

PARSHAT KI TEITZEI

7 - 13 Elul 5785

31 August - 6 September 2025

Torah: Duet. 21:10-25:19

HafTORah: Isaiah 54:1-10

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)

Positive Mitzvah 70 The "Doubtful" Guilt Offering

One who is uncertain whether he committed a sin whose transgression would require him to bring a Sin Offering he must then bring an Asham Taluy (a "Doubtful Guilt Offering").

(If afterwards it was conclusively ascertained that he did indeed commit such a sin, he must bring a standard Sin Offering [even if he has already brought his Asham].)

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



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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

THAT NEW CAR SMELL

Remember that feeling of getting behind the wheel of your car for the first time? Everything is so clean and crisp. The upholstery is spotless, and the paintwork is flawless. You promise yourself that this time you'll drive it carefully, maintain it on schedule and keep it looking pretty. A few months later and, hey, what happened? Fingerprints all over the exterior complement that slight ding on the rear bumper you got while parallel parking. The kids have decorated the seat cushions with indelible ink. There's a permanent collection of parking slips festooning the inside of your windscreen and a litter of chip packets and empty coke cans clog the floor on the passenger side. Your once new car is a pigsty! What about that time you moved? Remember how you promised yourself that you would keep the floorboards polished and the filters clear; how long did that last? That perfectly trimmed backyard is now a jungle, and the wallpaper in the dining room has marks at the exact height of the back of your chairs. Why is it that the real estate agent managed to detail the place to perfection, while the one who actually cares and pays for the place is less careful? You really didn't mean to neglect your own home, but the pressures of life overwhelmed you and you've fallen behind on the maintenance. And we make the same mistakes in our relationships. When you first met your spouse, you were on your best behavior; your manners sparkled and you were attentive to every nuance of conversation. You cared about your clothing and strove to anticipate your loved one's every last desire. During the halcyon days of courtship and those first, blissful months of marriage, everything seemed possible. Nothing was too much trouble, and your dedication was rewarded with devotion. But you began to take each other for granted. You've slipped up on your diet and no longer care so much about your ensemble. It's easier to just throw yesterday's clothes on the floor than dutifully walk them to the laundry basket. You still pretend to make meaningful conversation, but in reality, you've just mastered the art of looking like you're listening. Sure, you still love each other, but the promises and resolutions of those first months are fading by the day.

Build a Guard Rail

We'll read this week, "*When you build a new house, you shall make a guard rail for your roof*" - Deuteronomy 22:8. While nominally a public safety instruction, ensuring that people don't unwittingly take a tumble from the top floor of your building, Biblical commentators learn an important life-lesson from the subtext of this verse. Too often we build the house and assume that the "and they lived happily ever after" will just automatically happen. We start off all confident and sunny-side-up, but don't erect any precautions for the inevitable stumbles and spills. We just assume that because we want things to work out, they will, without any ongoing care or further attention needed.

But life isn't like that. If you don't maintain, you profane. Before getting into the car for the first time you should have already booked it in for its first service. Before signing the contract on the house you should already have a gardener and cleaning crew on retainer, and it makes sense to first go for pre-marital counselling before walking down the aisle together.

A fence of prevention is worth a pound of falls. Even as we embark on life's adventure, we should be mindful of the possible mishaps that lie ahead. We put up a guard rail not because we fear failure, but in expectation of accomplishment.

Never be afraid to embark on a new venture or to start afresh, because if you set the requisite safeguards in place from the beginning, there is every chance that you'll have much success to boast of in the end.

*By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum
Chabad in Moorabbin, Australia*

YOUR INNER ICE

Ice.

Cold. Benumbed. Arctic. Inflexible, rigid, and unyielding.

On the human plane, ice represents apathy, emotional frigidity, imperviousness to change, and resistance to inspiration.

It should come as no surprise then that our nation's archenemy, the nation of Amalek, is associated with coldness.

"Remember that which Amalek did to you, on the way, when you went out of Egypt. How he encountered you on the way..." - Deuteronomy 25:17.

The Hebrew word for "encountered you" is Kar'cha - which can also be translated as "cooled you."

After experiencing the miraculous Exodus, the even more spectacular Splitting of the Sea, and then being treated daily to manna from heaven - it is understandable that our ancestors were enjoying a spiritual heat wave. Warm, excited, inspired, on the highest of highs.

