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## NEWS

### HEBREW SABBATH SCHOOL

I would like to inform our readers who read Hebrew that we have posted on our website the Hebrew version of the Sabbath School. It is a free PDF, everyone can download it to practice his Hebrew.

### YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur begins Friday evening October 8th. This means that Yom Kippur is on Shabbat. Therefore, though it is Shabbat, Yom Kippur takes precedence and all restrictions of Yom Kippur apply. That is why for example the Jews fast on this Shabbat. It is the only case when it is allowed to fast on Shabbat, when it occurs on Yom Kippur.

For the Jewish people, Yom Kippur is not only for the Jews, but for the whole world. Rambam teaches, that each community, each country and ultimately the world is judged in the same manner. Thus, an individual should not only think that his transgression or fulfillment of a mitzvah tips the scale for him alone, but may very well tip the scale for all of mankind. That is why the salvation work of Jesus is for the whole world and not only a small group of privileged people.

The Torah states: **“This shall be an perpetual decree: In the seventh month [counting from the month of Nissan] on the tenth of the month you shall afflict yourselves and all manner of work you shall not do, neither the native born nor the convert amongst you. For this day, he [the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest] shall atone for you to purify you from all of your transgressions - before the Almighty you shall be purified.” (Lev 16:29-30)** Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is according to the Jewish tradition, the anniversary of the day Moshe brought down from Mount Sinai the second set of Ten Commandments. Rabbi Packouz

says that: “This signified that the Almighty forgave His people for the transgression of the Golden Calf. For all times this day was decreed to be a day of forgiveness for our sins.”

In the prayer service we say the *Viduy*, a confession, and the *AlChet*, a list of transgressions between man and God and between man and man. It is interesting to note two things. First, the transgressions are listed in alphabetical order (in Hebrew). This not only makes a comprehensive list, but gives a framework to include whatever sin Jews wish to include under the proper letter.

Secondly, the *Viduy* and *AlChet* are stated in the plural. This teaches Jews that they are one People and that they are responsible for each other. Even if we did not commit a particular offense, we carry a certain measure of responsibility for those who transgressed — especially if we could have prevented the transgression.

On Yom Kippur Jews read the Book of Jonah. The essence of the story is that God readily accepts the repentance of anyone — Jew or not Jew (as the Ninivites where not Jews) who sincerely desires to do Teshuva, to return to the Almighty and to the path of the Torah.

**Chag Sameach**

**Chatima Tova**

**HAPPY FEAST**

### SUCCOTH

Right after Yom Kippur the whole country of Israel prepares the next celebration, the Feast of Succot, Tabernacle Feast. That is why every family is preparing his succah or tabernacle. This year Succoth will be from October 13 to 20.

# OVERVIEW

## HA'AZINU

### Deuteronomy 32:1-52

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Newsletter

**A**lmost all of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns.

Moshe summons the heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world, and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation—that G-d “pulls the strings” of world events so that the people of Israel can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world.

G-d's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged.

Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods, and indulge in all kinds of depravity.

G-d will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, G-d will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will.

The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator, all the nations should come to adore the true and only one G-d. Israel has not done that when they were in the Land of Israel, they will do it in exile, scattered among the nations they have to bring to G-d.

Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between G-d and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be

restored. G-d will then turn His anger against the enemies of His people, as though they were His enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people.

G-d then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nebo and be gathered there to his people.

### RAIN AS A METAPHOR

**M**oshe's started his poem saying, “My teaching shall drop as rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb” (Deuteronomy 32:2). Water is a vital component of life. Rain is a vehicle for bringing water across the planet to places that otherwise would not have access to water. When rain falls on trees and plants, growth is not noticeable immediately. It takes time for the rain to have a visible effect.

Likewise, when we give admonition to others or we make efforts to change ourselves, improvement is often not immediately noticeable. We should not despair nor give up hope. Every effort has an impact just as every raindrop has an impact. If we keep trying, then, G-d willing, our efforts will bloom! Likely, this is why Moses chose rain as the metaphor for his teachings.

However, the rain is also the metaphor of the power of G-d through his Spirit and his Word. That is why in the haftara for this week, the prophet says: “Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.” (Joel 2:23) and the prophet continues, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28). G-d wants to bless his people. The best image of this blessing is the land of Israel. Because this land can be a land of abundance or a land of dryness and a desert. Everything depends on the rain. We receive the last rain around the feast of Passover and the first rain around the feast of Succoth. That means the country has no rain for

about 6 months. It is obvious that if we don't receive the rain on time, the whole country is in trouble. This rain became in the prophets the metaphor of spiritual blessings by the Spirit of G-d. Exactly as G-d sends rain on due time over the land of Israel, he sends his spirit over His people to bless them and to give them the gift of prophecy.

## REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD

Secular sources view history in perspectives of their own, predicated on economic, social, and political principles. By contrast, the Torah directs us to view history as the unfolding of the Divine Plan. **"Remember the days of old, understand the years of every generation."** (Deut. 32:7). What does understanding the "days of old" have to do with understanding "every generation"? As the Vilna Gaon explained, to understand 'the years of every generation' one must first 'remember the days of old' - the Six Days of Creation. For in those days lies the complete plan of the development of the universe and humankind in it. This, the Gaon taught, is the only way to understand history.

"History is the metamorphosis of man through the stages of destruction and redemption, continuing towards his final redemption in the days of Messiah. All such events, the redemptions and the destructions, are perceived as fundamental testimony to the presence of the Almighty in this world, and are understood as experiential units in divine supervision, the active force of the Hand of the Almighty."

There is an author I like very much who said "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." (CET 204). When the Bible invites us to look at the "days of old" to the past, it is not in order to regret or to be nostalgic, no it is to remember how G-d has led us in the past. G-d's direction in the past is the assurance that G-d continues to lead us today.

## THEY ARE ALWAYS FOR OUR GOOD

The Torah states: **"The Rock! His deeds are perfect for all His ways are just."** (Deuteronomy 32:4) The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, once asked someone how things were going for him. Replied the man, "It would not hurt if things

were a bit better." "How can you possibly know that it wouldn't hurt?" responded the Chofetz Chaim. "The Almighty knows better than you. He is merciful and compassionate. If He felt it would be good for you for things to be better, He definitely would have made them better. Certainly things are good for you the way they are."

Rabbi Packouz concludes saying things are not always the way we wish them to be, but they are always for our good. This awareness will give you an elevated feeling in your life. You have every right to try to improve your situation. However, whenever you do all you can to try, and the situation is still not the way you would wish, work on internalizing the consciousness that the Almighty is doing for you what is in your best interest.

Next Sabbath, on Yom Kippur we will read the book of Jonah. Jonah was not sure that G-d loves everyone, he did not want to preach in Niniva because he was afraid to make the Ninivites upset. However, when finally he went to Niniva, he preached in the city, the people were not upset against him but repented and G-d did not destroy the city of Niniva. Then Jonah repeated what Moshe already said a long time ago: **"I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."** (Jonah 4:2).

If we realize this love and compassion in our life and our mission, then we will experience that G-d is our Rock and our Salvation, we will discover how much G-d loves the world, everyone and not only the Jews or only the Christians, or only the Adventists, and this love will help us to understand what is the mission of our congregation in this context.

**Sources:** These comments of the parasha are based on comments published by Rabbi Zalmen Pakouz, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Rabbi Ari Kahn, Rabbi Noson Weisz, and Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek, from Aish HaTorah (Aish.com). By Rabbi Naftali Reich, Rabbi Berel Wein and Rabbi Yochanan Zweig, Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Torah.org (Project Genensis). By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair from Ohr Somayach, by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky. and Rabbi Zalmen Marozov.

## REPAINT, REPAINT...

**T**he story is told of a house painter who deeply regretted stealing from his clients by diluting the paint, but charging full price. He poured out his heart on Yom Kippur hoping for Divine direction. A voice comes from Heaven and decrees, "Repaint, repaint ... and thin no more!"

## DON'T HONOR IDOL WORSHIPERS

**R**abbi Meir of the city of Premishlan was known as a sage and righteous person. The ritual bath (Mikveh) in Premishlan was at the bottom of a steep mountain. During the summer people would use a shortcut to the bath which took them over the mountain. However, during the winter, the mountain was covered with snow and ice. It was very dangerous to go up and down and everyone would take the long way around.

That is everyone, except for Rabbi Meir. Even the snow and ice would not deter him from taking the short route and never did he slip or fall. Everyone looked at this as a miracle and attributed this to Rabbi Meir's righteousness.

Once a few young men decided that they can do it too. "It is nothing more than good balancing," they said. But when they attempted to go down, they tumbled, seriously injuring themselves. Now they had no doubt about the greatness of their rabbi.

When they were well enough to walk, they came to see Rabbi Meir and ask for his forgiveness and blessing. Then they asked, "Rabbi, how do you manage to walk down the hill?"

Rabbi Meir replied, "When one is tied and connected up high, one doesn't fall down below. Meir is connected to up High and thus he does not fall down below!"

