

# Torah Weekly

ד"סב

## PARSHAT VAYIKRA PARSHAT ZACHOR

7-13 Adar 5784  
17-23 March 2024

*Torah:* Leviticus 1:1 – 5:26  
*Parshat Zachor:* Deut. 25:17-19  
*Haftorah:* Samuel I 15:1-34

### Calendar

Chaplains have monthly calendars available.

### Psalms Daily

#### Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

*Psalm 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).

## Am I Only Human?

Chassidic teaching elaborates on the dual and dueling forces within us. On the one side is the human soul; instinctive, practical and obsessed with survival. In the other corner is the G-dly, transcendent soul; no personal agenda, completely committed to executing G-d's will. Despite the common overlap of interests – most things that are good for the individual are good for G-d – Chassidic teaching does not tolerate a "live and let live" coexistence. Being human or even humane won't cut it. We are not "only human," we are part G-dly; and our infinite side won't rest on good enough. We must outdo the preprogrammed natural kindness of humanity; we must add value beyond the factory-installed equipment we came with. We must be G-dly, not earthly. An animal does what it does, it makes no choices, it makes no mistakes, and in fact it "makes" nothing at all. Lions eat zebras and raccoons knock over garbage pails. We can be annoyed but never angry with them; they simply do what they do. We must never be raccoons. We must never settle for doing what we do simply because we are so programmed.

Raccoons knock over garbage pails. We can be annoyed but never angry with them. To be sure, our propensities are often fine and upstanding, yet if they are just our natural tendencies then we have not "done" anything. Grass grows and angels praise G-d—because they have no alternative, they are hardwired to do so. We must do more, infinitely more. It is not sufficient to passively allow the principal capital, our inborn skills, to just increase at the standard rate, that doesn't justify the risk G-d took of entrusting a part of Him within us. The Book of Leviticus begins with the laws of sacrifices. G-d demands that we surrender to Him our animal, our innate instincts; that we live consciously, making strides that outpace the inevitable. This is a personal message in the sacrificial procedure. "A man who offers from among you an offering to

G-d..." refers to more than surrendering our bad habits, it means doing more than can "reasonably" be expected; it means aligning with our G-dly, infinitely productive side.

Avodah (service), one of the pillars upon which the world stands (Ethics 1:1), includes the sacrificial process and its personal parallel, the duty to stretch beyond the intuitive.

When the serial failure suddenly succeeds, when father and son turn the page on thirty years of estrangement, they have done the unpredictable; they have surrendered their animal, their well-worn trends, to G-d. They experience the miraculous, they serve G-d instead of their survival instinct and they are free. The trajectory had them headed for repetitive failure and now they have exceeded the conventional, they have caused G-d's presence to be evident in the world. 2, 4, 6 does not dictate that 8 must follow. We can achieve the undreamed of, past (disastrous) performance is not a guarantee of future (calamitous) results.

So, we need not be "only human"; boring automatons, destined to repeat our patterns till the end of our days. We can change our patterns when we surrender the animalistic impulses we dutifully follow, when we offer them on the altar and follow its smoky residue up to the heavens. It's scary out there beyond the known, the comfortable and the familiar, it is always easier to stay with the "same old same old," yet that's where value is added and a dwelling place for G-d is made.

*By Baruch Epstein*

## Go the Extra Mile

The first chapters of Leviticus describe the offerings that Jews brought to the Sanctuary. It sums it all up with the statement: "Offer the best of everything to G-d." This phrase serves as the basis for a beautiful concept in Jewish teaching.

A building that serves as a synagogue or as a center of Jewish learning should be more beautiful than the personal homes of the

community members. The furniture donated to a synagogue should be more comfortable and more luxurious than those in its members' personal homes. When we offer food to a starving poor person, the food should be of better quality than the food that we eat ourselves. The clothing donated to the poor should be nicer than those we wear ourselves. We put all our energy and resources into the things that we truly love. A similar thought is expressed in a verse that the Jews sang when they crossed the Red Sea: "This is my G-d, and I will do beautiful things for Him." When we offer food to a starving poor person, the food should be of better quality than the food that we eat ourselves. The Talmud interprets this to mean that one should strive to acquire the most beautiful etrog and lulav, a beautiful sukkah, tallit and tefillin, a neatly written Torah scroll, and so on.

