

PARSHAT BEHAR

11-17 Iyar 5784
19-25 May 2024

Torah: Leviticus 25:1-26:2
Haftorah: Jeremiah 32:6-22

Where Are You Heading?

Have time for a tale or two? One nice day, the Czar decided to make a surprise visit to an army base somewhere in Russia. Reaching the base, he found it neglected and empty. A wise man, the Czar knew where to find his men: in the local tavern. Indeed, the tavern was full of soldiers making merry and drinking hard. The Czar, dressed in civilian clothing, stood at the side, observing. About two hours later, one soldier stood up and reminded his comrades of their duties and how they better get back to the base before the general would arrive. Hanging on each other for support and balance, the drunken soldiers began the mile-long trek home. Foot by foot, step by step, men were falling. What had begun as a group of two hundred soon dwindled to a mere handful. The Czar continued observing. About five feet before the base's gate, a soldier collapsed. The Czar walked over to him and made a red mark on his neck. Two feet further, another soldier collapsed. Only three soldiers made it to the base. The next day, the entire division was informed of an imminent inspection by the Czar. The soldiers quickly went into high alert, cleaning, and polishing. This was no joke. The Czar walked through the rows of soldiers standing at attention, oblivious to the cleanliness and effort of the men. He was looking for something; he was after the mark. And he saw it. He ran up to the soldier, raised his hand and mercilessly slapped the lad over and over.

With the last ounce of his strength, the beaten soldier begged for an explanation. The Czar replied that this was a consequence of his going to the bar the previous night. The beaten soldier was at loss. "But, but.... everyone else went!" he sputtered. "Besides, I deserve credit for making it back so close to the base." The Czar looked at him thoughtfully and said, "We are all humans, and humans make mistakes. Am I upset that my soldiers left their posts? Yes, but I can understand, and I can forgive."

"Why do I forgive them? Because I watched closely as those drunken soldiers fell to the floor; they all fell with their heads towards the base, demonstrating their commitment and loyalty to the place where they want to be—my army. They failed, okay, but their hearts were in the right place. You, on the other hand, made it almost all the way. Your body was in the right place, but your heart was not. How do I know? Because when you fell, you fell backwards, your head away from the base, towards the tavern. Your true loyalties were revealed."

The second story: A young woman comes back to her matchmaker after the first date and says, "It's over. Why? Well, today our values are on equal ground. The problem is that he is heading south, whereas I am aiming northward. We just happened to meet halfway..."

The name of this week's Torah reading, Behar, "on a mountain," teaches us that life is about climbing a mountain. Higher and higher we scale; to come closer to G-d is our goal. Sometimes we find ourselves going downhill, slipping and sliding on the slopes of morals,

tradition and ethics. We get drunk, we ditch our calling. It is unfortunate, and we must change course. But as long as we are ultimately heading upwards, as long as we are aiming for higher, as long as our heart and mind are in the right spot, we can be sure that we're on the right path. When will we reach the final destination? With the coming of the Redemption, the time when G-d will reveal Himself to all, when we will see Him, when we will dance with Him, when the Groom and bride will be united as one. Safe journey! We are almost by the finish line. Let's hurry along.

By Levi Autzon

The Engine and the Steering Wheel

Much of the struggle and tension within a human being can be boiled down to the natural tension between the mind and the heart—between that which the mind knows to be right and that which the heart desires. The mind and the heart have trouble communicating simply because they don't speak the same language, and they don't respond to the same stimuli. The job of the heart is to answer a simple question: "Is this good for me?" The heart does not respond to objective truths. The heart is not concerned about the greater good. The heart's job is to be subjective, to make sure that the self is happy and pampered. On the other hand, when functioning properly, the mind is supposed to be objective. The mind is the tool that allows the human being to transcend the self. The mind has the ability to ponder the

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)

Pirkei Avot (4:1)

Ben Zoma would say:

Who is wise? One who learns from every man. As is stated: "From all my teachers I have grown wise, for Your testimonials are my meditation." - Psalms 119:99
Who is strong? One who overpowers his inclinations. As is stated, "Better one who is slow to anger than one with might, one who rules his spirit than the captor of a city." - Proverbs 16:32
Who is rich? One who is happy with his lot. As is stated: "If you eat of toil of your hands, fortunate are you, and good is to you" - Psalms 128:2: "fortunate are you" in this world, "and good is to you" in the World to Come.

Who is honorable? One who honors his fellows. As is stated: "For to those who honor me, I accord honor; those who scorn me shall be demeaned." - Samuel 12:30

