

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

PARSHAT EIKEV

26 July – 1 August
12 – 18 Av

Eikev: Deuteronomy 7:12 – 11:25
Isaiah 49:14 – 51:3

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

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

RAIN'S SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE REVEALED

When will it stop? It's been raining all week. Rain, just go away! Come again some other day. How often do we North Americans complain about the rain! Israelis appreciate the rain. They mean it when they pray for rain three times a day during Israel's rainy season. The Hebrew phrase, mashiv haruach umorid hageshem ("who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall") recited by Jews worldwide from the end of Sukkot until Passover offers praise to G-d for the blessing of rain.

Rain Is Not Random

Rain is mentioned twice in the Torah portion of Eikev. First, the Torah tells us, "From the rain of heaven you will drink water." The Land of Israel depends on rainfall since it has just one large body of fresh water.

In the second paragraph of the Shema prayer, which is also found in this Torah portion, rain is mentioned again. "If you listen to my commandments that I command you today—to love G-d, your G-d, and serve Him with all of your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you rain for your land in its proper time, the early and the late rains." The message is clear: Rainfall is not a random occurrence. It's a blessing that comes directly from G-d. Rainfall is the result of human prayer, as a verse in Genesis teaches, "And no plant of the field was yet on Earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprouted, for G-d had not sent rain upon the Earth and there was no man to work the soil."

Rashi explains that until the creation of the first human, there had been no one to appreciate the benefits of rain. Adam understood the significance of rain and prayed for it. As a result, rain fell, and trees and plants emerged. This emphasizes how great a blessing rain truly is.

Water Symbolizes Torah

The same way humanity cannot survive without water, the Jewish people can't survive without Torah. There are many references to water symbolizing Torah, perhaps none more direct than, "There

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is no water other than Torah." Like the physical rain, the blessings of Torah are drawn down by fulfilling G-d's commandments.

"The day when rain falls is as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created," the Talmud tells us. Perhaps the Torah is likened to rain because it nurtures us to reach our full potential and become the people we were meant to be.

Balancing Physicality and Spirituality

Just as there must be a balance between rainfall and sunshine for crops to thrive, a person's spiritual and material needs intersect. Most mitzvot involve physical actions. Through using something physical for a Divine purpose, we tangibly integrate spirituality into our lives.

The Rebbe would conclude his personal correspondence with blessings for both material well-being and spiritual attainment. Physicality and spirituality are not mutually exclusive; they are meant to work in conjunction with one another. If our basic physical needs are not met, we can become preoccupied by what we lack, to the detriment of our spiritual pursuits, as Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said: "If there is no flour, there is no Torah."

So, it's another rainy day, but I look at it differently now. The weather forecast predicts scattered showers tomorrow, too, but now I look forward to appreciating that rain for what it truly is: a blessing from G-d.

Making It Relevant

Be mindful of how much energy you are expending on your physical and spiritual pursuits.

Develop your appreciation for G-d's many blessings to the earth and to humankind. Show your appreciation in prayer.

The next time it rains, don't be disappointed that you have to cancel your picnic. Thank G-d for the blessing (and take an umbrella).

By Katia Bolotin

CHONI THE CIRCLE-MAKER

Talmud, Taanit 19a

It once happened that they petitioned Choni the Circle-Maker, "Pray that rain should fall."

Said Choni to them, "Go, bring your Passover ovens indoors, so that they should not dissolve."

Choni prayed, but no rain fell. What did he do? He drew a circle, stood inside it, and said to G-d: "Master of the Universe! Your children turned to me because I am like a member of Your household. I swear by Your great name that I'm not budging from here until You have compassion on Your children!"

A rain began to drizzle.

Said Choni: "That's not what I asked for. I asked for rains to fill the cisterns, trenches and reservoirs."

The rains started coming down in torrents.

Said Choni: "That's not what I asked for. I asked for rains of goodwill, blessing and generosity."

