

Torah Weekly

September 12 - 18, 2021
6 - 12 Tishrei, 5782

Torah: Ha'azinu:
Deuteronomy 32:1-52
Haftorah: 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 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).

Why sing sad songs?

"Listen heavens and I shall speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth."

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.

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.... 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.

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.

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."

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."

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"?!

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

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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.

By: Menachem Feldman

Sunday, September 12, 2021 --- 6 Tishrei 5782

Rebbetzin Chana (1964)

Tishrei 6 is the yahrtzeit (day of passing) of Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson (1879-1964), mother of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Monday, September 13, 2021 --- 7 Tishrei 5782

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)

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 --- 8 Tishrei 5782

Temple Dedicated (826 BCE)

The 14-day dedication festivities, celebrating the completion of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem built by King Solomon, commenced on the 8th of Tishrei of the year 2935 from creation (826 BCE). The First Temple served as the epicenter of Jewish national and spiritual life for 410 years, until its destruction by the Babylonians in 423 BCE.

Wednesday, September 15, 2021 --- 9 Tishrei 5782

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)

Thursday, September 16, 2021 --- 10 Tishrei 5782

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.

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.

Friday, September 17, 2020 --- 11 Tishrei 5782

Jethro Advises Moses (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur, his father-in-law Jethro encountered him attempting to singlehandedly judge the Jewish nation. This prompted him to offer advice:

You will surely wear yourself out...for the matter is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me [and] I will advise you...You shall select from the entire nation men of valor...and you shall appoint over [Israel] leaders over thousands, leaders over hundreds, leaders over fifties, and leaders over tens. They shall judge the nation at all times, and it shall be that any major matter they shall bring to you, and every minor matter they shall judge themselves. This will make it easier for you, and they shall bear [the burden] with you (Exodus 18:18-22. Rashi to ibid. 18:13).

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).

Shabbat, September 18, 2021 --- 12 Tishrei 5782

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 ascetism.