

## PARSHAT TZAV PARSHAT PARAH

14-20 Adar II 5784  
24-30 March 2024

*Torah:* Leviticus 6:1-8:36  
*Parshat Parah:* 19:1-22  
*Haftorah:* Ezekiel 36:16-36

### Calendar

Chaplains have monthly calendars available.

### 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)

### Psalms 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).

## What You Need To Do and What You Need To Get Done

### Our Routine

A Chassid (Hassidic Jew) in the galoshes trade once asked his Rebbe to bless his faltering business. Seeking to calm the unduly worried Chassid, the Rebbe said, "I have seen feet in galoshes, but I have never seen a head in galoshes." The Chassid gathered at once that he was overly invested in the unimportant. Likewise, many of our activities just need to "get done." They are not the goal; they are the means to a goal. For example, our first task when we wake in the morning is to dress. We don't get out of bed to dress; we get dressed to go out and do what we need to do. The same goes for eating breakfast and driving to work: these are simply things we get done in service of our goal. So what do we wake up to do? Some will tell you they get out of bed to go to work, but for most that is not true either. We might enjoy our work, but if we didn't need to be there, we would likely take the day off. The primary reason that we go to work is to earn money to pay our bills, so we can live. It's something we need to get done in order to do what we need to do. But why do we live? Are we here for ourselves, or is there a deeper purpose?

### To Do

G-d made us so that we could serve Him. That is the reason we get out of bed. That is what we do. Everything else—waking up, getting dressed, eating breakfast, driving to work, earning money—is what we get done in order to do what we are here to do. This doesn't mean that we can't enjoy the things we get done, or that we must pay them little heed. If we don't pay attention to what we eat for breakfast, we won't have the proper fuel to do what we woke up to do. If we don't enjoy our downtime, we won't have the

relaxation and focus necessary to return to work. Accomplishing the things we need to get done requires attention and care. They aren't negligible; they are important items on our daily agenda, without which we cannot do what we need to do. On the other hand, these activities don't rise to the to-do level. Once we know what we are here to do, we can appreciate it and take it seriously. When we realize that we are here to give charity or to pray or to chant kiddush, that this was the reason we woke up in the morning and went through our day, we "put our head into it"—we invest ourselves in that action. We take our time, give it our fullest attention, value it and derive immense satisfaction from it.

### To Get Done

We spend more time on the things we get done than on the things we do. This is the nature of things. Take going to school, for example. You wake up, get dressed, eat, drive, park, lug your books, enter, greet friends, take your seat, endure roll call, and sit through an hour's lecture, during which the teacher repeats much information you already know in order to set the stage for new information. Once it's over, you collect your books, say goodbye, drive home and do homework designed to review and retain what you learned. The entire exercise took four hours, but it took only three minutes to learn the new piece of information that you came to learn. Suppose you went to school but failed to learn anything. You would have spent your entire day getting stuff done, but you would have accomplished nothing. Doing the one thing you came to do justifies the effort it takes to get to that moment. When you realize that this one task or moment is the purpose of your entire day, you invest yourself in it, doing it with gusto and joy. At that moment, the entire day clicks. It all has a point.

### Removing Ashes

We can now gain insight into a curious passage in the Torah. Before delineating the laws for sacrifices in the Temple, the Torah veers off and

describes the ritual for removing excess ashes from the altar. Removing excess ash is important, but why does it precede the sacrificial rite?

The Torah teaches us that before offering a sacrifice, one must complete many preparatory tasks. The ashes must be cleaned, the fires must be stoked, the offering must be purchased and brought to the priest, and the knives must be laid out. These are all critical details without which a sacrifice cannot be offered. The Torah tells us that the kohen wore special garments while removing the ashes, but the priestly vestments were worn only when offering sacrifices. This one detail speaks volumes. It tells us that none of the preparatory tasks are as important as the sacrifice itself. The sacrifice is the goal; these are just the means. They serve the goal and enable us to fulfill it. When we do things that need to get done, we "wear special garments"—we don't dismiss them just because they aren't the primary goal. Yet we also don't treat them like we treat the primary goal, just as the priestly vestments weren't worn for the preparatory tasks. It's easy to mistake the many preparatory tasks for the goal, because they take up so much of our time. We spend much more time on the means than on the goal. We wake up each morning with a long to-get-done list, whereas the to-do list is fairly short. The Torah reminds us to focus on our goal and never confuse the means with the end. Let's do what we are here to do!

By Lazer Gurkow

## The Poor Man's Offering

The various types of offerings brought on the altar in the Sanctuary and in Jerusalem were classified as Major Sanctity and Lesser Sanctity. The Mincha (meal) offering of the poor is



called Kodesh Kodoshim (Major Sanctity) "like the sin-offering" of the repentant Abarbanel, the great Spanish commentator, observes that while other offerings may be of relatively minor sacredness, those of the poor, who give with sacrifice and self-denial, are of major holiness. Similarly, the expression of contrition by the erstwhile sinner, his remorse for evildoing, is cherished by his merciful Creator. The wealthy need not

patronize their less grandly endowed brothers. The significance of the offering lies less in its quantitative measure than in the degree that the donor is involved, how much of himself he offers. The wealthy with their more lavish philanthropies need not patronize their less grandly endowed brothers. At the same time, the measure for G-d being the heart, it ill becomes the modest contributor to charity to deprecate the wealthy or to boast of his own

relative generosity ("if I can give five dollars, he can give ten thousand..."). While the negotiable value of the large gifts of the wealthy is not diminished by pride, small charities given arrogantly have little material or spiritual significance.

