

# Torah Weekly

ד"ס

## PARSHAT PEKUDEI

30 Adar I - 6 Adar II 5784  
10-16 March 2024

*Torah:* Exodus 38:21-40:38  
*Haftorah:* Kings I 7:51-8:21

### 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).

## A Foundation of Love

The materials for the portable desert sanctuary, the Mishkan, came from the donations, the freewill offerings, of the Jewish people. Each Jew gave according to his and her ability and generosity of heart.

The Adanim, however, the “bases” upon which the upright boards of the Mishkan walls rested—its foundation—came from a different source. These bases were cast from the silver given by the Jews as part of a mandatory levy—a half-shekel from each individual. (The Shekel was a standard small weight unit, used to weigh gold, silver and copper for monetary purposes.) Rich and poor, motivated and unmotivated, happily or grouchy, each Jew gave exactly the same amount.

The one thing that all Jews must have at every moment is an unconditional love for each other. The Mishkan, the edifice that “housed” the Divine presence, is expressive of the totality of the Jewish people. Our nation as a whole, and every individual Jew too, is also a sanctuary for G-d’s presence.

We all have different levels of ability, opportunity and commitment. Every one of us has strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas. In our lives we will build and uphold the Sanctuary of Judaism in varying ways, dependent both on circumstances we control and on those that we cannot. The foundation of this edifice, however, the silver sockets arrayed in precise alignment on the ground that support the structure of the sanctuary—they are built of constancy, the

same for everyone at every phase of their lives.

“Silver” in Hebrew, Kesef, also means “yearning” and “love.” The one thing that all Jews must have at every moment is an unconditional love for each other.

Notwithstanding all the differences between us, the foundation for making for G-d a dwelling place in our world is an absolute sense of the equal, irreplaceable and fundamental value of each Jew in our purpose and mission as a people. We cannot see any Jew as marginal; we cannot write any Jew off as hopelessly disconnected. We cannot allow questions of behavior and ideology to obscure the need to align and support each other in whatever it is that we need from each other. This is why we speak of a love felt as a yearning—Kesef. We must allow ourselves to be drawn together with a force and desire for unity more powerful than the forces that wish to push us apart.

*By Shlomo Yaffe*

## Home

Nations go to war over it, families sign away a sizeable chunk of their income for the next thirty years to acquire one. The sages of the Talmud go so far as to say that “a man without a homestead is not a man.”

A home is more than a roof to keep out the rain, walls to keep out unwanted visitors, a kitchen in which to prepare food and a bed in which to sleep. Forts, office buildings, hotels and restaurants can perform those functions as well, or better, than any residence. But only at home is a person at home. Home is where you can make faces at the mirror, wear an old green

sweater with a hole under the armpit, and eat pickles with peanut butter—because you feel like it.

G-d, too, desires a home—a place where He can be fully and uninhibitedly Himself. The Chassidic masters ask: Why did G-d create the physical world? What can our coarse, finite, strife-ridden existence give Him that the spiritual dimensions of creation cannot? And they answer: G-d created the physical world because He wanted a home—a place where He can do things because He feels like it.

G-d’s first home was a two-room, 45-by-15-foot building. According to Exodus 25, it was made of the following materials: gold, silver, copper, blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool, flax, goat hair, animal hides and wood. It was made to order, from detailed specifications given to Moses at Mount Sinai. It sat in the very center of the Israelite camp in the desert and was designed so that it could be dismantled and reassembled as they wandered from place to place for the forty years between their exodus from Egypt and their entry into the Holy Land. Later, a larger and more permanent version was constructed on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Said G-d to man: I created wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and in these creations My mind dwells. I created love, justice and compassion, and in these my character resides. I created beauty, splendor and majesty, and in these I invest My personality. But none of these are My home, any more than the office at which you work or



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the theater at which you are entertained is yours. So I created physical matter—the most undivine thing I could conceive of—so that I should have a place in which there are no roles for Me to play and no

characteristics for Me to project. Only My will to fulfill. When you take your gold (your material excesses), your silver (your stolid middle-class wealth) and your copper (your pauper's subsistence

pennies) and use them to fashion a reality that conforms to My will, you have made Me at home in My world.

*By Yanki Tauber*

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

### **Monday, March 11, 2024-1 Adar II, 5784 Plague of Darkness (1313 BCE)**

The 9th plague to strike the Egyptians a thick darkness that blanketed the land so that "no man saw his fellow, and no man could move from his place" (Exodus 10:23) -- commenced on the 1st of Adar, six weeks before the Exodus.

### **Passing of Ibn Ezra (1164)**

The highly regarded Biblical commentator, Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089?-1164CE), passed away on Adar 1, 4924.

### **Passing of Shach (circa 1663)**

Adar 1 is also the Yahrzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the great Halachist Rabbi Shabtai Hakohen Katz (1621-1663?), author of the Siftei Cohen commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's Code of Jewish Law. He is known as "Shach".

### **Ezekiel Foretells Egypt's Downfall (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, foretelling his downfall in the hands of the Babylonians.

### **Tuesday, March 12, 2024-2 Adar II, 5784 Agadir Earthquake (1960)**

Hundreds of Jews, including some students of the local Chabad Yeshiva, were among the thousands of victims to perish in a devastating earthquake that struck Agadir, Morocco on the 2nd of Adar in 1960.