These verses convey a teaching that is contrary to contemporary practice. People tend to donate things only when they no longer need them. Old, rickety furniture and used clothing are the typical stuff for donations. The Torah, however, teaches us to do a mitzvah with heart and soul. If we treat the poor with empathy, we would not give them things of lesser quality than we want for ourselves. But the Torah goes beyond that and says that we should give the poor even better than what we ourselves have. This is because we put all our energy and resources into the things that we truly love. Tzedakah (charity) is a mitzvah, and when a person loves doing mitzvot, he will invest more in the mitzvah than in his ordinary needs. A person who thinks of his religious obligations as a burden and nuisance will do the bare minimum that is required by Jewish law. Once he is "of the hook," he will no longer exert any effort in doing more. But the Jew who appreciates how Judaism enriches his life with depth and meaning does mitzvot with love. And when a mitzvah is done out of love, it is done with care and beauty. The extent of how much



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effort a person puts into mitzvot is a pretty good barometer to measure his attitude towards Judaism. When given an opportunity to earn more dollars, few people will say, "Why bother? I can manage with the

bare necessities." Why would the spiritual quality of life be any less important? A Jew with a healthy attitude towards Judaism will "go the extra mile" and strive to do mitzvot in the very best way possible. The mitzvah itself

is only half its value. The same mitzvah that is done with a good attitude has double the value.

*By Avrohom Altein*

## War Against Persian Jew-Haters (356 BCE)

On the 13th of Adar 3405 (356 BCE), battles were fought throughout the Persian Empire between the Jews and those seeking to kill them, following a decree issued by the Persian King Achashveirosh to his Prime Minister, Haman, 11 months earlier, allowing for the widespread

murder of Jews on that day. 75,000 enemies of the Jews were killed on that day, including Haman's ten sons, whose bodies were subsequently hanged. The Jews did not take any of the possessions of the slain as booty, though authorized to do so by the king's decree.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, March 17, 2024-7 Adar II, 5784**

**Moses' Birth & Passing (1393 and 1273 BCE)**

Moses was born in Egypt on the 7th of Adar of the year 2368 from creation (1393 BCE) and passed away on his 120th birthday - Adar 7, 2488 (1273 BCE)

**The Spanish Inquisition (1481)**

The Inquisition was created in the twelfth century to find "Christian heretics" who would be punished or killed. Eventually, Jews too were open to such charges of heresy, simply for being Jewish; and torture was routinely used to extract "confessions". In 1481 the Inquisition began to function in Spain to expose the secret Jews, known as the Anusim, or Marranos. This Inquisition was anti-Jewish more than in any previous countries. The first public sentencing and burning alive of six Jewish men and one woman by the Spanish Inquisition was held on this date in Seville in Southern Spain. Following the start of the Spanish Inquisition many Jews fled Spain -- commenced on the 1st of Adar, six weeks before the Exodus.

**Passing of Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz, "Kli Yakar" (1619)**

Born in the year 1550 in Luntschitz, Poland, with just the name Ephraim, the name Sholomo was added later during a life-threatening illness. Rabbi Sholomo Ephraim was a disciple of the famed Talmudist, Rabbi Sholomo Luria, author of the Yam Shel Sholomo, as well as the great Jewish kabbalist and philosopher, Rabbi Judah Lowe, known as the "Maharal of Prague". In the year 1604, after having first headed the yeshivah in Levov, he was appointed rabbi of Prague, replacing Rabbi Lowe, who was then quite elderly. He held the position until his passing. He is the author of a number of works but is perhaps best known for his work *Kli Yakar* (a commentary on the Torah) and *Olelot Ephraim* (a collection of sermons). While most say he passed away on 7 Adar II, some records have 7 Iyar as the correct date.

