

Torah Weekly

July 26 - August 1, 2020
5 - 11 Av, 5780

Torah: Va'etchanan:
Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

Haftarah:
Isaiah 40:1-26

PARSHAT
VA'ETCHANAN

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 Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

The Never Ending Voice When the Ten Commandments are repeated in the Torah as part of Moses' review of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness, Moses describes how G-d spoke those words in "*a mighty voice that did not end*" (Deuteronomy 5:19). One of the explanations offered by Rashi is that Moses is contrasting G-d's voice with human voices. The finite voice of a human being, even a Pavarotti, will fade and falter. It cannot go on forever. But the voice of the Almighty did not end, did not weaken. It remained strong throughout. Is this all the great prophet had to teach us about the voice of G-d? That it was a powerful baritone? That it resonated? Is the greatness of the Infinite One that he didn't suffer from shortness of breath, that He didn't need a few puffs of Ventolin? Is this a meaningful motivation for the Jews to accept the Torah? Moses was the greatest of all prophets. He foresaw what no other prophet could see. Perhaps he saw his people becoming caught up in the civilization of ancient Greece, in the beauty, culture, philosophy and art of the day. And they might question, is Torah still relevant? Perhaps he foresaw Jews empowered by the Industrial Revolution, where they might have thought Torah to be somewhat backward. Or, maybe it was during the Russian Revolution that

faith and religion were positively primitive. Perhaps Moses saw our own generation with its satellites and space shuttles, television and technology. And he saw young people questioning whether Torah still speaks to them. And so Moses tells us that the voice that thundered from Sinai was no ordinary voice. The voice that proclaimed the Ten Commandments was a voice that was not only powerful at the time, but one that "did not end." It still rings out, it still resonates, it still speaks to each of us in every generation and in every part of the world. Revolutions may come and go but revelation is eternal. The voice of Sinai continues to proclaim eternal truths that never become passé or irrelevant. *Honor Your Parents*, revere them, look after them in their old age instead of abandoning them to some decrepit old age home. *Live moral lives*; do not tamper with the sacred fiber of family life, be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Dedicate one day every week and *keep that day holy*. Turn your back on the rat race and rediscover your humanity and your children. *Don't be guilty of greed, envy, dishonesty or corruption*. Are these ideas and values dated? Are these commandments tired, stale or irrelevant? On the contrary. They speak to us now as perhaps never before. The G-dly voice has lost none of its strength, none of its majesty. The mortal voice

of man declines and fades into oblivion. Politicians and spin-doctors come and go, but the heavenly sound reverberates down the ages. Torah is truth and truth is forever. The voice of G-d shall never be stilled. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman True Love* You shall love the L-rd, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 6:5) We share a multifaceted relationship with G-d: He is our king, and we are His subjects; He is our father, and we are His children; He is our shepherd, and we are His flock. These metaphors are more than poetic words used to describe the relationship. Rather, they imply the different sentiments and attitudes which the relationship demands of us: reverence, awe, obedience, trust, etc. In addition to all these emotions, we are also instructed to love G-d. This aspect of the relationship is portrayed by the husband-wife relationship we share with G-d: a relationship characterized by passionate love. It therefore follows that an understanding of the husband-wife dynamic can enhance our love affair with G-d. Love. It's a basic need. Every person needs to feel loved and cherished—by family, friends, and needless to say, by his or her spouse. Love itself is an intangible quality. It's not what the other person does for you; it's the sentiment which is behind the act, the feeling which is the motivation for the deed. It's the life behind

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the relationship. There can be two married couples, both of who “go through the motions” and daily grind of marriage—but one couple shares a spark which is conspicuously absent by the other. Yet the acts which express the love cannot be underestimated. Feelings of love cannot exist in a vacuum; they must be translated into deeds. “But I love you; isn’t that all that matters?” is *not* an appropriate response when your spouse reminds you that you once again “forgot” to call to say you’ll be at work late. Very early in my marriage I found out that “I love you, honey, but I’ll let you clean up after dinner tonight” earns a quick ticket to the doghouse. Why *is* a transcendent feeling like love so contingent on actions? While the question may sound profoundly philosophical, the answer is quite simple. If love is complete, it consumes the entirety of the person. It cannot be relegated to any single aspect of one’s personality—not even the totality of one’s feelings and emotions. Love means being all there for the one you cherish. Only when love translates into actions—when it is expressed by the eyes and the mouth and the hands and the feet—is it all-encompassing and complete. “I love G-d and share a very personal relationship with Him” sounds very spiritual, but it is an imperfect affection. If our love for G-d is real and true, then it must express itself in everyday action. It’s not enough to have a “good Jewish heart”—one’s nose and one’s stomach and arms and legs also need to be Jewish. “Like a face reflected by water, so too, hearts reflect each other.” G-d’s love for us is complete and eternal. But if we want this love to be revealed, we must perfect our love for Him by expressing it in the totality of our actions. For when “I am to my Beloved,” then “my Beloved is to me.”

