



# THE INSPIRE

## BEHAALOTECHA

### MAZAL TOVS

## BIRTHDAYS

Rhonda Laderman Sunday  
Lee Raine Monday  
Vincent Goodman Thursday  
Stanley Baskin Saturday  
Paul Sugarman Saturday

## ANNIVERSARIES

### TIMES

## SHABBAT & SERVICE TIMES

29 May candle lighting 8:48pm  
Shabbat end 10:14 pm

Kabbalat Shabbat 7pm  
Shabbos morning 9am

### YARTZEIT

**Jacobs, Deborah** mother Goldstone, Minnie Merrill  
bas David Saturday 29/5/21 Sivan 18, 5781

**Hurst, Ann** Mother Nicholls, sima Sima bas osher  
Saturday 29/5/21 Sivan 18, 5781

**Goldstone, Loretta** mother Fishman, Tuba Tuba  
bas Moshe Chaim Tuesday 1/6/21 Sivan 21, 5781

**Piatkus, Brian** mother Piatkus, Minnie Mindel bas  
Moshe Aharon Friday 4/6/21 Sivan 24, 5781

### PARSHAH POINTERS

Aaron is commanded to raise light in the lamps of the menorah, and the tribe of Levi is initiated into the service in the Sanctuary.

A "Second Passover" is instituted in response to the petition "Why should we be deprived?" by a group of Jews who were unable to bring the Passover offering in its appointed time because they were ritually impure. G-d instructs Moses on the procedures for Israel's journeys and encampments in the desert, and the people journey in formation from Mount Sinai, where they had been camped for nearly a year.

The people are dissatisfied with their "bread from heaven" (the manna), and demand that Moses supply them with meat. Moses appoints 70 elders, to whom he imparts of his spirit, to assist him in the burden of governing the people. Miriam speaks negatively of Moses, and is punished with leprosy; Moses prays for her healing, and the entire community waits seven days for her recovery.

YOSSY GOLDMAN

Okay, I admit it. I'm not sure how I would have behaved if I were in the position of the Jews back in the wilderness. We always criticize their lack of faith in G-d and the rough time they gave Moses. Even as G-d was providing them with the most incredible miracles – bread from heaven and water from rocks – they were busy moaning and groaning throughout. But would I have acted differently? Who knows? You think it was easy to live in a desert, even with all the miracles in the Bible? I suppose a lot depends on a person's attitude and perspective in life. Recently, I heard a powerful insight in the name of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, one of the outstanding authorities in Jewish law of our time (he passed away in 1986). He was speaking of the generation of Jewish immigrants to the United States who spawned what became known as the "lost generation." Why was it that the children of parents who were religious, or at least traditional, moved so far away from the Judaism of their parental homes? Rabbi Moshe argued that it could be summed up in one simple question of attitude. Did those parents convey to their children that Judaism was a burden or a boon, a pleasure or a pain? Was the constant refrain these children heard at home, Oy, it's hard to be a Jew! or Ahh, it is good to be a Jew! Was being Jewish in those early days in America something to sigh about, or something to celebrate and sing about? Whether children grew up hearing that Judaism was a pain or a privilege would determine whether they embraced it happily or escaped from it at the first opportunity. According to Rabbi Moshe, on that hinged the success or failure of an entire generation. Indeed, we know of many Jews who survived the Holocaust and because of their horrific experiences perceived being Jewish as a death sentence, G-d forbid. There were those who sought to run as far away as possible from Europe. Many found their way to Australia and became "closet Jews." Some never even told their children that they were Jewish. It was for this reason that the late Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Immanuel Jacobowitz argued that while Holocaust education was important, there was a danger in over-emphasizing the Holocaust in Jewish Day Schools. We want our children to see that Judaism is a blessing, not a curse. Our Jewishness should not be dark and depressing, but bright and joyous. I remember having a discussion with a group of businessmen some years ago where we were trying to put together a slide show to promote one of our local institutions. We were looking for a particularly powerful scene. One prominent doctor suggested that, for him, the single most powerful scene in Jewish life was the Rabbi walking into the house of mourning carrying his bag of prayer books. To him, that may have been powerful, but for me – as a rabbi – I'd never heard anything as depressing. What am I, the Angel of Death? The Jews in the wilderness had their own issues. We should try and learn from their mistakes and be more faithful and trusting in the leadership of the Moses of our own time. But beyond that, let us not whine and whimper about the challenges of Jewish life. Let us convey to our children that Judaism is a joy and a privilege. Then, please G-d, they will embrace it for generations to come



I have branches, but no fruit, trunk or leaves. What am I?

Answer: A Fish hook

## JOKE

A new hair salon opened up for business right across the street from the old established hair cutters' place. They put up a big bold sign which read: "WE GIVE SEVEN DOLLAR HAIR CUTS!" Not to be outdone, the old Master Barber put up his own sign: "WE FIX SEVEN DOLLAR HAIR CUTS!"

