

# Torah Weekly

04 – 10 August, 2019  
3 Av – 9 Av, 5779  
Torah: Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22  
Haftarah: Isaiah 1:1-27  
PARSHAT DEVARIM

**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).

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**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

**MEMORY** On the Shabbat prior to Tisha B'Av, the Jewish national day of mourning, we will hear the famous Haftarah (reading from the Prophets) of Chazon, the "Vision of Isaiah." And on Tishah B'Av itself, we will recall the destruction of our Holy Temple nearly 2,000 years ago by fasting and mourning and the other observances of the day.

But why remember? The world cannot understand why we go on about the Holocaust—and that was only 60 years ago! For over 19 centuries, we have been remembering and observing this event and it has become the saddest day in our calendar. Why? Why not let bygones be bygones? It's history. What was was. Why keep revisiting old and painful visions?

They say that Napoleon was once passing through the Jewish ghetto in Paris and heard sounds of crying and wailing emanating from a synagogue. He stopped to ask what the lament was about. He was told that the Jews were remembering the destruction of their Temple. "When did it happen?" asked the Emperor. "Some 1700 years ago," was the answer he received. Whereupon Napoleon stated with conviction that a people who never forgot its past would be destined to forever have a future.

Jews never had history. We have memory. History can become a book, a museum, and forgotten antiquities. Memory is alive. And memory guarantees our future.

Even amidst the ruins, we refused to forget. The first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. As they led the Jews into captivity, the Jews sat

down and wept. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept remembering Zion." What did we cry for? Our lost wealth, homes and businesses? No. We cried for Zion and Jerusalem. "If I forget thee 'O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning. If I fail to elevate Jerusalem above my foremost joy, then let my tongue cleave to its palate." We were not weeping for ourselves or our lost liberties but for the heavenly city and the Holy Temple. Amidst the bondage, we aspired to rebuild; amidst the ruins we dreamt of returning.

And because we refused to forget Jerusalem, we did return. Because we refused to accept defeat or accept our exile as a historical fait accompli, we have rebuilt proud Jewish communities the world over, while our victors have been vanquished by time. Today there are no more Babylonians and the people who now live in Rome are not the Romans who destroyed the Second Temple. Those nations became history while we, inspired by memory, emerged revitalized and regenerated and forever it will be true that Am Yisrael Chai — the people of Israel lives!

I remember hearing a story of a Torah scholar and his nephew who were in the Holocaust. In the concentration camp, they studied the Talmud together. They were learning the tractate Moed Katan, a part of the Talmud that, ironically, discusses the laws of mourning. And when the time came that the uncle saw himself staring death in the face, he said to his nephew, "Promise me that if you survive you will finish studying this book of Moed Katan." Amidst the

misery, desolation and tragedy, what thought preoccupied his mind? That the Talmud should still be studied. This was his last wish on earth. Was it madness, or is it the very secret of our survival?

Only if we refuse to forget, only if we observe Tisha B'av, can we hope to rebuild one day. Indeed, the Talmud assures us, "Whosoever mourns for Jerusalem, will merit to witness her rejoicing." If we are to make it back to Zion, if our people are to harbor the hope of being restored and revived, then we dare not forget. We need to observe our National Day of Mourning. Forego the movies and the restaurants. Sit down on a low seat to mourn with your people; and perhaps even more importantly, to remember. And, please G-d, He will restore those glorious days and rebuild His own everlasting house. May it be speedily in our day.

by Rabbi Yossy Goldman

## HOW'S YOUR VISION?

What does it mean to be visionary, to have a vision for your life and pursuits? In a basic sense, this means conceptualizing goals and objectives; it means considering future potential and focusing on a target for growth. It means recognizing that "now" isn't all that there is. "Now"—disconnected from the future and its possibilities—can be stale and aimless. "Now" is our reality; but vision can breathe commitment, animation and hope into that reality.

Vision brings optimism and direction. It is the North Star which guides the efforts that actually bring our dream to life. The problem is that with the passage of time it becomes

more difficult for the realistic person to continue dreaming. Disappointments eventually take their toll on the human psyche. Which raises the question: When does one learn to adjust one's expectations and recognize that that dreams are . . . just dreams? Never. While we should always be acutely aware of reality, warts and all, we can never stop believing in—and working toward—a brighter future. Consider this: Our Holy Temple, along with our entire Jewish commonwealth, was destroyed by the Romans almost two thousand years ago. It's been rough ever since, and we're fully aware of our reality. Every year, on Tisha B'Av, the 9th of Av, we mournfully remember the destruction and recognize the pain of our own times. Yet, interestingly, the preceding Shabbat is always observed as a "Shabbat of Vision." The Shabbat's reading from the Prophets begins with the words Chazon Yeshayahu, the "vision of Isaiah" regarding the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, an eighteenth-century legendary chassidic master, taught a deeper reason for the moniker "Shabbat of Vision." Every year, he explained, on the Shabbat before our collective day of mourning, G-d shows us a Vision of the Future. We are shown a vision of a rebuilt Temple, a reconstituted people and a better world.

