

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

July 31- August 6, 2022
3-9 Av, 5782

Torah Reading:
Devarim: 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 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).

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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 Tisha 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 Yossy Goldman

Subliminal Advertising

In the 1950s, when the Western world was paranoid about the threat posed by Soviet expansionism, and politicians of all other shades were warning about the reds hiding under our beds, there was much fear-mongering about the dangers posed by subliminal advertising.

The theory was that the Commies would subvert television executives into allowing them to broadcast coded messages, flashing onto our screens too quickly for conscious perception to integrate, which would register on the viewers at a subconscious, decision-making level.

I'm not sure about the science behind the theory, nor whether advertisers are currently exploiting the hypothesis to sell stuff to the masses, but a similar concept will be operating on Jews all over the world this Shabbat.

Next week is Tisha B'Av, a 25-hour fast in commemoration of all the tragedies that have befallen our nation over our long and torturous history.

The Shabbat before Tisha B'Av is referred to as Shabbat Chazon, "Shabbat of the Vision." It is so named after the first words of this week's *haftarah* (reading from the prophets), which begins, "*Chazon Yeshayahu* . . ."—"The vision of the prophet Isaiah . . ."

Another justification for the week being referred to as the “Shabbat of the Vision” is that on this special day we are all granted a vision of the promised third Temple.

An often-repeated parable has a favored child being presented with a gorgeous suit by his proud father. The spoiled child ruins it, whereupon his forgiving father gives him another suit, this one even more splendid than the first.

When the kid rips this second suit, his father finally recognizes his son’s lack of maturity and decides not to repeat the mistake. He commissions a third suit, but this time holds back from presenting his son with the prize, preferring to safeguard the garment in his own closet.

Once in a while, in an attempt to encourage his son to reform, the father shows his beloved the suit waiting for him, and begs him to demonstrate the necessary maturity to deserve the gift.

The child in the story is analogous to the Jewish nation, while the father represents G-d. We once had a beautiful Temple in Jerusalem, the envy of all our neighbors. Unfortunately, due to our sins, this First Temple was destroyed and, after a short period of exile, another Temple was built on the original site.

When our behavior caused us to lose the Second Temple, **G-d** decided not to immediately replace the Temple, but to rebuild it in heaven, in readiness for our redemption.

As a preparation for Tisha B’Av, the anniversary of both Temples’ destruction, we are shown a vision of the third Temple, in the hope that the prize dangled before us will inspire us to return to G-d.

I must confess that not once have I, in my conscious experience, been worthy to perceive this vision. Every year, the Shabbat before Tisha B’Av, I remember this parable and wonder: what is the use of a vision from G-d if I don’t see it? I’m positive there is nothing wrong with the source of the transmission, but evidently I’m not tuned to the right spiritual frequency.

I don’t know if the communists or Madison Avenue ever perfected the art of subliminal suggestion, but I am sure that G-d has the requisite skills to pull it off. The fact that I don’t merit to knowingly recognize and be inspired by this annual vision is my loss. Nonetheless, the vision emanates from G-d, and somehow, subtly, subconsciously, even I pick up on the promise of redemption that awaits, and on a subconscious level respond to the suggestion to change.

We are all familiar with the occasional spirit of discontent that appears out of nowhere and prods us to change. The next time it strikes, don’t just roll over to the other side and wait for it to go away, but rather recognize it for what it is—a subliminal suggestion from G-d—and resolve to wake up to yourself and live up to your responsibilities.

By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum

Sunday, July 31, 2022 --- 3 Av, 5782

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 unreserved 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*.

Monday, August 1, 2022 --- 4 Av, 5782

Passing of R. Menachem Azariah 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 *Kesef 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.

Tuesday, August 2, 2022 --- 5 Av, 5782

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.

Wednesday, August 3, 2022 --- 6 Av, 5782

First Human on the Moon (1969)

On July 16, 1969, Apollo 11 was launched from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. After a successful landing on the moon’s surface, Neil Armstrong became the first human to step foot on our celestial neighbor, on July 21, corresponding to the Hebrew date of 6 Menachem Av.

Thursday, August 4, 2022 --- 7 Av, 5782

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.

Friday, August 5, 2022 --- 8 Av, 5782

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.

Civil War in Jerusalem (67 CE)

Fighting breaks out inside the besieged city of Jerusalem between Jewish factions divided on the question of whether or not to fight the Roman armies encircling the city from without. One group sets fire to the city’s considerable food stores, consigning its population to starvation until the fall of Jerusalem three years later.

Shabbat, August 6, 2022 --- 9 Av, 5782

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.

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 descendant 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).]

Expulsion From England (1290)

On this date in 1290, King Edward I of England issued an Edict of Expulsion, ordering the expulsion of all Jews from his territory.

Spanish Expulsion (1492)

The Jews of Spain were expelled by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella on the 9th of Av of 1492, terminating many centuries of flourishing Jewish life in that country.

Fall of Betar (133 CE)

Betar, the last stronghold in the heroic Bar Kochba rebellion, fell to the Romans on the 9th of Av of the year 3893 (133 CE) after a three-year siege. 580,000 Jews died by starvation or the sword, including Bar Kochba, the leader of the rebellion.