

PARSHAT BESHALACH

11-17 Shevat 5784
21-27 January 2024

Torah: Exodus 13:17-17:16
Haftorah: Judges 4:4-5:31

Calendar

Chaplains have monthly calendars available.

Psalms Daily

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalms 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain/Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Sweetening the Waters

Disciplining children is an integral part of parenting. Without discipline, a child lacks necessary boundaries and an appreciation for consequences — indispensable tools for adult life. Nonetheless, all too often, well-intentioned discipline estranges children and, instead of prodding them in the right direction, steels their resolve to continue on their ill-chosen path. At what point is "tough love" too much? To answer this question, first let us analyze the parent/child relationship dynamic, starting with the core of this powerful relationship. Why do parents love their children? As I am writing this article, my wife and sister-in-law are sitting beside me (both holding their little infants). In response to this question, my wife shrugged and said, "It's just natural." My sister-in-law was confused by the question. "You probably meant to ask, 'How is it that some people don't love their children?'" Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi defines "nature" as an event or phenomenon that occurs constantly. Nature isn't any more logical than the miraculous, but its repetitiveness dulls our senses to the extent that we can't imagine life otherwise. Why is it natural for parents to love their child no matter what? The real reason is because we are merely a reflection of G-d; created in His image. And since G-d unconditionally loves His children, we are programmed to feel and behave as such. And following G-d's example, our love for our children expresses itself in two primary forms. The most obvious expressions of love are embraces, kisses, gifts, and other forms of endearing behavior. Disciplinary actions also are motivated by love, perhaps an even deeper love than the obvious expressions of affection. We give gifts to distant relatives and casual acquaintances, but disciplinary measures are reserved for our

children only. We shower praise liberally, but we reserve our well-intentioned constructive criticism for those whom we really care about. We have to really love a person dearly in order to care enough to dispense tough love.

"[The Israelites] came to Marah, but they could not drink waters from Marah because they were bitter ... The L-rd instructed [Moses] concerning a piece of wood, which he cast into the water, and the water became sweet." - Exodus 15:23-25

"They came to Marah."

Nourishing, flowing water is a metaphor for kindness. On their way to receiving the Torah, the Israelites encountered "bitter waters." It was G-d's kindness, but it did not express itself as such. Rather, it was a more profound level of love which expressed itself as hardships, adversity, and difficulty. Hardships, adversity, and difficulty which were intended to elevate the nation to a higher level, to reveal their latent powers, to mold them into a refined nation.

"But they could not drink waters from Marah."

It was G-d's kindness, but it did not express itself as such. The Israelites couldn't drink the bitter waters. A child can become non-receptive to disciplinary actions for two reasons: a) The harshness of the measures are too much for the child to bear. b) He doesn't feel the love inherent in the actions.

"Because they were bitter."

The Israelites were too "bitter" and unrefined. They were not mature enough to appreciate the "waters" which lurked behind the bitter taste.

"The L-rd instructed him concerning a piece of wood, which he cast into the water, and the water became sweet."

At this point G-d realized that the bitter waters were counterproductive. If the child

cannot bear the pain, or if the child cannot appreciate the love motivating the discipline, then it is time to sweeten the waters.

By Naftali Silberberg

Moses' Heavy Hand

The crossing of the Red Sea, the manna, the water from the rock, and the war with Amalek, are some of the events described in this week's Torah portion.

Each of these pleads for discussion, and at the moment we will dwell on the manner of victory over Amalek. The Torah portion's last words make Amalek the eternal enemy of Israel, proclaiming "war with Amalek from generation to generation."

"When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. And the hands of Moses became heavy..." With these words the battle is decided; not just Moses' struggle, but the war of the generations, ours as well. A Judaism of words alone has the weight of the air it is Israel's perpetuation, its victory over the irresistible currents of history, is assured not by eloquence and noble ideals, but by its actions. The hands of Moses decide the battle. There are few abstract ideals, though Jewish in origin, that are not now part of the universal heritage of the civilized world. In the abstract, love of G-d and ideals, though Jewish in origin, that are not now part of the universal heritage of the civilized world. In the abstract, love of G-d and mankind, the superiority of spirit over materialism, faith in the Creator — these are not by themselves marks of Judaism or Jewishness. Other religions (and to a degree, non-religious people as well) profess these ideals.

The distinguishing characteristic of Israel is its concretization of these abstractions, its unique method of sanctifying human life and activities, its individual and exacting road to G-dliness, and its own conception of the G-dly life — these make Judaism. Not the



ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Aleph Institute
Hyman & Martha Rogal Center

5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

www.AlephNE.org
info@AlephNE.org

eloquence of oratory, not the profundities of theology, not the inspiration of the heart, but the tangible, physical hands, the deeds, the day-by-day affirmation by doing what G-d demands of us — these spell the victory of Israel over Amalek. When Jews "let down the hands," when observance of Torah is neglected, then Amalek prevails, the future of

Israel is in doubt. The Jew without mitzvot has little to make or keep him Jewish. Of course, Moses' hands are heavy — performance of mitzvot, practicing self-control, bringing Judaism into every sphere of life — this is no shortcut to Heaven. But there can be no viable, inspiring, worthwhile Judaism without mitzvot. A Judaism of words alone has the

weight of the air it is. A Judaism of deeds, of mitzvot, has the solidity to survive the crush of persecution and the blandishments of assimilation, to prevail over any weapon the enemies of Israel can devise.

