

Torah Weekly

ב"ח

October 6-12, 2019
7-13 Tishrei, 5780
Torah: Deuteronomy 32:1-52
Haftarah: Samuel II 22:1-51
PARSHAT HA'AZINU

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.

Why Sing Sad Songs? “Listen heavens and I shall speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth” (Deuteronomy 32:1.) This is the opening verse of the song of Haazinu, the song that Moshe recited to his people on the day of his passing. The song is poetic, powerful and poignant. After a few introductory verses, there is a description of G-d’s kindness to the Jewish people: “He found them in a desert land, and in a desolate, howling wasteland. He encompassed them and bestowed understanding upon them; He protected them as the pupil of His eye. As an eagle awakens its nest, hovering over its fledglings, it spreads its wings, taking them and carrying them on its pinions. (Ibid., 32:10-11) The song continues with the prediction that the Jews would eventually turn away from G-d: “Yeshurun [Israel] became fat and kicked.... You forgot G-d who made you. You began to serve idols that are new; your fathers never imagined them...(Ibid., 32:15)...I will hide my face from them I will see what will be their end for they are a generation of changes; they are not [recognizable] as My children whom I have reared.”(Ibid., 32:20) What follows is a story as sad as Jewish history: “I will link evils upon them. I will use up My arrows on them. They will sprout hair from famine, attacked by demons, excised by Meriri. I will incite the teeth of livestock upon them, with the venom of creatures that slither in the dust. From outside, the sword will bereave, and terror from within; young men and maidens, suckling babes with venerable elders.” (Ibid., 32:23-25.) The song closes on a positive note, predicting that ultimately, “The nations will

cause His [G-d’s] nation to rejoice, for He will avenge the blood of His servants ... and He will atone His land, His nation.” (Ibid., 32:43.) This song was sung quite often in the Holy Temple. Every day, while the priests would offer the daily offerings, the Levites would accompany the service with music and songs of praise from King David’s book of Psalms. All of the songs sung were joyous, and were meant to imbue the service with a spirit of joy, in fulfillment of the commandment to “serve the Lord with joy.”(Psalms 100:2) Surprisingly, the song that the Levites sang every Shabbat, as the priests offered the Musaf offering, the additional offering for the Shabbat, was non-other than the Song of Haazinu. They would sing one section per week, completing the song every six weeks. Why this song? Isn’t this the wrong message for the occasion? Granted, the sections sung on week one, two and six, are indeed inspiring, but what about the weeks in between, the portions of the song that foretell the tragedies that would befall our people? How could a person feel uplifted while the Levites were singing, “I [G-d] said I will cause them to be forgotten, their remembrance will be destroyed from mankind”?! (Deuteronomy 32:26.) The answer is, in the weeks that the Levites sang the bitter parts of the song, they were teaching us how to overcome the tragic stanzas of our lives. The Levites were teaching us to be patient as we allow the song to unfold. We should not expect to wake up each and every day of our lives and hear a joyous song playing in our ears. There will be days when we hear no song, when all we can hear is lamentation. Yet, the message of the Levites is

that each stanza is part of a larger song, which can be heard in full only if we come back next week for more. Ultimately, we will persist, and we will find the joy. We will then realize that the difficult part of the road is just that, a road to a deeper and more meaningful joy. When everything is going well it is difficult to feel complete joy. Part of us is always worried that the blessings in our life will not last. We can’t be fully happy with our successes, because deep down we fear that we may lose them. We can’t fully celebrate our relationships, because deep down we are worried that they may end. The young couple, whose love is pure, is not fully happy because they are not sure whether their love is deep enough to survive a major conflict, whether it is strong enough to overcome pain and resentment. Only when the relationship survives deep challenges can the joy be complete. For only then do we know that the bond is unbreakable. The Torah portion of Haazinu is always read in the month of the holidays, in the month that contains both the days of awe, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as well as the days of joy, Sukkot and Simchat Torah. In the beginning of the month we face the pain created by our weakness. We think about the sins of the past year, we think about the pain of separation caused by sin, the pain of separation from G-d and from people we sinned against. In the days of awe, we overcome the pain, we return, we reconnect. And then we realize that our relationship with G-d is deeper and stronger than we imagined. We realize that our bond with G-d is unbreakable. That no matter how much pain we caused, no matter how far we tried to run,

He has been waiting for us—waiting for us to return, waiting to accept us, waiting to embrace us. We discover that the intense joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah is possible only after we experience the days of awe. We discover that all parts of the journey are integral to the intense joy. We discover that they are all part of the same song. No matter what life brings us, we remember that we are in the middle of a song. If we keep singing, keep playing the notes, we will discover the music. We will discover that there was music all along. *(Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot, vol. 24, Haazinu.)* By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

