

## PARSHAT HA'AZINU YOM KIPPUR

6 - 12 Tishrei 5786  
28 September - 4 October 2025

### YOM KIPPUR

*Torah:* Leviticus 16:1-34  
*Maftir:* Numbers 29:7-11  
*Haftorah:* Isaiah 57:14-58:14

## PARSHAT HA'AZINU

*Torah:* Exodus 13:17-17:16  
*Haftorah:* Judges 4:4-5:31

## FINDING PURPOSE WITH ALS

In this week's portion, Haazinu, there is so much depth, so much meaning. Everyone should learn it and find personal meaning. You will find that it talks to you.

There is one verse that I keep going back to. It is a source of strength and meaning for me.

Against the backdrop of Israel pinning their faith in idols and suffering at the hands of their enemies, G-d says "*See now that it is I! I am the One, and there is no god like Me! I cause death and grant life. I strike, but I heal, and no one can rescue from My Hand!*"

What about this verse gives me strength and meaning?

When I was diagnosed with ALS, there were two possible roads to travel: I could have fallen prey to the "why me?" attitude, sunken into depression and been miserable. Instead, knowing that this is from G-d, I knew that if He put me in this predicament, there must be a good reason. I chose to ask myself, how can I serve His purpose from my situation? What can be done from my position now, that could not have been accomplished when I was well? True, I can't do many of the things I once could. But with what I do have, I have found ways to make a difference. The things I love to do most, to teach and lift others up, I'm still doing. The method changed; before I would speak, now I write (I never dreamed I would become a writer). It seems that because of my predicament, my words are more effective.

The problem with "why me?" is that your focus is on me, the ultimate false deity. To this G-d says, "*See it is I!*" who put you here. He tailor-made your scenario. Find your mission and strengths specifically from your situation. You don't have to be challenged with suffering to learn this lesson; you need only be alive, because "*I kill and I bring to life!*". It is G-d that chooses you to be alive. Recognizing this is the beginning of meaning in your life. And if you are suffering, know that "*I strike and I heal!*" Again this is from G-d. There is purpose in your struggle that can only be realized through your struggle. Find a way to turn your pain into positive, your struggle into strength.

With all that said, we've struggled and suffered enough. It's time for Moshiach (the Messiah) to come.

*By Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz  
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## WHAT THE ATHENIAN SAGES DIDN'T UNDERTAND

They weren't pretty and they weren't for genteel company, and historians now debate how appropriate they were at the time. But the fact of the matter remains that the wartime speeches of General George Patton have contributed to making him one of the most motivational and inspiring military leaders in US history.

In the throes of the darkest days of WWII, he regularly rallied his troops with tough talk that could make one's hair stand on end. And boy oh boy, did his words hit home and inspire his soldiers.

His best known speech occurred on 14 Sivan 5704 (June 5, 1944), just before D-Day. It was so effective that author Terry Brighton called it "The greatest motivational speech of the war and perhaps of all time, exceeding (in its morale-boosting effect if not as literature) the words Shakespeare gave King Henry V at Agincourt."

Patton believed in his men, and he inspired them accordingly. Indeed, under Patton, the Third Army landed in Normandy and went on to play an integral role in the last months of the War. The rapid offensive he called for brought the Third Army wide acclaim.

### Two Forms of Speech

Parshat Haazinu is a sort of swansong, a stirring poem recited by Moses on his final day on this earth. The opening words are:

*"Listen, O heavens, and I will speak!  
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth!"*

Moses tells the heavens that he will "speak" to them. As for the earth, she will hear "the words" of his mouth. In the original Hebrew, these words are "Dibur" for the former, and "Amirah" for the latter.

Generally speaking, Dibur is a harsher form of speech, more "straight-talk," whereas Amirah is softer, more diplomatic. Accordingly, Moses spoke more harshly and truthfully to the heavens, reserving the softer, kinder talk for the earth.

Why?

**Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya and the Athenian Sages**

To get to the bottom of this, we're going to take a detour and explore a puzzling Talmudic story.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya was one of the preeminent sages who lived in Israel under Roman rule shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple (which occurred in 3830, or 70 CE). On a mission to Rome to speak to the authorities, he challenged the scholars of Athens in front of the emperor, claiming, "We are wiser than they." The Talmud proceeds to tell of an elaborate string of events that eventually saw the rabbi cunningly sneak his way into the Athenian academy and stand face to face with the elders of Greece. A lively discussion ensued, and one of the Athenian scholars asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya a riddle:

In the case of a certain man who goes and asks to marry a woman and her family does not give her to him, why would he see fit to go to a family that is greater than the first?

Rabbi Yehoshua took a peg and stuck it into the lower part of the wall, but it did not go in. He then stuck it into the upper portion of the wall, and it went in.

Rabbi Yehoshua said to them, "So it is with the one seeking a wife. Perhaps he will find the girl destined for him."

What is the meaning of this puzzling story?

### How to Speak to People

It's plain that the entire debate was metaphorical. One suggested interpretation is that they were debating what to do when you see a person doing something they shouldn't be doing. Should you say something? And if so, what's the optimal way to go about it?

Intuitively, most people first try a gentle, soft-spoken approach - going over to the offending party and trying to get them to come round with kind, encouraging words.

But that doesn't always work. What then?

The Athenian sages said, "If you try once with gentle efforts and it doesn't work, there's no use trying again. Why even bother with another family if the first one refuses? It won't work. Forget it."

But Rabbi Yehoshua taught them a deep truth about the soul: a person can always be better. You can speak to the person's higher self, the part being covered up by their current behavior.

### Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

*Psalm 117*

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.  
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

### Positive Mitzvah 96 Ritual Impurity of an Animal Carcass

We are commanded regarding the ritual impurity [contained in and emitted by] an animal carcass. [I.e., when contracted, one must follow all the laws associated with this impurity.]

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When the usual soft talk isn't working, there's another option: a sincere and spiritually attuned person who is able to truly sense the other person's soul can speak forcefully and directly to it. That talk may not be so "nice." It might sound harsh. But it's worth it, because the recipient has a truer, more pristine part that is able to hear such words.

The Athenian scholars didn't believe in a soul, so they were incredulous: If the peg doesn't fit in the bottom brick, certainly it won't fit higher up on the wall! But Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya knew the truth. He knew that even in instances when the peg doesn't fit on the lower rung of the ladder, you can reach for the top rung and straight-talk the person back to their pure self.

So, he took the peg, reached higher, and lo and behold, it fit!

### Heaven vs. Earth

This explains our verse: When talking with someone on the conventional "earthly" level, gentle and kind "Amirah" is the way to go. But if that doesn't work, don't give up. Dig within yourself and find your inner purity that is able to sense their pure soul and reach out on that level. This is a very different type of talk. It may be rhetoric that appeals forcefully to something out of reach, but the soul can hear it.

There will always be people in your life who meander from the straight and narrow. It could be your child, a good friend, or a former student. How wonderful it would be if a short, kind, and encouraging word was all it took to set them straight.

But it doesn't always work that way. Sometimes people you love do some crazy stuff, and it's difficult to come up with words that will appeal to them. It is at such times that you must dig within yourself (yes, yourself - not them!) to

find their soul. When you're able to see that pure and shining soul, you'll come up with words of "Dibur," a truer and less varnished discourse that can pierce through the muck and hit home. All it takes is belief. Belief that they possess a radiant soul. So go ahead and talk to it.

By Rabbi Aharon Loschak  
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## HA'AZINU IN A NUTSHELL

The name of the Parshah, "Haazinu," means "Listen" and it is found in Deuteronomy 32:1.

The greater part of the Torah reading of Haazinu ("Listen In") consists of a 70-line "song" delivered by Moses to the people of Israel on the last day of his earthly life.

Calling heaven and earth as witnesses, Moses exhorts the people, "Remember the days of old / Consider the years of many generations / Ask your father, and he will recount it to you / Your elders, and they will tell you" how G-d "found them in a desert land," made them a people, chose them as His own, and bequeathed them a bountiful land. The song also warns against the pitfalls of plenty—"Yeshurun grew fat and kicked / You have grown fat, thick and rotund / He forsook G-d who made him / And spurned the Rock of his salvation"—and the terrible calamities that would result, which Moses describes as G-d "hiding His face." Yet in the end, he promises, G-d will avenge the blood of His servants, and be reconciled with His people and land.