Their heat, and their aura of invincibility, radiated outwards, and no nation dared to confront them. No nation, that is, besides one. Amalek was unaffected by the heat, and brazenly came forth to attack the Israelites and apply a cold compress to their burning enthusiasm. Miracles shmiracles...

They tried to cool our passion - and we are enjoined to never forget their chilling stab, and to utterly eliminate them from the face of the earth.

And on a personal level, there is an Amalek lurking within every one of us. It is the icy voice that attempts to inculcate us with apathy and immunize us against passion and inspiration. This Amalek, too, must be destroyed.

But how?

Well, the most obvious antidote to ice is heat. With enough heat you could melt a glacier.

But there's another way...

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In terms of spiritual service, ice represents absolute and unshakable commitment to G-d.

Not a commitment based on emotions (warmth), not one that rests on a foundation of love and awe for the Creator or an appreciation of the beauty and importance of serving Him. For ultimately, any such relationship is based on a feeling of self: I love, I fear, I feel, I like, I appreciate, I understand...

And when the service depends on my warmth and excitement, it will fluctuate from day to day, even minute to minute. Some days will be sunny and warm; others will be overcast and chilly.

But if the commitment isn't driven by warmth and passion, by what I want and feel, but by what is wanted of me - then it's steady and constant, and not subject to vacillations and swings. Because what I'm wanted and needed for doesn't change.

In Ezekiel's depiction of the supernal chariot, he describes the "awesome ice" that stands above the holy Chayot (Ezekiel 1:22).

The Chayot are angels who, as we say in our daily morning prayers, serve

their Master with a "mighty tumult." Their excitement at singing G-d's praises and proclaiming His holiness defies description. But there's something above their heads, a service superior to theirs. Ice.

And don't mistake the person who serves G-d with icy resolve for a wimp. Don't think that his lack of ego or personal agenda renders him a pushover.

Much to the contrary, his icy determination isn't mitigated by considerations of ego and pride. He stands his ground no matter what may come his way. His determination can sink ships that are deemed to be unsinkable.

So, if you want to melt your inner ice, go right ahead.

But I recommend that you fight ice with ice.

*By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg
Editor, Jewish Learning Institute*

KI TEITZEI IN A NUTSHELL

The name of the Parshah, "Ki Teitzei," means "when you go out," and it is found in Deuteronomy 21:10.

Seventy-four of the Torah's 613 commandments (Mitzvot) are in the Parshah of Ki Teitzei. These include the laws of the beautiful captive, the inheritance rights of the firstborn, the wayward and rebellious son, burial and dignity of the dead, returning a lost object, sending away the mother bird before taking her young, the duty to erect a safety fence around the roof of one's home, and the various forms of Kilayim (forbidden plant and animal hybrids).

Also recounted are the judicial procedures and penalties for adultery, for the rape or seduction of an unmarried girl, and for a husband who falsely accuses his wife of infidelity. The following cannot marry a person of Jewish lineage: a Mamzer (someone born from an

adulterous or incestuous relationship); a male of Moabite or Ammonite descent; a first- or second-generation Edomite or Egyptian.

Our Parshah also includes laws governing the purity of the military camp; the prohibition against turning in an escaped slave; the duty to pay a worker on time, and to allow anyone working for you - man or animal - to "eat on the job"; the proper treatment of a debtor, and the prohibition against charging interest on a loan; the laws of divorce (from which are also derived many of the laws of marriage); the penalty of thirty-nine lashes for transgression of a Torah prohibition; and the procedures for Yibbum ("levirate marriage") of the wife of a deceased childless brother, or Chalitzah ("removing of the shoe") in the case that the brother-in-law does not wish to marry her.

Ki Teitzei concludes with the obligation to remember "what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt."

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, 7 Elul 5785 - 31 August 2025

Moses' parents remarry (1394 BCE)

Amram and Jochebed had separated because of Pharaoh's decree that all male Jewish babies be killed. Prompted by their six-year-old daughter Miriam's rebuke ("Pharaoh decreed against the males; you decreed against the males and the females") they remarried on the 7th of Elul of the year 2367 (1394 BCE). Moses was born six months and one day later, on 7 Adar, 2368.