Our sages say that each of the mitzvot is like a rope which runs between us and G-d. Thus, the mitzvot (commandments) are connections that bind us to our Creator. This is what Moshe says in the Parsha, "But you that did connect to the L-rd your G-d are alive every one of you today." By connecting to G-d above, through the mitzvot and through our love for G-d, we are connected to life here below — for Godliness is life.

The story is told that just before Yom Kippur a woman called her Rabbi. Her husband had been

told by his doctor that he was suffering from a condition which could prove life-threatening if he fasted. Nevertheless he was determined to fast. The rabbi spoke to his doctor and consulted another observant doctor to confirm the diagnosis. There was no doubt that fasting would endanger his life.

The Rav called in the man and explained to him that he must eat on Yom Kippur. He looked at him straight in the eye and said, "Rabbi, you're a young man and I'm about three times your age, well into my 70s. Since my bar mitzvah I have not eaten on Yom Kippur, and I do not intend to start now." The Rav replied that "I could not force you to eat on Yom Kippur, but that as soon as he left the office, the Rav would instruct the gabbai never to give him another honor in our shul." When he asked why he deserved such treatment for being strict with respect to Yom Kippur, The rav told him that we are prohibited from honoring idol worshipers.

"What idol worship am I guilty of?" he demanded to know. The Rav explained, "The G-d of Israel has decreed that you must eat on Yom Kippur. If some other god has commanded you to fast, it is irrelevant to me if you call it Zeus, Kemosh or Yom Kippur; all idols are the same."

## HAFTARAH

### Hosea 14:2-10 - Joel 2:15-27

### Micah 7:18-20

**W**e have celebrated Yom Kippur and we will start Succoth on Monday night. For this special Shabbat between these two great celebrations Israel is going to read three texts for the Haftara, not only one.

**HAFTARAH:** The text of Hosea is a call to come

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back to the Lord, we are still in the context of *Teshuva* (repentance and confession). "Take words with you and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all guilt; accept that which is good, and we will offer the fruit of our lips." (Hos. 14:2). Israel has understood that sacrifices of animal are not pleasing the L-rd, what he wants from us is much more the fruits of our lips that means praises, *Hallel* and prayers.

**The prophet Joel** is much more in the context of calling to repentance, with the shofar as it is blown on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation;" (Joel 2:15-16). Israel has just gathered in a solemn assembly for Yom Kippur, however the prophet says to Israel that one solemn assembly a year is not enough, repentance, confession and coming back to the L-rd should be done every day. If Israel is faithful that way, the L-rd will bless her "In response to his people the LORD said: I am sending you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a mockery among the nations." (Joel 2:19).

**The last text from Micah** is a recognition from Israel that the L-rd has forgiven her sins. "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and unswerving loyalty to Abraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old." (Mic. 7-18.20). What a wonderful God who repeat His promises to His people and help them to start a new year full of confidence in Him! I love our God for his mercy upon His people.

## BRIT HACHADASHA

### Acts 1:1-12

**T**he parasha is about the last instructions and song Moshe gave to Israel. The text of the Brith Hachadasha is about the last words of Yeshua on the earth. He addresses these words to his talmidim who were scared about the leaving of Yeshua and being on their own.

One of the ultimate concerns of Yeshua was about equipping his talmidim for the ministry "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John

baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:4-5)

The parasha and the aftarah compare the Ruach Elohim (spirit of God) to the rain which refreshes the earth. As first believers Yeshua's talmidim had to start the mission that Yeshua gave them, but this mission could not be fulfilled without a strong help from G-d and his Spirit. That is why Yeshua said to his talmidim "Do not leave Jerusalem", don't be in a hurry to start the mission. They could run all over the world to share the message of Yeshua, but it would not have been with success, because it would have been without the power of the Ruach Hakodesh. In his instructions Yeshua continues saying: "wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about." This gift is the gift of the Ruach Elohim.

Later, on the same day, Yeshua said to them "But you will receive power when the Ruach Hakodesh comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Yerushalaim, and in all Yehudah and Shomron, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8. Yeshua wanted his message to be preached all over the world, not only in Yerushalaim, but in all Yehudah, Shomron and everywhere and to the end of the world. It is really what the talmidim have done, all the book of Acts is about the fulfillment of this mission.

After giving his last instructions Moshe went up the Mount Nebo from where G-d took him for eternity. In our text of Acts we also see Yeshua going up to heaven: "After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going," (Acts 1:9-10). However this text ends with a great hope, the hope of the return of the Mashiach: when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11) May He come back speedily in our days. Amen.