The Parshah concludes with G-d's instruction to Moses to ascend the summit of Mount Nebo, from which he will behold the Promised Land before dying on the mountain. "For you shall see the land opposite you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the children of Israel."

## YOM KIPPUR TORAH READINGS IN A NUTSHELL

The Torah reading for Yom Kippur morning describes the service performed on this day by the Kohen Gadol (high priest) in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

A special feature of the Yom Kippur service was the casting of lots over two goats - equal in age, size and appearance - to determine which shall be offered to G-d in the Holy Temple, and which shall be dispatched to carry off the sins of Israel to the wilderness.

The climax of the service was when the Kohen Gadol entered the innermost chamber in the Temple, the "Holy of Holies." Wearing special garments of pure white linen, the Kohen Gadol would enter the sacred place with a pan of burning coals in his right hand, and a ladle containing an exact handful of Ketoret (incense) in his left. Inside the Holy of Holies, he would place the Ketoret over the coals, wait for the room to fill with its aromatic smoke, and hastily retreat from the holy place.

"This shall be an everlasting statute for you," the Torah reading concludes. "...For on this day He will forgive you, to purify you, that you be cleansed from all your sins before G-d... once a year."

During the afternoon Minchah service, we read chapter 18 of Leviticus, which details the prohibitions against incest and other deviant sexual behaviors. The Torah reading is followed by a Haftarah (reading from the Prophets) which tells the story of Jonah - the prophet who was sent to prophesy the destruction of the sinful city of Ninveh, ran away from G-d, was swallowed by a fish, and learned the power of prayer and repentance to evoke G-d's mercy and annul the harshest decrees.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, 6 Tishrei 5786 - 28 September 2025**

### Passing of the "Shpoler Zaide" (1811)

Rabbi Aryeh Leib, known as the "Shpoler Zaide" (the Grandfather of Shpoli) was a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch, known for his passionate service of G-d. He passed away on 6 Tishrei 5572 (1811).

### Rebbetzin Chana (1964)

6 Tishrei is the Yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson (5639-5725, or 1879-1964), mother of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel OBM.

**Monday, 7 Tishrei 5786 - 29 September 2025**

### Birth of Zebulun

Zebulun, the son of Jacob and Leah, and the tenth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei. He lived to be 110 years old.

**Tuesday, 8 Tishrei 5786 - 30 September 2025**

### 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 8<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei of the year 2935 (826 BCE). The First Temple served as the epicenter of Jewish national and spiritual life for 410 year, until its destruction by the Babylonians in 3338 (423 BCE).

### Massacres at Babi Yar (1941)

On 8-9 Tishrei 5702 (1941), German forces aided by Ukrainian collaborators massacred over 30,000 Jews in the Babi Yar ravine near Kiev, Ukraine.

**Thursday, 10 Tishrei 5786 - 2 October 2025**

### Rebecca Born (1677 BCE)

Rivka (Rebecca), the wife of Isaac, the mother of Jacob and Esau, and one of the four "Mothers" of the Jewish people, was born on 10 Tishrei 2085 (1677 BCE) She lived to the age of 121, and is buried in Me'aras Hamachpelah (lit. "Cave of the Couples") in Hebron, together with Isaac, and Abraham, Sara, Jacob, and Leah.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Tablets (1313 BCE)

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei 2449 (1313 BCE), 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 (lit. "return") for all generations.

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

On 10 Tishrei 3352 (410 BCE) 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.

### Start of Yom Kippur War (1973)

A coalition of Arab forces led by Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, in 5734 (1973) in what became known as the Yom Kippur War. Although Israel suffered tremendous casualties, the war ultimately resulted in a miraculous Israeli victory.

**Friday, 11 Tishrei 5786 - 3 October 2025**

### Donations Brought for Mishkan (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur 2449 (1313 BCE), 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.

**Shabbat, 12 Tishrei 5786 - 4 October 2025**

### Passing of Rabbi Avraham "The Angel" (1776)

The 12<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei is the Yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Abraham (5500-5536, or 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.