By Zalman Posner

NEW YEAR FOR THE TREES

Tu BiShevat ("the 15th of Shevat") which marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees." This is the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle.

Legally, the "New Year for Trees" relates to the various tithes that must be separated from produce grown in the

Holy Land. We mark the day by eating fruit, particularly from the "Seven Kinds" that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates). On this day we remember that "Man is a tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) and reflect on the lessons we can derive from our botanical analogue.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, January 21, 2024-11 Shevat, 5784 Jews of Colmar Expelled (1510)

Three years after the request by the Council of Colmar, Emperor Maximilian I granted permission to expel the Jews of Colmar, Germany (now France). The community exerted every effort to secure the repeal of the decree of banishment. With the help of Rabbi Joselman of Rosheim, the leader of the Alsatian Jews, the enforcement of the decree was postponed until S. George's Day of 1512.

Birth of the "Chafetz Chaim" (1838)

Birth of the revered Torah scholar, pietist and Jewish leader Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) of Radin (Poland), author of Chafetz Chaim (a work on the evils of gossip and slander and the guidelines of proper speech) and Mishnah Berurah (a codification of Torah law).

Monday, January 22, 2024-12 Shevat, 5784 Warsaw Ghetto Insurgency Begins (1943)

On January 18, 1943, the Germans began their second deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, which led to the first instance of armed resistance. The deportation was halted within a few days; only 5,000 Jews were removed instead of 8,000 as planned. The Nazis retreated, only to return three months later, at which time the Warsaw uprising started in earnest.

Passing of R. Chaim Kapusi (1631)

R. Chaim Kapusi was one of the leading sages of Egypt in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. He passed away at the age of ninety, on 12 Shevat in the year 5391 from Creation (1631). It is related that R. Chaim once became blind, and the townsfolk spread rumors attributing his condition to bribery, as the verse states, "Bribery blinds the eyes of the wise." Hearing this, R. Chaim got up before the entire congregation and announced: "If it is true that I

have accepted bribery, may my eyes retain their sightlessness. But if it is not true, may my vision be restored!" Miraculously, his vision returned immediately, and he proceeded to identify the congregants by name (Shem Hagedolim).

Tuesday, January 23, 2024-13 Shevat, 5784

Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah Schneersohn (1942)

Wife of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson, and mother of the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah (1860-1942) lived through the upheavals of the first half of the 20th century. After Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's release, the family resettled in Latvia and later, Poland; in 1940, they survived the bombing of Warsaw, were rescued from Nazi-occupied city, and emigrated to the United States. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah passed away in New York on the 13th of Shevat of 1942.

Thursday, Auschwitz Liberated (1945)

On January 27, 1945, the Russian army arrived in Auschwitz, the most infamous of the Nazi death camps, and liberated some 7,000 survivors—those left behind as unfit to join the evacuation "Death March."

Wednesday, January 24, 2024-14 Shevat, 5784

Penei Yehoshua (1756)

Shevat 14 is the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk Katz (1680-1756), author of the Talmudic work "Penei Yehoshua." He served as rabbi of Lemberg (Lvov) in 1718, Berlin in 1730, Metz in 1734 and Frankfurt in 1740.

Thursday, January 25, 2024-15 Shevat, 5784

Birthday of R. Nechemiah of Dubrowna (1788-1852)

R. Nechemiah was a brilliant Torah scholar who lived in Dubrowna, a town in what is now Belarus. He was a disciple of the first three

Rebbses of Chabad, R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, R. DovBer of Lubavitch, and R. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (who was also his first cousin through marriage). He kept a scholarly correspondence with R. Menachem Mendel, some of which is preserved in his book of responsa, Divrei Nechemiah. R. Nechemiah was born on 15 Shevat in the year 5548 from Creation (1788) and passed away on his sixty-fourth birthday in 5612 (1852).

Friday, January 26, 2024--16 Shevat, 5784

The "Shaarei Teshuvah" (c.1823)

Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Margolis first served as rabbi in Brestitzki, Poland, and later in Dubno, Poland/Ukraine. He is the author of a digest of halachic responsa written after the publication of the Code of Jewish Law, known as "Shaarei Teshuvah." This work can be found in the margins of most prints of the Code of Jewish Law.

Shabbat, January 27, 2024-17 Shevat, 5784

Purim Saragossa (1421)

A noxious plot was brewing against the Jewish community of Saragossa, but they were completely unaware of the looming danger. They were spared, however, thanks to a handful of synagogues beadles who acted on a dream they all had. The resulting salvation on the 17th of Shevat was celebrated by Saragossan Jews and dubbed "Purim Saragossa."

A Hebrew Megillah (scroll) was penned, describing the details of the miraculous story. To this day, this scroll is read in certain communities on Purim Saragossa.