A proper rain began to fall. But it continued to fall until the Jews went out of Jerusalem up onto the Temple Mount, because of the flooding caused by the rains. So they came to Choni and said: "Just as you prayed that the rains should fall, now pray that they should go away." Said he to them: "Go and see if the Stone of Claims has dissolved yet . . ."

Shimon ben Shetach sent a message to Choni: "If not for the fact that you are Choni, I would have issued a decree of excommunication against you. But what can I do against you, who nags the Almighty and He fulfills your wish, like a child who nags his father and his father fulfills his wish . . ."

NOT ON BREAD ALONE

Gratitude is a basic aspect of Jewish life. To feel and express gratitude to the people around us, and also, to feel and express gratitude to G-d.

An important aspect of this special gratitude is the saying of Grace After Meals after eating bread. It is a significant event whether at an individual eats a sandwich for lunch.

The saying of Grace After Meals expresses the idea that we depend on G-d for every detail of our lives, and we are grateful to Him for caring for us at every step. We need G-d for our existence from moment to moment, for the air we breathe and for the food we eat. The idea that we should recite this prayer comes from a verse in the Torah. "You should eat and be satisfied and bless G-d for the good land He has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:10). The Sages comment that the literal meaning of this implies that we are commanded to

Sacred material please do not desecrate

bless G-d only if we have eaten enough to be "satisfied." However, the Sages introduce the idea that we should say Grace After Meals even if we are not actually sated, as long as we have had a minimum amount of bread (an "olive-size," regarded as one ounce).

This prayer has four paragraphs. The first concerns the fact that G-d provides food for the whole world: this was composed by Moses. The Jewish people wandering in the desert recited it after eating the manna which fell from heaven.

After forty years they entered the Promised Land. Then Joshua wrote the second paragraph, which starts by thanking G-d for the sacred Land of Israel. This paragraph also thanks G-d for the Covenant of Circumcision, for the Exodus from Egypt and for the Torah.

The third paragraph, composed by David and Solomon, concerns the sacred city of Jerusalem. It also speaks of the Davidic line of kings and of the Temple. This paragraph ends with a plea to G-d to rebuild the holy city of Jerusalem with the coming of the Messiah.

The final paragraph of Grace after Meals was composed by the Sages some 1,870 years ago. It is a general expression of gratitude to G-d: He is "the King who is good and who does good to all." In fact, this last paragraph was written after the terrible tragedy of the failure of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 135 CE. Huge numbers of Jews were massacred. The praise to G-d could be seen as gratitude that we survive to bring living Judaism to the next generation. In this final section we also thank our hosts and our parents, and again ask G-d to send Elijah who will announce the Messiah.

Additional paragraphs and sentences, or slight changes of wording, provide recognition of special days such as Shabbat, the New Moon and the festivals.

Grace After Meals not only thanks G-d for supplying our basic needs; it is an integral part of our lives as Jews, expressing the entire course of Jewish history, with its joys, tragedies and hopes. Reciting it or singing it bonds us to thousands of years of the life of the Jewish people, and also provides a precious opportunity to speak directly to G-d.

By Tali Loewenthal

PIRKEI AVOT

Rabbi Elazar HaKapor would say: Envy, lust and honor drive a man from the world." (4:21)

QUESTION: Previously (2:11) Rabbi Yehoshua said, "The evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred of one's fellow drive a man from the world." Does Rabbi Eliezer HaKappar agree or do they argue?

ANSWER: In reality they are talking of the same three things. Rabbi Yehoshua is discussing the cause, and Rabbi Eliezer the effect.

The root of jealousy is the evil eye. Looking with an evil eye at someone else's possessions causes one to be jealous. Thus, a father or teacher is not jealous of his son or student (Sanhedrin 105b) since he is happy and proud of their accomplishments.

Desires and lust are the doing of the evil inclination, which slyly induces man to desire the forbidden. The evil inclination is situated in the person's heart, and as our Sages say, "The eye sees and the heart desires" (Bamidbar 15:39, Rashi).