## RABBI SACKS OBM

In this week's parsha Moses reaches his lowest ebb. Not surprisingly. After all that had happened – the miracles, the exodus, the division of the sea, food from heaven, water from a rock, the revelation at Sinai and the covenant that went with it – the people, yet again, were complaining about the food. And not because they were hungry; merely because they were bored. "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for free—and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic." As for the miraculous "bread from heaven," although it sustained them it had ceased to satisfy them: "Now our appetite is gone; there's nothing to look at but this manna!"

Any leader might despair at such a moment. What is striking is the depth of Moses' despair, the candor with which he expresses it, and the blazing honesty of the Torah in telling us this story. This is what he says to G d:

"Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do You tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land You promised on oath to their ancestors? ... If this is how You are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in Your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

Every leader, perhaps every human being, at some time in their lives faces failure, defeat and the looming abyss of despair. What is fascinating is G d's response. He does not tell Moses, "Cheer up; pull yourself together; you are bigger than this." Instead He gives him something practical to do:

"Gather for Me seventy of the elders of Israel ...I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself."

It is as if G d were saying to Moses, "Remember what your father-in-law Jethro told you. Do not try to lead alone. Do not try to live alone. Even you, the greatest of the prophets, are still human, and humans are social animals. Enlist others. Choose associates. End your isolation. Have friends."

What is moving about this episode is that, at the moment of Moses' maximum emotional vulnerability, G d Himself speaks to Moses as a friend. This is fundamental to Judaism as a whole. For us G d is not (merely) Creator of the universe, L rd of history, Sovereign, Lawgiver and Redeemer, the G d of capital-letter nouns. He is also close, tender, loving: "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds." He is like a parent: "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you." He is like a shepherd; "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me." He is always there: "G d is close to all who call on Him – to all who call on Him in truth."

In 2006, in the fittingly named Hope Square outside London's Liverpool Street Station, a memorial was erected in memory of Kindertransport, the operation that rescued 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi Germany shortly before the outbreak of war. At the ceremony one of the speakers, a woman by then in her eighties who was one of the saved, spoke movingly about the warmth she felt toward the country that had given refuge to her and her fellow kinder. In her speech she said something that left an indelible impression on me. She said, "I discovered that in England a policeman could be a friend." That is what made England so different from Germany. And it is what Moses discovered long ago about G d Himself. He is not just a supreme power. He is also a friend. That is what Moses discovered in this week's parsha.

Friends matter. They shape our lives. How much they do so was discovered by two social scientists, Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, using data from the Framingham Heart Study. This project, started in 1948, has followed more than 15,000 residents of Framingham, Massachusetts, examining their heart rate, weight, blood levels and other health indicators, on average every four years. Its purpose was to identify risk factors for heart disease. However, Christakis and Fowler were interested in something else, namely the effects of socialization.

Does it make a difference to your health whether you have friends, and if so, what kind of people they are?

Their discoveries were impressive. Not only does having friends matter; so too does having the right ones. If your friends are slim, active, happy and have healthy habits, the likelihood is that so will you, and the same is true of the reverse. Another study, in 2000, showed that if at college, you have a roommate who works hard at his or her studies, the probability is that you will work harder. A Princeton study in 2006 showed that if one of your siblings has a child, you are 15% more likely to do so within the next two years. Habits are contagious. They spread through social networks. Even your friends' friends and their friends can still have an influence on your behavior.

Jordan Peterson, in his 12 Rules for Life, marshalls his own experience and that of his contemporaries, growing up in the small, isolated town of Fairview, Alberta. Those who chose upwardly mobile individuals as friends went on to success. Those who fell into bad company fared badly, sometimes disastrously. We can choose the wrong friends, he says, precisely because they boost our self-image. If we have a fault and know we do, we can find reassurance in the fact that the people we associate with have the same fault. This soothes our troubled mind but at the price of making it almost impossible to escape our deficiencies. Hence his Rule 3: Make friends with people who want the best for you.

None of this would come as a surprise to the sages, who pointed out, for example, that the key figures in the Korach rebellion were encamped near one another. From this they concluded, "Woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbour." In the opposite direction, the tribes of Yehudah, Issachar and Zevulun were encamped near Moses and Aaron, and they became distinguished for their expertise in Torah.

Hence, "Happy the righteous and happy his neighbour." Hence Maimonides' axiom:

It is natural to be influenced in character and conduct by your friends and associates, and to follow the fashions of your fellow citizens. Therefore one ought to ensure that your friends are virtuous and that you frequent the company of the wise so that you learn from the way they live, and that you keep a distance from bad company.

Or, as the sages put it more briefly: "Make for yourself a mentor and acquire for yourself a friend."

In the end that is what G d did for Moses, and it ended his depression. He told him to gather around him seventy elders who would bear the burden of leadership with him. There was nothing they could do that Moses could not: he did not need their practical or spiritual help. But they did alleviate his isolation. They shared his spirit. They gave him the gift of friendship. We all need it. We are social animals. "It is not good to be alone."

