

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

September 10-16 2023
24-29 Elul, 5783-1 Tishrei
5784

Rosh Hashanah Day 1:
Torah: Genesis 21:1-34
Numbers 29:1-6
Haftarah: Samuel 1 1:1-2:10
Rosh Hashanah Day 2:
Torah: Genesis 22:1-24
Numbers 29:1-6
Haftarah: Jeremiah 31:1-19
ROSH HASHANAH

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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Committing our Future

The onset of the new year is traditionally a time for an honest personal reassessment, and a commitment to refocus on our most important priorities. The High Holiday prayers and homilies will offer much inspiration and food for thought in this direction, but I would like to take the moment to examine the Rosh Hashanah Torah readings and Haftorahs, and cull from them an important message.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah we read from Genesis the story of Isaac's birth. The reading continues with the account of Ishmael's expulsion from Abraham's home when it was discovered that he was violent and a negative role model for Isaac. The Haftarah of this day follows the same theme, discussing the miraculous birth of Samuel to his formerly barren mother, Chana.

Our children are the first and most important frontier in this vital campaign

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah we read about the Binding of Isaac, and conclude with the birth of Rebecca. The Haftarah is a hauntingly beautiful selection from the Book of Jeremiah which talks of G-d's undying love for his chosen nation, whom He terms as His "most precious son." The Haftarah also contains G-d's assurance to Rachel, weeping inconsolably for her exiled children: "Your children shall return to their border." As you may have realized

by now, the Torah readings for both days of the holiday, as well as both Haftorahs, share the same theme — children: the great blessing of having children, the importance of educating them properly, and our commitment to their welfare.

To be sure, this is a fitting topic for these days, considering that Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the sixth day of Creation, when Adam and Eve were commanded/blessed: "Be fruitful and multiply." Indeed, on that very day they were blessed with their first children— Cain, Abel and their twin sisters.

On a deeper level, Rosh Hashanah is the day when we recommit to the mission we were entrusted with on the day Man was created more than 5700 years ago. The heaven and earth and myriads of creatures were created on the first five days of Creation, but none have the ability to freely choose or reject their Creator. The purpose of Man is to *choose* to be aware of the Divine reality hidden behind the thick veil of nature, and to promote this awareness throughout Creation by totally utilizing it in the service of G-d.

This task begins at home. Our children are the first and most important frontier in this vital campaign. Sarah and Chana understood this, and yearned for the privilege of sharing their knowledge of G-d with future generations. Abraham, appreciating the critical importance of this objective, willingly parted with his eldest son Ishmael in order to ensure the integrity of Isaac's education.

And aside for the importance of this mission on a cosmic level, it also just happens to be the surest path to the child's spiritual fulfillment and consequently his happiness.

On this Rosh Hashanah let us resolve to provide our children with their spiritual needs, and rid our homes of all negative influences which can impede them on their spiritual path. This certainly isn't an easy task for already overworked parents — but the entirety of Creation is watching, hoping that we succeed in our efforts.

By Naftali Silberberg

On the Haftarah: Rachel's Sacrifice

The haftarah for the second day of Rosh Hashanah is all about the redemption. It details how we will return to our ancient homeland of Israel and how wonderful it will be in the future Messianic age. It also explains the reason why we will merit redemption and ends with how much G-d loves us. The core of its message is repentance and ultimate sacrifice. That is its connection to Rosh Hashanah. The haftarah begins with G-d saying that He found favor in us when we were in the desert, and He led us to tranquility in Israel. It continues to describe how we will return there, how wonderful things will be, and that we will return as a "vast assembly." With what merit will we return? With the merit of repentance: returning to G-d through prayer and supplication. As the verse says, "They will come weeping, with supplications I will lead them." The power of our repentance will bring an end to this exile, and it is repentance that is central to the High Holidays, as the Ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur, are called the 10 Days of repentance.

G-d then addresses the nations of world, and tells them that He will redeem us and that they won't be able to take advantage of us anymore. Then G-d says the most amazing thing: "I will turn their mourning into joy." He doesn't say that He will end our mourning. Rather He will turn our mourning into joy. This means that the actual suffering and pain of the exile will be transformed into joy. The more the suffering in exile, the greater the joy when Moshiach comes. The haftarah continues: "So says G-d, 'a voice is heard on high, bitter weeping, Rachel is crying for her children...' Her cries are so powerful, that G-d gives in to her. He tells her that she doesn't have to cry anymore, "your children will return to their border." It is certain that our patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and our other matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca and Leah) are crying for us as well. Why are only Rachel's cries heard? Why is she able to break through, while the others could not? It is because of her great sacrifice. What was her sacrifice? Many of you know the story. When Jacob and Rachel were to be married, Jacob suspected that the unscrupulous Laban, his future father-in-law, would put his older daughter, Leah, under the veil. So he and Rachel prepared a secret signal for her to show, so that he would know that it was really her. When Laban indeed made the switch, Rachel realized how embarrassed Leah would be if she was discovered, so she gave her the secret sign. By giving her sister the signal, she sacrificed everything. First, she gave away the man she loved. Second, had she married him that day, she would have possibly been his only wife and the mother of all the tribes. She also gave up the ability to be with Jacob, which was not only a physical sacrifice, but a spiritual loss as well. This is her tearful argument to G-d. This is her tearful argument to G-d: If I, a mere mortal, was not jealous of my sister and gave her the secret signal, then G-d, who doesn't have jealousy, because He is far beyond that, should not be jealous that the Jewish people served false gods. And with this cry, she accomplishes what no one else could, that her children will return to their border. Then, as He does throughout the haftarah, G-d uses Ephraim as a metaphor for his nation.