Spies Die (1312 BCE)

The Spies who slandered the Land of Israel died in the desert (see Numbers 13).

Monday, 8 Elul 5785 - 1 September 2025

President Washington Responds to Newport Jews (1790)

The sexton of the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, wrote a heartwarming letter to President George Washington on behalf of the Jewish community, welcoming the President on his visit to Newport. In his letter, he expressed a vision of an American government that would permit all religions to live side by side in harmony, giving all its citizens the freedom to practice their religions.

On 8 Elul 5550 (1790), President Washington responded:

"The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

...May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one

shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig-tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid..."

Tuesday, 9 Elul 5785 - 2 September 2025

Birth of Dan (1566 BCE)

Dan, the son of Jacob and Bilhah, fifth of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, was born on 9 Elul 2195 (1566 BCE) in Haran. He lived to the age of 125.

Nachmanides Renews Jerusalem Community (1267)

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (known as Nachmanides, 4954-5030, or 1194-1270) arrived in Jerusalem after being forced to flee his native Spain and renewed its Jewish community there. The synagogue he established is functional today, having been restored following the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 5727 (1967).

Wednesday, 10 Elul 5785 - 3 September 2025

Noah Dispatches Raven (2105 BCE)

On the 10th of Elul 1656 (2105 BCE), as the Great Flood neared its end, Noah opened the window of the Ark and dispatched a raven to determine if the flood waters had begun to recede (Genesis 8:1; Rashi).

Passing of Rabbi Pinchas Schapiro (1791)

Rabbi Pinchas Schapiro of Koretz (born 5486, or 1726) was one of the greatest disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, and a colleague of Rabbi Dovber, the Maggid of Mezeritch. His teachings were published posthumously in various books, such as Likkutei Shoshanim and Midrash Pinchas. He passed away on 10 Elul 5551 (1791). Rabbi Pinchas' son, Rabbi Moshe, and grandsons, Rabbi Shmuel Abba and Rabbi Pinchas, managed the famed printing press in Slavuta.

Thursday, 11 Elul 5785 - 4 September 2025

Completion of Beit Yosef (1542)

In 5282 (1522), Rabbi Yosef Caro started writing the Beit Yosef, his famous commentary on the Arba Turim, Yaakov Ben Asher's comprehensive Halachic code. He started writing this commentary in Adrianople, Turkey, and continued for the next twenty years, during which time he relocated to Safed, Israel. He completed the monumental work on the 11th of Elul 5302 (1542). It took another ten years for the writings to be published.

Friday, 12 Elul 5785 - 5 September 2025

Nachmanides Born (1194)

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (known as Nachmanides, or Ramban) was born on 12 Elul 4954 (1194), in Gerona, Spain. He was a Torah scholar, Kabbalist, philosopher, physician and Jewish leader. He is known for his extensive commentary on the Torah, for a debate he was forced to participate in against a representative of the Church, as well as for leading the reestablishment of the Jewish community of Jerusalem after it was devastated by the Crusades in 4059 (1099).

Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe visits US (1929)

On the 12th of Elul 5689 (1929), two years after escaping a death sentence imposed upon him by the Russian Communist regime and his subsequent departure from that country, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, arrived in New York for a ten-month tour of the United States. In the course of his stay, the Rebbe visited the Jewish communities in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Boston and several other communities, and was received by President Hoover at the White House. The purpose of the Rebbe's visit was, a) to bring the plight of Russian Jewry to the attention of the American Jewish community and raise funds for the Rebbe's efforts on its behalf; b) to improve the state of Yiddishkeit (Torah-true Judaism) in America and strengthen the ties of the American Chabad-Chassidic community with the Rebbe. The Rebbe also wished to explore the possibility of settling in the US and establishing the headquarters of Chabad there; though he did not decide to do so at that time, his 5689 (1929) visit laid the foundations for his move to New York in 5700 (1940) and the revolutionary changes he wrought in American Jewish life.

Shabbat, 13 Elul 5785 - 6 September 2025

Passing of Ben Ish Chai (1909)

13 Elul is the Yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, Iraq (5594-5669, or 1835-1909), the renowned Sephardic Halachic authority and Kabbalist, known as "Ben Ish Chai" after his work by that name.