G-d equips us for the mourning by ensuring that hope—the Vision—never dies. G-d equips us for the mourning by ensuring that hope—the Vision—never dies; this Shabbat ensures that our sobering recognition of "now" doesn't smother our hope for the future. I can't see this divinely granted vision with my physical eyes. But if G-d is showing it to me, it must be resonating somewhere in my soul. So this Shabbat, I'll prepare to tackle reality on Tisha B'Av by first searching myself to find G-d's vision of a beautiful future. Will you join me? *By Mendy Herson*

**NINE DAYS** During the "Nine Days" from Av 1st to the Ninth of Av, we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple. We customarily abstain from meat and wine, music, haircutting, bathing for pleasure, and other joyous (and dangerous) activities.

**FAST OF AV** Because of the holiness of Shabbat, the Fast of the Ninth of Av ("Tish'ah B'Av") is observed next week on Av 10. The fast mourns the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel. For approximately 25 hours--from sundown on Saturday to nightfall Sunday evening--we abstain from eating and drinking, bathing, the wearing of leather footwear, and marital relations. It is customary to sit on the floor or a low seat until after mid-day. Torah study is restricted to laws of mourning, passages describing the destruction of the Temple, and the like. The tefillin are worn only during the afternoon Minchah prayers

**REMINDERS!** Please remember to file the paperwork for the Fast of Av (August 10-11). Also, please begin working with your Rabbi/Chaplain to ensure the paperwork is being processed for Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah order forms are due by August 23<sup>rd</sup>

**August 4, 2019 - 3 Av, 5779**

**Passing of R. Shimshon of Ostropolle (1648).** R. Shimshon of Ostropolle was a saintly individual who was greatly revered both in his lifetime and beyond. It is told that an angel called a maggid would come and reveal secrets of Torah to him, and that he merited revelations from Elijah the Prophet. He himself records kabbalistic insights that were revealed to him in dreams. R. Shimshon authored Dan Yadin, a kabbalistic commentary, as well as numerous other unpreserved works. Additionally, many of his interpretations that were preserved orally have been collected and published. R. Shimshon died a martyr's death at the hands of a Cossack mob during the Chmielnicki Massacres, while wrapped in his tallit and tefillin.

**August 5, 2019 - 4 Av, 5779**

**Passing of R. Menachem Mendel of Fano (1620).** R. Menachem Azariah of Fano, Italy, was a famed Talmudic scholar and kabbalist. A prolific author, he composed numerous works in both kabbalah and Jewish law, the most famous of which is Asarah Maamaros, a collection of kabbalistic treatises. Additionally, he used his wealth to obtain and publish the works of other great sages (such as R. Yosef Caro's Kessef Mishneh). R. Menachem Azariah was a devoted follower of the great kabbalist R. Moshe Cordovero, whom he also lent financial support. Later, he was introduced to the kabbalistic doctrines of R. Yitzchak Luria (the Arizal), which he embraced wholeheartedly as well.

**August 6, 2019 - 5 Av, 5779**

**Passing of "Ari" (1572).** Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, known as Ari HaKadosh ("The Holy Lion") passed away on the 5th of Av of the year 5332 from creation (1572 CE). Born in Jerusalem in 1534, he spent many years in secluded study near Cairo, Egypt. In 1570 he settled in Safed, where he lived for two years until his passing at age 38. During that brief period, the Ari revolutionized the study of Kabbalah, and came to be universally regarded as one of the most important figures in Jewish mysticism. It was he who proclaimed, "In these times, we are allowed and duty-bound to reveal this wisdom," opening the door to the integration of the teachings of Kabbalah--until then the province of a select few in each generation--into "mainstream" Judaism.

**Passing of R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (1940).** R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski served as rabbi of the prestigious Jewish community of Vilna, Lithuania, for over fifty years. He was a distinguished scholar, and he authored *Achiezer*, a collection of halachic responsa. A devoted communal activist, R. Chaim Ozer worked together with the fifth and sixth Lubavitcher Rebbes, R. Sholom DovBer and R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, on many projects to ease the plight of Russian Jewry (such as the 1929 struggle to send matzah into the Soviet Union).

**August 8, 2019 - 7 Av, 5779**

**First Temple Invaded (423 BCE).** After nearly a month of fierce fighting inside Jerusalem (see "Today in Jewish History" for Tammuz 9), the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia broke through into the Temple compound, where they feasted and vandalized until the afternoon of Av 9, when they set the Holy Temple aflame.