By Yitzi Hurwitz

Sunday, September 10, 2023-24 Elul, 5783

Passing of Chafetz Chaim (1933)

Elul 24 is the yahrtzeit of the revered Torah scholar, pietist and Jewish leader Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) of Radin (Poland), author of Chafetz Chaim (a work on the evils of gossip and slander and the guidelines of proper speech) and Mishnah Berurah (a codification of Torah law).

Preparations for Second Temple Construction Begin (353 BCE)

Inspired by Haggai's prophecy on the first of Elul (see entry for that date), Zerubavel son of She'altiel, ruler of Judah, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the High Priest, began the preparations for the construction of the Second Temple (Haggai 1:15). The actual construction began exactly three months later, on Kislev 24 (see entry for that date).

Monday, September 11, 2023-25 Elul, 5783

Creation (3760 BCE)

The 1st day of creation, on which G-d created existence, time, matter, darkness and light, was the 25th of Elul. (Rosh Hashanah, on which we mark "the beginning of Your works", is actually the 6th day of creation, on which the world attained the potential for the realization of its purpose, with the creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Rosh Hashanah is therefore the day from which the Jewish calendar begins to count the years of history; the 1st day of creation thus occurred on the 25th of Elul of what is termed -1 from creation.

Jerusalem Walls Rebuilt (335 BCE)

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem -- which had been in ruins since the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians 88 years earlier -- was completed by Nehemia on Elul 25 of the year 3426 from creation (335 BCE) as related in the Book of Nehemia (ch. 6).

Passing of R. Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (2nd century CE)

Passing of R. Michel of Zlotchov Disciple of the Baal Shem Tov (1786)

Tuesday, September 12, 2023-26 Elul, 5783

Creation of Skies (3760 BCE)

Today is the second day of Creation, when G-d created the skies:

Wednesday, September 13, 2023-27 Elul, 5783

Passing of Belzer Rebbe (1855)

Elul 27 is the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Shalom Rokeach (1779-1855), founder of the Belz Chassidic dynasty.

Creation of Dry Land and Vegetation (3760 BCE)

Today is the third day of Creation, when G-d exposed the dry land and created vegetation.

Frankfurt Jews Expelled (1614)

On this date in 1614, the evil Vincent Fettmilch organized an attack on the Jewish quarter of Frankfurt, and the Jews were expelled from the city (Yosef Ometz §953). Thanks to the Emperor's intervention, two years later the Jews were allowed to return to the city in honor, and Vincent and his cohorts were hanged (see entry for 20 Adar 1)

Passing of R. Nathan Adler (1800)

R. Nathan Adler, a known kabbalist and mystic, headed a Talmudic academy in Frankfurt. Among his many students was the famed R. Moshe Schreiber, known as the Chatam Sofer, who viewed R. Nathan as his primary teacher and accorded him the utmost reverence.

Thursday, September 14, 2023-28 Elul, 5783

Creation of Celestial Bodies (3760 BCE)

Today is the fourth day of Creation, when G-d created the sun, moon, and stars.

Friday, September 15, 2023-29 Elul, 5783

TzemaCh Tzedek Born (1789)

The third Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch (1789-1866), was born on the 29th of Elul.

Creation of Creatures and Birds (3760 BCE)

Today is the fifth day of Creation, when G-d created the animals of the sea and the birds.

Death of False Prophet Hananiah son of Azur (3760 BCE)

In the fourth year of the reign of King Zedekiah, Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would ultimately fall to Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah ch. 27). A false prophet named Hananiah son of Azur contradicted his words, claiming that in two years' time, the precious vessels Nebuchadnezzar had sacked four years prior would be returned. While wishing that this "prophecy" would indeed come true, Jeremiah warned the people that Hananiah was a false prophet, and foretold that he would die that same year. Indeed, Hananiah died on 29 Elul, the last day of the year (Jeremiah ch. 28).

Shabbat, September 16, 2023-1 Tishrei, 5784

Adam & Eve (3760 BCE)

G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (ibid., 2:7).

1st Sin & Repentance (3760 BCE)

On the very day he was created, man committed the first sin of history, transgressing the divine commandment not to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil."

Dove's 3rd Mission (2105 BCE)

On the 1st of Tishrei, on the 307th day of the Great Flood, Noah dispatched a dove from the ark, for the third time (see "On This Date" for Elul 17 and Elul 23). When the dove did not return, Noah knew that the Flood's waters had completely drained from the earth.

Binding of Isaac; Sarah's Passing (1677 BCE)

Abraham's supreme test of faith -- his binding of Isaac in preparation to sacrifice him as per G-d's command -- occurred on the 1st of Tishrei of the year 2084 from creation (1677 BCE), and is recalled each Rosh Hashanah with the sounding of the shofar.

Baal Shem Tov's Vision of Moshiach (1746)

In a letter to his brother-in-law, Rabbi Gershon Kitover, the Baal Shem Tov relates: "On Rosh Hashanah of the year 5507 [from creation] I made an 'ascent of soul' in the manner known to you... I ascended level after level until I reached the chamber of Moshiach... And I asked Moshiach: "When will the Master come?" And he replied: "When your teachings will be disseminated and revealed in the world, and your wellsprings will spread to the outside..." (Keter Shem Tov 1:1).

Daf Yomi (1923)

The "Daf Yomi" daily regimen of Talmud study (in which the participant studies one folio a day to complete the entire Talmud in seven years) initiated by Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin, was launched on Rosh Hashanah of 1923.