**Sinking of Struma (1942)**

On December 12, 1941, the Struma ship set off from the port of Constanta, Romania, carrying 800 Jewish Romanian refugees headed for British Mandatory Palestine. The ship was detained at Istanbul, where British authorities refused to allow the ship to continue to its destination. On February 23, 1942, Turkish

authorities towed the ship out to the Black Sea, where it drifted aimlessly due to a failed engine. The next day, the ship was sunk by a Soviet submarine. Only one passenger survived the horrific disaster.

**Monday, March 18, 2024-8 Adar II, 5784**

**Maryland Law Revoked (1825)**

In 1715, the Crown Colony of Maryland enacted a law requiring any citizen who wished to hold public office to take an oath of abjuration, which contained the words, "upon the true faith of a Christian". On February 26, 1825, an act "for the relief of the Jews in Maryland," was passed by Maryland's House of Delegates.

**Tuesday, March 19, 2024-9 Adar II, 5784**

**First Torah Dispute (1st century CE)**

The schools of Shammai and Hillel for the very first time disagreed regarding a case of Jewish law., the schools argued regarding many different laws, until the law was established according to the teachings of the "House of Hillel".

**Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe arrives in America (1940)**

After a 12-day sea voyage, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), disembarked at the New York harbor on the 9th of Adar II of 1940, following his miraculous rescue from Nazi-occupied Warsaw.

**Thursday, March 21, 2024-11 Adar II, 5784**

**Passing of Rogatchover (1936)**

Rabbi Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon passed away in Vienna on Thursday, March 5, 1936. Rabbi Rosen, born in 1858, and raised in the Belarusian city of Rogatchov, served for decades as a rabbi in the Latvian city of Dvinsk (Daugavpils).

Rabbi Rosen authored tens of thousands of responsa on the Talmud and Jewish law. Many of them have been compiled in the set of volumes *Tzafnat Paneach*.

**Passing of the "Chida" (1806)**

Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, popularly known as the Chida, an acronym of his four names, was a master Talmudist, Kabbalist, decisor of Halachah, historian, bibliophile and traveler, who raised funds on behalf of the Jews of the Holy Land. His prolific writings cover virtually every area of Jewish tradition, history, and belief. Born in 1724 in Jerusalem, he studied

under the greatest Sephardic sages in the holy city, which teachings heavily influenced his prolific writings. His chronicles of his travels offer invaluable insights into Jewish life of his times, and his Torah teachings are studied until this day. Toward the end of his life, he settled in Livorno, where he passed away in 1806.

**Friday, March 22, 2024-12 Adar II, 5784**

**Herod's Temple Dedicated (11 BCE)**

After 334 years, the 2nd Holy Temple in Jerusalem was in disrepair. In the year 19 BCE, King Herod I floated the idea of rebuilding and renovating the Temple. Though many Jews were wary of Herod's motives, the renovation was completed eight years later. The new structure was magnificent, causing the Talmud to state: "He who has not seen Herod's edifice has not seen a magnificent edifice!"

**Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires Bombed (1992)**

On the afternoon of 12 Adar II 5752 (March 17, 1992), a pickup truck loaded with explosives smashed into the front of the Israeli Embassy and detonated. The embassy, a church, and a school were destroyed. The blast killed 29 and wounded 242.

**Shabbat, March 23, 2024-13 Adar II, 5784**

**Maccabee victory (135 BCE)**

The Maccabees defeated the Syrian General Nicanor in a battle fought four years after the Maccabee's liberation of the Holy Land and the miracle of Chanukah.

**Passing of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1986)**

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was one of the major leaders of American Jewry in the 20th century. Born in 1895, he came to New York in 1936 in order to escape the oppressive Soviet regime. In addition to the students in the yeshivah he headed, he guided rabbis and lay people with his insightful and definitive responsa on virtually every area of Jewish law. Many of them have been collected in the multi-volume *Igrot Moshe*.

**Passing of R. Yehudah the Pious (1217)**

R. Yehudah HaChassid—the pious—was held in high esteem for his piety and saintliness. He authored *Sefer Chassidim*, a collection of ethical and halachic teachings that is widely studied to this day. The kabbalistic instructions included in his so-called "testament" are accepted and practiced in many communities.