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



ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

abstract, to ask, not, "Is this good for me," but rather, "Is this good?" The healthy mind will be attracted to that which it understands to be objectively good, while the heart will reject it if it is inconsistent with what it perceives to be good for itself. With the mind and the heart pulling in different directions, which one should the person follow? Which one should rule the person? Western society is unequivocal: "Follow your heart." Parents and teachers, songwriters and poets keep telling us that "your heart knows best." It does not take much thought to see the flaw in the "follow the heart" formula. What if one wakes up in the morning and his heart tells him to rob a bank? Should he do what his mother always taught him to do and follow his heart? Both the emotion and intellect are critical to a healthy life. Both are necessary. On the journey of our lives, the heart is the engine, and the mind is the steering wheel. A person without emotion is a person without an engine, without passion, without the strength to smash through the obstacles and achieve, without the fire to overcome

rivers of separation and connect to another. But an engine without a steering wheel will end up stuck in a ditch at the side of the road. The heart is the stuff of life, but when the mind turns on the "check engine" light, we must stop, lift the hood and examine the emotions. In fact, we "check the engine" every year during the forty-nine days between the holidays of Passover and Shavuot. Kabbalah teaches that there are seven emotions, each emotion including the full spectrum of emotions within it. On each day of the forty-nine days, we examine one of our emotions. We scrutinize the emotion and direct it to the proper road. We cannot live a healthy life without love, awe, compassion, and commitment. But we must ensure that our emotions are guided by our objective mind to lead us to healthy relationships. Unrefined emotion can lead a person to self-centered, destructive, narcissistic behavior. This 49-day pattern of refining our emotions is reflected in the commandment of the Jubilee, which we read about in this week's Torah portion: "You shall count for yourself seven sabbatical years, seven years seven times. The days of

these seven sabbatical years shall amount to forty-nine years for you... You shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim freedom [for slaves] throughout the land for all who live on it. It shall be a Jubilee for you, and you shall return, each man to his property, and you shall return, each man to his family."

- *Leviticus 25:8-10*

We count seven years seven times. Each of the forty-nine years represents the refinement. We must ensure our emotions are guided by our objective mind of one character trait. On the fiftieth year, we "proclaim freedom throughout the land." On the fifteenth year we are refined, free of the negative impulses of the emotions. On the fiftieth year we can enjoy the freedom of objectivity, the freedom to see the perspectives of our loved ones, the freedom to unshackle ourselves from the grasp of our ego, the freedom to apologize, the freedom to improve. The freedom to use our inner engine, not to self-destruct, but to imbue us with the drive and passion to achieve that which we know we want to achieve.

By Menachem Feldman

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Monday, May 20, 2024-12 Iyar, 5784

Roman Jews Granted Privileges (1402)

On the 12th of Iyar, 1402, the Jews of Rome were granted "privileges" by Pope Boniface IX. They were given legal right to observe their Shabbat, protection from local oppressive officials, their taxes were reduced, and orders were given to treat Jews as full-fledged Roman citizens.

Tuesday, May 21, 2024-13 Iyar, 5784

Jews Expelled from Berne (1427)

The Jews of Berne, Switzerland were expelled on this date in 1427. Berne had a long history of expulsions and anti-Jewish riots.

Wednesday, May 22, 2024-14 Iyar, 5784

Second Passover" (1312 BCE)

G-d instructed the people of Israel to bring the Passover offering on the afternoon of Nissan 14. "There were, however, certain persons who had become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, and could not, therefore, prepare the Passover offering on that day. G-d established the 14th of Iyar as a "second Passover" (Pesach Sheini) for anyone who was unable to bring the offering on its appointed time in the previous month.

Rabbi Meir (2nd Century CE)

Rabbi Meir, a second century scholar and scribe, was among the foremost disciples of

Rabbi Akiva. His colleagues called him Meir because he "enlightened the eyes of the sages" with his genius and scholarship ("Meir" comes from the Hebrew word "Or," light).

Germans Burn Jewish Books (1933)

Following the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany in the year 1933, the Nazis burned thousands of books written by Jews—and others deemed "Un-German"—on the 14 of Iyar of that year.

Eichmann Captured (1960)

Adolf Eichmann, a key party in implementing of Hitler's "final solution," was captured by agents of the Israeli "Mossad" in Buenos Aires, Argentina. "Eichmann was found guilty on all counts, sentenced to death and hanged at Ramleh Prison on May 31, 1962.

Thursday, May 23, 2024-15 Iyar, 5784

Riots in Rostov-on-Don (1883)

Rostov-on-Don, Russia, was home to 14 Synagogues and many communal institutions. With the encouragement of local Russian officials, a wave of anti-Jewish riots (pogroms) swept the city on the 15th of Iyar of 1883.

Friday, May 24, 2024-16 Iyar, 5784

Romans Razed Jerusalem Wall (70)

In the year 70 CE (3830 from Creation), Titus and the Roman army laid siege upon

Jerusalem, greatly weakening its defenders. On the 16th of Iyar, the Romans razed the middle wall of Jerusalem. The city was later burned, its inhabitants massacred, and the Temple destroyed on the 9th of Av.

"Nuremberg Laws" Passed in Hungary (1939)

The Nazi Nuremberg Laws, depriving Jews the rights citizenship, were passed by the government of Nazi Germany in 1935.

Dachau Liberated (1945)

On 16 Iyar of 1945, the Dachau concentration camp was liberated by allied forces.

Shabbat, May 25, 2024--17 Iyar, 5784

Roman Garrison Defeated (66)

Following the theft of silver from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem on the 17th of Iyar of the year 3826 from Creation (66 CE), the Jewish defense force attacked and defeated the Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem.

Passing of "Noda B'Yehudah" (1793)

The 17th of Iyar marks the passing of Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (1713-1793), author of the Talmudic-Halachic work Noda B'Yehuda and Chief Rabbi of Prague. His famous "Letter of Peace" helped to heal the rift between the great sages Rabbi Yaakov Emden and Rabbi Yonasan Eibeshutz, which threatened to irreparably divide the Jewish people.