*By Zalman Posner*

## Purim Observances

Purim is on Sunday, 14 Adar II/March 30

Purim observances include:

- A)** Reading of the Megillah (Book of Esther), which recounts the story of the Purim miracle.
- B)** Giving to the poor (gifts of money should be given to at least two poor people).
- C)** Sending gifts of food to friends (a minimum of two ready-to-eat foods to at least one friend).
- D)** The Purim feast.

In addition, the 'Al Hanissim' is recited during prayer.

Customs include dressing up in disguising costumes and eating the traditional Purim food, the Hamantash.

*(In Jerusalem and other ancient walled cities, the festival is observed the next day, on 15 Adar--see entries for Adar 15.)*

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

### **Sunday, March 24, 2024-14 Adar II, 5784** **Purim Victory Celebrated (356 BCE)**

The festival of Purim celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's plot "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day."

The events of Purim extended over a period of several years, culminating in the victory celebrations of Adar 14-15 of 356 BCE. Below is a timeline of the major events. For the detailed story, see the Book of Esther and The Story of Purim.

### **Conclusion of First Gulf War (1991)**

On August 2, 1990, the Iraqi army under Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait. After five weeks of heavy fighting, coalition forces succeeded in liberating Kuwait, and a ceasefire was declared on February 28, 1991, corresponding to the holiday of Purim. Despite threats from Hussein to bombard Israel with chemical warheads, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, stated unequivocally that "the Land of Israel is the safest place in the world," and predicted that the war would be over by Purim.

### **Monday, March 25, 2024-15 Adar II, 5784**

### **Ezekiel Foretells the Downfall of Israel's Enemies (421 BCE)**

On this date, in the year following the Holy Temple's destruction, G-d tells Ezekiel to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and for the Jewish nation's other enemies, foretelling their ultimate downfall.

### **Purim Victory Celebrated in Shushan (356 BCE)**

The battles fought between the Jews and their enemies, which took place on Adar 13 throughout the Persian empire (see "Today in Jewish History" for that date), continued for two days -- Adar 13 and 14 -- in the capital city of Shushan, where there were a greater number of Jew haters. Thus, the victory celebrations in Shushan were held on the 15th of Adar, and the observance of the festival of Purim was instituted for that day in Shushan and all walled cities. (See Laws and Customs below).

### **Tuesday, March 26, 2024-16 Adar II, 5784** **Rebuilding of Jerusalem Wall Begun (c. 41 CE)**

Agrippa I, appointed by the Roman Emperor to rule over Judea, was pious and kind to his subjects. During his reign, the Jews began to prosper and live comfortably. The Sages of the time accorded him great respect.

Agrippa I started construction to repair, broaden and heighten the walls around Jerusalem. The Romans, wary of the Jews' rising prosperity, placed many obstacles in his way. Nonetheless, the wall was completed, though the finished product was not as magnificent as originally planned. The 16th of Adar, the day when the construction commenced, was instituted to be a joyous day.

### **Wednesday, March 27, 2024-17 Adar II, 5784** **Torah Sages Escape (c. 75 BCE)**

In the year 91 BCE, Alexander Yannai of the Hasmonean family succeeded his brother Yehuda Aristobolus to the throne of Judea. Alexander Yannai was a Sadducee who virulently persecuted the Pharisees. At one point during his bloody reign, following a victory he scored on a battlefield, he invited all the Torah scholars for a celebratory feast. During this feast he was slighted by one of the guests, which led him to execute all the Torah scholars in attendance. A few of the sages managed to escape to the town of Sulukus in Syria. There, too, they encountered anti-Semitic enemies who murdered many of the exiled sages. The handful of surviving Torah scholars went in to hiding, finding refuge in the home of an individual named Zevadai. On the night of the 17th of Adar they escaped the hostile city of Sulukus. Eventually these surviving scholars revived Torah Judaism. The date they escaped the clutches of death was established as a day of celebration.

### **Thursday, March 28, 2024-18 Adar II, 5784**

### **First US Jewish Periodical (1823)**

The inaugural edition of "The Jew," the first Jewish periodical in the United States, was published in March

of 1823. It was published in New York City and edited by Solomon H. Jackson.

The subtitle of the paper was "Being a defense of Judaism against all adversaries, and particularly against the insidious attacks of Israel's Advocate." Its major aim was to combat missionaries, and specifically "Israel's Advocate," a Christian conversionist periodical published at the same time. The periodical was issued until March 1825.

### **Salvation of Yemenite Jewry (1722)**

The Jews of Sana'a, Yemen, were saved from a decree plotted against them by the king's anti-Semitic ministers, in which they were accused of killing the grand prince. Yemenite Jewry celebrated this day each year with feasting and rejoicing.

### **Friday, March 29, 2024-19 Adar II, 5784** **Israel Secures Ein Gedi (1949)**

Following the War of Independence, Israel needed to secure its borders against the hostile Arab nations which surrounded it. Ein Gedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea, was secured on Sunday, March 20, 1949.

### **Passing of R. Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1932)**

Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld played a leading role in the Jewish community of British-Mandatory Jerusalem for almost six decades. He authored the book of responsa *Salmas Chaim*.

### **Shabbat, March 30, 2024-20 Adar II, 5784**

### **Choni the Circle Maker prays for rain (1st Century BCE)**

"One year, most of Adar went by and it didn't rain. They sent for Choni the Circle Maker. He prayed and the rains didn't come. He drew a circle, stood in it and said: 'Master of The World! Your children have turned to me; I swear in Your great name that I won't move from here until You have pity on Your children.' The rains came down." - *Talmud, Taanit 23a*

### **Passing of "Bach" (1640)**

Adar 20 is the Yahrzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Yoel Sirkes (1560?-1640), Rabbi of Krakow and author of the Bayit Chadash ("Bach") commentary on the great Halachic work, the Arba'ah Turim.