### **Wednesday, March 13, 2024-3 Adar II, 5784 2nd Temple Completed (349 BCE)**

The joyous dedication of the second Holy Temple (Beit HaMikdash) on the site of the 1st Temple in Jerusalem, was celebrated on the 13th of Adar of the year 3412 from creation (349 BCE), after four years of work. The First Temple, built by King Solomon in 833 BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 423 BCE. At that time, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied: "Thus says the L-rd: After seventy years for Babylon will I visit you... and return you to this place." In 371 the Persian emperor Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple, but the construction was halted the next year when the Samaritans persuaded Cyrus to withdraw permission. Achashverosh II (of Purim fame) upheld the moratorium. Only in 353 -- exactly 70 years after the destruction -- did the building of the Temple resume under Darius II.

### **Passing of Rabbi Mordechai Jaffe (the Levush) (1612)**

Rabbi Mordechai Jaffe served as the rabbi of numerous communities in Poland and Lithuania. Among his more well-known works are Levush Malchus, a halachic code following the order of R. Jacob ben Asher's Arbah Turim, and Levush HaOrah, a super-commentary to Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki's Torah commentary. Rabbi Mordechai served as the head of the "Council of Four Lands," the government-sanctioned Jewish organization entrusted with dealing with Jewish communal affairs. In addition to Talmud and Jewish law, Rabbi Mordechai was also well-versed in both Kabbalah and astronomy.

### **Thursday, March 14, 2024-4 Adar II, 5784 Maharam's Body Ransomed (1307)**

The tragic saga of the imprisonment of Rabbi Meir ben Baruch ("Maharam") of Rothenburg ended when his body was ransomed, 14 years after his death, by Alexander ben Shlomo (Susskind) Wimpfen. "Maharam" (1215?-1293) was the leading Torah authority in Germany, and authored thousands of Halachic responsa as well as the Tosaphot commentary of the Talmudic tractate Yoma. In 1283 he was imprisoned in the Ensisheim fortress and held for a huge ransom, but he forbade the Jewish community to pay it (based on the Talmudic ruling that exorbitant sums should not be paid to free captives, as this would encourage the taking of hostages for ransom). For many years Maharam's disciple, R. Shimon ben Tzadok, was allowed to visit him in his cell and recorded his teachings in a work called Tashbetz.

Even after the Maharam's passing in 1293, his body was not released for burial until it was ransomed by R. Alexander, who was subsequently laid to rest at his side.

### **Passing of R. Leib Sarah's (1791)**

Adar 4 is the yahrzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Leib Sarah's (1730-1791), a disciple of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. One of the "hidden tzaddikim," Rabbi Leib spent his life wandering from place to place to raise money for the ransoming of imprisoned Jews and the support of other hidden tzaddikim.

### **Roman Ghetto Abolished (1798)**

In 1555, Pope Paul IV segregated the Jews of Rome in a walled quarter surrounded by gates that were locked at night. The ghettoed Jews were then subjected to various forms of degradation as well as restrictions on their personal freedoms. During the French Revolution, Italy was conquered by Napoleon Bonaparte. On the 4th of Adar (Tuesday, February 20, 1798) the Ghetto was legally

abolished. It was reinstated, however, as soon as the Papacy regained control.

### **Friday, March 15, 2024-5 Adar II, 5784 Moses' Last Day of Leadership (1273 BCE)**

Moses passed away on the 7th of Adar. Following G-d's instruction that Joshua should succeed him and lead the Jewish nation into the Land of Israel, Moses transferred leadership duties to Joshua on the day before he passed away. Thus, the fifth day of Adar was the last day of Moses' leadership.

### **Passing of R. Shmuel Abba Schapiro of Slavuta (1864)**

R. Shmuel Abba Schapiro and his brother R. Pinchas managed the famed printing press of Slavuta, in what is now Ukraine. In 1835, they were falsely accused of arranging the murder of one of their workers (who had committed suicide). As a result, the government ordered the closing of all Russian Jewish printing presses (save for one press in Vilnius), and the brothers were incarcerated and flogged. The brothers' tremendous piety and fear of Heaven followed them to their cells. It is related that while walking through the two rows of soldiers who were administering the flogging, R. Shmuel Abba's kippah (skullcap) fell off of his head, and he refused to proceed until it was returned, although he received additional blows as a result. A miniature Torah scroll was smuggled into their cell during their incarceration to enable the brothers to study. This unique scroll later gifted to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who would dance with it every year on Simchat Torah. Shmuel Abba passed away on 5 Adar in the year 5624 from Creation (1864). Books printed in the Slavuta press remain prized collectors' items to this day.

### **Shabbat, March 16, 2024-6 Adar II, 5784 Moses Completes the Torah (1273 BCE)**

Moses completed the book of Deuteronomy, concluding his review of the Torah which he began several weeks earlier, on the 1st of Shevat. He then wrote down the completed Five Books of Moses, word for word, as dictated to him by G-d. This scroll of the Torah was put into the Holy Ark, next to the Tablets of Testimony.

### **First Print of Torah with Onkelos & Rashi (1482)**

The first edition of the Five Books of Moses (Torah) with the Targum Onkelos (Aramaic translation of the Torah) and the commentary of the famed commentator Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as Rashi, was published on this date in 1482.