A main reason for a person's hating people and disassociating himself from the community is his imagining that people are not properly appreciating his qualities and not giving him the respect and honor he deserves. Thus, hatred of people is caused by one's pursuit of honor.

Hence, when the evil eye makes one suffer of jealousy, and the evil inclination drives one to outlandish desires, and hatred springs from a thwarted desire for honor, these sicknesses drive a person from the world.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Monday, 13 Av, 5786 – 27 July, 2026

Passing of R. Nassan Nata Schapiro (1633)

R. Nassan Nata Schapiro was a saintly scholar who was proficient in both Talmud and kabbalah. He served as rabbi of Cracow, and authored Megaleh Amukos, a kabbalistic Torah commentary.

Tuesday, 14 Av, 5786 – 28 July, 2026

R. Schneur Zalman Settles in Liadi (1801)

The first Rebbe of Chabad, R. Schneur Zalman (known as the Alter Rebbe), served as preacher in the town of Liozna (in present-day Belarus) from 1783 until 1801. In that year, R. Schneur Zalman was imprisoned for a second time in Petersburg, due to trumped-up charges presented by his opponents to the government. After his release, he relocated to Liadi (also in Belarus), where he continued leading his followers and teaching the philosophy of Chabad. He remained in Liadi until 1812, when he and his family fled eastward from the oncoming French forces of Napoleon.

Under the leadership of R. Schneur Zalman's son, R. DovBer, in 1814 the seat of the Chabad movement was transferred to the town of Lubavitch (in Russia near the Belarussian border). It remained there for over 100 years, until 1915, when the fifth Chabad Rebbe, R. Sholom DovBer, fled from Lubavitch to Rostov in face of the advancing German army during World War I.

Wednesday, 15 Av, 5786 – 29 July, 2026

End of Dying in Desert (1274 BCE) 15 Av

In wake of the incident of the "Spies," in which the generation that came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership demonstrated their unpreparedness for the task of conquering and settling the Holy Land, G-d decreed that entire generation would die out in the desert (see "Today in Jewish History" for Av 8 and Av 9). After 38 years of wandering through the wilderness the dying finally ended, and a new generation of Jews stood ready to enter the Holy Land. It was the 15th of Av of the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE)

Thursday, 16 Av, 5786 – 30 July, 2026

Sir Moses Montefiore (1885) 16 Av

Sir Moses Montefiore was a religious philanthropist who worked tirelessly on behalf of his brethren worldwide, and especially in the Land of Israel. He dispensed large sums toward charitable causes and founded numerous establishments and institutions. Sir Montefiore traveled far and wide to visit Jewish communities and interceded on their behalf before rulers such as Queen Victoria, Czar Alexander the Second, the Ottoman Sultan, and the pope. He lived to the ripe old age of 100, passing away on 16 Menachem Av 5645 (1885).

Friday, 17 Av, 5786 – 31 July, 2026

Hebron Massacre (1929)

Sixty-seven Jewish men, women and children were slaughtered, and scores wounded, raped and maimed, by their Arab neighbors in the city of Hebron, who rioted for three days amid cries of "Slaughter the Jews." The killings began on Friday afternoon, 17 Av, and most of the victims lost their lives on Shabbat, 18 Av. The survivors were forced to evacuate to Jerusalem, and the ancient Jewish community of Hebron, which had lived in relative peace in the city for hundreds of years, was not revived until after Israel's capture of Hebron in the 1967 Six Day war.

Shabbat, August 1, 2026

18 Av, 5786

Western Lamp Extinguished (c. 578 BCE)

Every evening, the priest would kindle the seven lights of the menorah in the Holy Temple. Miraculously, although six of the seven candles would burn out, the western lamp would remain lit until the following evening. (See link below for the exact identity of the western lamp.)

During the reign of the idolatrous King Ahaz (father of the pious King Hezekiah), this miracle discontinued. The first time the western lamp was found to have extinguished was on 18 Menachem Av (or, according to other versions, 17 Menachem Av). (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 580:2)