Torah portion:

Eliezer, the servant of Abraham. The Patriarchs and Matriarchs are more than just the founding fathers and mothers of our people.

According to Kabbalistic teachings, the soul of each and every Jew comprises the qualities and attributes embodied by them. And yet, often, it can be hard for us to identify with our Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Midrash teaches us that "the Patriarchs are truly the [divine] chariot"—just as a chariot has no will of its own, and is but a vehicle for the rider, so too the Patriarchs served as a vehicle for nothing but the divine will. So while our soul possesses love, the attribute of Abraham, discipline, the attribute of Isaac, and compassion, the attribute of Jacob, we also cling to our own aspirations. We navigate through life, and we want to know "what's in it for me." We don't always identify with the "chariot" of our history, with those men and women who saw themselves exclusively as vehicles of the Divine will.

Enter Eliezer.

Eliezer was the servant of Abraham, dispatched to a

distant land to find a bride for

Isaac. Eliezer was entrusted with facilitating the marriage that would produce the Jewish people. It was his job to bring about the union of heaven and earth. Eliezer himself had mixed feelings about his mission. On the one hand, he understood the importance of fulfilling Abraham's request that he find a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's family, but on the other hand, he had a psychological resistance to the success of the mission. According to the Midrash, Eliezer hoped that his own daughter would be the one to marry Isaac; thus, the success of his mission would spell the end of his personal aspiration. Before Eliezer embarked on his mission, he said to Abraham: "Perhaps the woman will not follow me?" Rashi points out that there was a deeper meaning to this innocent-sounding question:

Perhaps the woman will not follow me: It [the word **לָא** (perhaps)] is written [without a vav and may be read] **לָא** (to me). Eliezer had a daughter, and he was looking for a pretext so that Abraham would tell him, to turn to him, to marry off his daughter to him (Isaac). Eliezer was not an independent person son who was capable of completely surrendering himself to his parents. Eliezer was an independent person. An emissary. An individual with his own personality, perspective and agenda. And yet, it was specifically Eliezer, despite his misgivings about the mission, who succeeded in arranging the marriage. He was the one who, relying on his own initiative, using his own creativity, employing his own judgment, was instrumental in the marriage that would perpetuate Abraham's legacy for all future generations. If the purpose of creation is to bring together spirit and matter, then that purpose must be carried out by people like you and me, who, like Eliezer, possess both polar opposites within themselves. By combining our own identity and perspective with the will of the Divine, we are able to use our personal gifts, talents and unique touch to carry out the vision of the Creator. Only when the two diametrical parts of ourselves, the voice of Abraham and the voice of our own individuality, collaborate to achieve one goal are we able to unite our internal "heaven" and "earth," thus fulfilling the purpose of creation.

By Menachem Feldman

Bless New Month

This Shabbat is Shabbat Mevarchim ("the Shabbat that blesses" the new month): a special prayer is recited blessing the Rosh Chodesh ("Head of the Month") of the upcoming month of Kislev, which falls on Tuesday of next week.

Prior to the blessing, we announce the precise time of the molad, the "birth" of the new moon. See molad times on side of Aleph Institute calendar.

It is a Chabad custom to recite the entire book of Psalms before morning prayers, and to conduct farbrengens (chassidic gatherings) in the course of the Shabbat.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, November 5, 2023-21 Cheshvan, 5784

Passing of R. David Ibn Zimra (1574)

R. David ibn Zimra, known by the acronym Radvaz, was a great rabbi and scholar who led the Jewish communities of Egypt and Safed for sixty years. Radvaz was held in high esteem by his contemporaries, and is the author of 3000 responsa, covering a vast array of topics. Among his more famous students are R. Isaac Luria (the Ari) and R. Betzalel Ashkenazi (author of Shitah Mekubetztes). It is said that Elijah the Prophet revealed himself to him.

Monday, November 6, 2023-22 Cheshvan, 5784

Lisbon Earthquake (1755)

A great earthquake struck Lisbon, Portugal, destroying much of the city including the courthouse of the Inquisition.

Tuesday, November 7, 2023-23 Cheshvan, 5784

Hasmonean Holiday (137 BCE)

In Talmudic times, Cheshvan 23 was commemorated as the day on which the stones of the altar which were defiled by the Greeks were removed from the Holy Temple.

Wednesday, November 8, 2023-24 Cheshvan, 5784

Passing of R. Avraham Azulai (1643)

R. Avraham was a famous kabbalist who resided in Hebron, Jerusalem, and Gaza. He authored Chessed L'Avraham, and was the great-grandfather of R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai (the Chida). R. Avraham's signature had the appearance of a ship, to commemorate the time when the ship he was traveling on capsized along with all his possessions, and he was miraculously saved (Shem Hagedolim).

Thursday, November 9, 2023-25 Cheshvan, 5784

Passing of R. Efraim Eliezer Yolles (1988)

R. Efraim Eliezer was an influential rabbi in Philadelphia who enjoyed a close relationship with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, with whom he corresponded regularly. He would often pay a visit to the Rebbe in conjunction with Sukkot, Passover, and/or Shavuot, quoting the Talmudic passage, "One must greet his teacher during the holiday."

Friday, November 10, 2023-26 Cheshvan, 5784

Passing of R. Refael of Hamburg (1803)

R. Refael was the chief rabbi of the three sister cities of Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbek in Germany for twenty-three years. These three important Jewish centers were known as AHU, after their Hebrew abbreviations, and were the residence of many famous scholars and personalities, such as R. Jonathan Eibenschutz, R. Tzvi Ashkenazi, R. Jacob Emden, and Glueckel of Hameln.

Shabbat, November 11, 2023-27 Cheshvan, 5784

Flood ends (2104 BCE)

On the 27th of Cheshvan of the year 1657 from creation (2104 BCE) "the earth dried" (Genesis 8:14) completing the 365-day duration of the great flood that wiped out all life on earth save for the eight human beings and the animals (at least two of each species) in Noah's ark; on this day G-d commanded Noah to "Come out of the ark" and repopulate, settle and civilize the earth.