It is part of the intellectual history of the West and the fact that from quite early on, Christianity became more Hellenistic than Hebraic, that people came to think that the main purpose of religion is to convey information (about the origin of the universe, miracles, life after death, and so on). Hence the conflict between religion and science, revelation and reason, faith and demonstration. These are false dichotomies.

Judaism has foundational beliefs, to be sure, but it is fundamentally about something else altogether. For us, faith is the redemption of solitude. It is about relationships – between us and G d, us and our family, us and our neighbours, us and our people, us and humankind. Judaism is not about the lonely soul. It is about the bonds that bind us to one another and to the Author of all. It is, in the highest sense, about friendship.

Hence the life-changing idea: we tend to become what our friends are. So choose as friends people who are what you aspire to be.

In 1941, the German army was spreading its web over Europe, expanding its reach to North Africa and eastwards. The death machine was in full swing anywhere Hitler's soldiers set foot, and the Jewish people's sentence was a foregone conclusion.

A military coup erupted in Baghdad during the early spring of that year, in an attempt to overthrow British influence in the region. The uprising was led by Rashid Ali al-Gaylani (1892-1965), an Iraqi nationalist, who acted in full collaboration and support of the Germans.

This led to the Anglo-Iraqi War, during which those in the sitting government fled for their lives. The news induced great panic throughout Iraq's Jewish communities, including the isolated villages in Kurdistan in the north.

As Rashid Ali established his rule, demonstrations against Jews took place in Iraqi cities, often ending in violent riots and looting of Jewish homes and businesses. Jews were imprisoned and tortured on the grounds that they were helping Britain in the war.

Rabbi Yitzchak Noach (1888-1962) was the rabbi of Koy Sanjaq in the Kurdistan region. In addition to his masterful knowledge of Talmud and Jewish law, he was also proficient in the works of Kabbalah. In light of the disturbing events, he decreed a day of fasting and heartfelt prayer in the city's great synagogue.

The following day, young and old flocked to the synagogue. Their prayers were heart-wrenching; the wailing gripping. During the day, terrible news of the riots taking place against the Jews of Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Basra only served to intensify their desperate devotion.

In the evening, after the conclusion of the fast, the community members retired to their homes, deeply worried but hopeful for a miracle.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the community of Koy Sanjaq and the surrounding villages went to the home of the rabbi and begged him to intercede On High to have the terrible decree annulled.

Rabbi Yitzchak Noach responded, "Do you think I'm not doing everything within my power?" After a pause, he continued. "You keep praying through the night, and I will do whatever I can as well."

The leaders returned to the synagogue and continued to pray and recite Psalms. Rabbi Yitzchak Noach remained at home and continued storming the heavens. At about midnight, he began preparing himself to go to sleep. He immersed in a mikvah in preparation for the Kabbalistic practise of shaalot chalom, whereby one requests Divine assistance through a dream. Rabbi Yitzchak Noach wished to learn the future of Rashid Ali's uprising and the future of the Jews in the country.

Before dawn, he awoke in a sweat and the words of Psalm 37:10 flickered before him: "A short while longer and the wicked man (rasha) is not here, and you shall look at his place and he is not there." The general message of the verse seemed hopeful, but the rabbi wished to learn why this specific verse was shown to him. He locked himself in his room and began pondering what hidden meaning was embedded in the verse.

When the time for the morning prayers came, a faint smile was detectable on Rabbi Yitzchak Noach's face. He noted to those in his inner circle, "The word rasha in the verse are the initials of Rashid Ali. However, I still do not have the full meaning of the verse." After the morning prayers, he returned to his room and continued to meditate.

Only in the late afternoon did he emerge, his face aglow and full of hope. "I think I have figured out what the verse means in this context! The word for 'a short while,' me'at, is an acronym for mem tet omer, meaning on the 49th day of the Omer, the day before Shavuot, the decree will be done."

And indeed, on May 30th, the 48th day of the Omer, Rashid Ali and his allies fled to Germany, via Iran.

This did not mean that life went back to normal for Iraq's Jews. Far from it. In fact, June 1st and 2nd, the two days of Shavuot, were marked by anti-Jewish rioting, murder, and maiming. When all was said and done, more than 180 innocent Jews had been killed, 1,000 had been injured, and more than 900 homes had been destroyed.

Yet, the existential threat embodied by Germany and her Arab sympathizers had been removed with the flight of Rashid Ali, giving new meaning to the second half of the verse, "... you shall look at his place and he is not there."

#### FOOD 4 THOUGHT

In creating the whole of existence, G-d made forces that reveal Him and forces that oppose Him—He made light and He made darkness.

One who does good brings in more light. One who fails, feeds the darkness.

But the one who fails and then returns transcends that entire scheme. He reaches out directly to the Essential Creator. Beyond darkness and light.

And so, his darkness becomes light.