Heaven & Earth It contains only 43 verses, yet the song Moses taught the Jews on the last day of his life spans all of Jewish history, from the very beginning when “He found them in a desert land,” all the way to the future redemption when the nations will praise G-d, “For He will... appease His land [and] His people.” In the opening phrase, Moses calls for heaven and earth to bear witness: “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth!” (Deuteronomy 32:1) Because Jewish law requires legal matters to be established on the basis of two witnesses, Moses called upon both heaven and earth to bear witness that he indeed had conveyed this song to the people. The testimony of heaven and earth is more than merely a poetic metaphor. Moses was conveying the profound lesson that in order for the message to endure, the Jew must evoke both heaven and earth. The purpose of the Jewish people—the objective of all Jewish history—is the marriage of heaven and earth. While many spiritual seekers and virtually all religions seek to escape the confines of the flesh and climb heavenward, the Jew is charged with a far more profound calling: first create peace, then build a bridge, and finally marry heaven and earth. Moses uses different words to address the heavens and the earth. He says: “Give ear, O heavens (Haazinu), and “let the earth hear” (va’tishma). The Hebrew word haazinu, give ear, is used specifically when the listener is in close proximity to the speaker. The word tishma, hear, however, applies to hearing something distant. Indeed, the Midrash explains that Moses was close to the heavens—i.e., spirituality was the reality of his existence. Hence he employed the word haazinu when addressing the heavens. The material world, however, was distant and insignificant to Moses, so he used the word tishma when addressing the earth. Moses was close to the heavens, but since the purpose of Judaism is to connect both matter and spirit, Moses had to invoke not only heaven but earth as well. We each have a “heaven” and “earth” within us. Part of us seeks the transcendent and the spiritual, while another part is drawn to the earthly and the physical. Perhaps more than any other part of the song, the opening words, “Give ear O heavens” and “Let the earth hear,” capture the mission of the Jew. The song is read on Shabbat in close proximity to the holidays of Yom Kippur and Sukkot, for Yom Kippur and Sukkot are the embodiment of the song. On Yom Kippur we reach to the heavens, we connect to the core of our soul and feel unified with G-d. But, just as we reach the climax of the holiness of Yom Kippur, we transition to preparation for the holiday of Sukkot, when we celebrate the physical bounty with which we have been blessed: You shall make yourself the Festival of Sukkot for seven days, when you gather in [the produce] from your threshing floor and your vat... Seven days you shall celebrate the Festival to the L-rd, your G-d, in the place which the L-rd shall choose, because the L-rd, your G-d, will bless you in all your produce, and in all the work of your hands, and you will only be happy. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15) The combination of Yom Kippur and Sukkot represents the life of the Jew. We are “close to heaven,” we connect to our angelic, spiritual, and pure soul on Yom Kippur, and then we connect that spiritual awareness to the field, to sanctify and uplift the blessings of everyday life. (Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot, Haazinu, vol. 2.)

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

Reminder: Yom Kippur is this week. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year—the day on which we are closest to G-d and to the quintessence of our own souls. It is the Day of Atonement—“For on this day He will forgive you, to purify you, that you be cleansed from all your sins before G-d” (Leviticus 16:30)

October 6, 2019- 7 Tishrei 5780

Birth of Zebulun

Zebulun, the son of Jacob and Leah, tenth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on the 7th of Tishrei. He lived to be 110 years old. (Yalkut Shimoni, Shemot, remez 162)

October 7, 2019- 8 Tishrei 5780

Passing of R. Baruch (1791)

Yahrtzeit of Rabbi Baruch, father of the founder of Chabad, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

October 8, 2019- 9 Tishrei 5780

Burial of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (1791)

The great Talmudic sage Rabbi Elazar, son of the famed Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, was buried near his father in Meron. (Bava Metzia 84b)

October 9, 2019- 10 Tishrei 5780

Rebecca Born (1677 BCE)

Birth of Rebecca (1677-1556 BCE), wife of Isaac, mother of Jacob and Esau, and one of the Four Matriarchs of Israel.

October 9, 2019- 10 Tishrei 5780

2nd Tablets (1313 BCE)

On the 10th of Tishrei of the year 2449 from creation, 82 days after the people of Israel betrayed their newly entered covenant with G-d by worshipping a Golden Calf and after Moses twice spent 40 days atop Mount Sinai pleading on their behalf, "G-d restored His goodwill with the Jewish people gladly and wholeheartedly, saying to Moses 'I have forgiven, as you ask', and gave him the Second Tablets" -- thereby establishing the day as a time for atonement, forgiveness and teshuvah for all generations.

October 9, 2019- 10 Tishrei 5780

Ezekiel's Vision of the Third Temple (410 BCE)

The prophet Ezekiel saw a vision in which he was transported to the Temple Mount, where an angel holding a measuring rod gave him a detailed tour of the Third Temple. (Ezekiel 40:1)

October 10, 2019- 11 Tishrei 5780

Donations Brought for the Mishkan (Tabernacle) (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur, he gathered the nation of Israel and instructed them to construct a Mishkan so that G-d's presence would dwell among them. The Jews eagerly brought all of the necessary materials, exceeding what was needed for the task (Exodus ch. 35. Rashi to ibid. 35:1).

October 11, 2019- 12 Tishrei 5780

Passing of R. Abraham "The Angel" (1776)

The 12th of Tishrei is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Abraham (1740-1776) the son of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch and study partner of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi; known as "Rabbi Abraham the Angel" for his saintliness and asceticism.

October 12, 2019- 13 Tishrei 5780

Passing of Rebbe Maharash (1882)

Tishrei 13 is the yahrtzeit of the fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, known as "Maharash" (a Hebrew acronym for "our master Rabbi Shmuel").