By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg

Sunday, July 26, 2020 --- 5 Av, 5780

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.

Tuesday, July 28, 2020 --- 7 Av, 5780

First Temple Invaded (423 BCE)

After nearly a month of fierce fighting inside Jerusalem, 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.

Wednesday, July 29, 2020 --- 8 Av, 5780

Spies Return (1312 BCE)

The Spies dispatched 40 days earlier by Moses to tour the Promised Land return to Israel's encampment in the desert, bearing a huge cluster of grapes and other lush fruits. But even as they praise the land's fertility, they terrify the people with tales of mighty giant warriors dwelling there and assert that the land is unconquerable.

Thursday, July 30, 2020 --- 9 Av, 5780

Exodus Generation Condemned to Die in Desert (1312 BCE)

On the Ninth of Av of the year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE), the generation of Jews who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership 16 months earlier were condemned to die in the desert and the entry into the Land of Israel was delayed for 40 years. As related in Numbers 14, when the Spies that Moses sent to the Land of Canaan returned with their disheartening report the Jewish people wept all night -- the night of Av 9th -- proclaiming that they'd rather return to Egypt than attempt to conquer and settle it; G-d decreed that the entire generation would wander in the desert for 40 years until the last of them died out, and that their children, under the leadership of Joshua, will enter the land He promised as Israel's heritage. This is the first of five national tragedies that occurred on Av 9 listed by the Talmud (Taanit 4:6), due to which the day was designated as a fast day. The other four are: the destruction of the two Temples, the fall of Betar, and the plowing over of Jerusalem.

Holy Temples Destroyed (423 BCE and 69 CE)

Both the first and second Holy Temples which stood in Jerusalem were destroyed on Av 9: the First Temple by the Babylonians in the year 3338 from creation (423 BCE), and the second by the Romans in 3829 (69 CE). The Temples' destruction represents the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, for it marks our descent into Galut--the state of physical exile and spiritual displacement in which we still find ourselves today. Thus the Destruction is mourned as a tragedy that affects our lives today, 2,000 years later, no less than the very generation that experienced it first hand. Yet the Ninth of Av is also a day of hope. The Talmud relates that Moshiach ("anointed one"--the Messiah), was born at the very moment that the Temple was set aflame and the Galut began. [This is in keeping with the teachings of our sages that, "In every generation is born a descendent of Judah who is worthy to become Israel's Moshiach" (Bartinoro on Ruth); "When the time will come, G-d will reveal Himself to him and send him, and then the spirit of Moshiach, which is hidden and secreted on high, will be manifested in him" (Chattam Sofer).]

Friday, July 31, 2020 --- 10 Av, 5780

Birth of Isaachar (1565/1564 BCE)

Issachar, the son of Jacob and Leah, ninth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on 10 Menachem Av in Haran. He lived to the age of 122. The tribe of Issachar was well-known for their Torah scholarship, producing many members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court.

Shabbat, August 1, 2020 --- 11 Av, 5780

Passing of R. Hillel of Paritch (1864)

R. Hillel of Paritch was one of the outstanding followers of the second and third Rebbes of Lubavitch, R. DovBer and R. Menachem Mendel Schneersohn. He was an exceptional scholar and served as rabbi of Paritch and then of Babroisk. Additionally, he would make a yearly visit on behalf of the Rebbe to the Jewish colonies in the Kherson region, teaching them Chassidut and inspiring their residents to increase in their observance of the mitzvot. R. Hillel was known for his scrupulous adherence to every detail of Jewish law. He authored Pelach Harimon, a collection of sermons on chassidic philosophy, and composed a number of heartfelt tunes sung often at farbrengens until today.