

The Hidden Face and the Set Name

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 16 September 2026

5 Tishrei 5787 · Wednesday, 16 September 2026 · Aseret Yemei Teshuvah · Parashat Ha'azinu (4th)

Today's Exact Portions

Secular date: Wednesday, 16 September 2026

Hebrew date: 5 Tishrei 5787

Season: The fifth of the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah (Ten Days of Repentance), four days after the close of Elul, five days before Yom Kippur (10 Tishrei / Monday, 21 September 2026). Shabbat Shuvah and Parashat Ha'azinu fall this coming Shabbat (19 September).

Chumash (daily aliyah): Parashat Ha'azinu, fourth portion — Devarim 32:19–28

Tehillim (daily): Chapters 29–34

Additional Tehillim (Baal Shem Tov custom, Elul through Yom Kippur): Chapters 100–102

Tanya: Iggeret HaKodesh, middle of Epistle 20

Rambam, three chapters: Hilchot Tum'at Okhalin, chapters 7–9

Rambam, one chapter: Hilchot Ishut, chapter 20

Sefer HaMitzvot: Positive Commandment 98 — the laws governing food and drink that have contracted ritual impurity

Hayom Yom (5 Tishrei): The second method of teshuvah — *Shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid*; awareness of continuous creation from *ayin* to *yesh* as the avodah of return

Laws and customs of the day: Psalm 130 and *Avinu Malkeinu* are inserted in the daily prayers. These are the days of which Yeshayahu said, “Seek Hashem when He is to be found; call upon Him when He is near” (Yeshayahu 55:6).

Historical markers: On this date Rabbi Akiva was taken captive by Rome (Tishrei 5, 3894 / 134 CE); his martyrdom is recalled in *Eleh Ezkarah* on Yom Kippur. Naftali son of Yaakov and Bilhah was born on the fifth of Tishrei.

I. The Season: What Elul Prepared, and What These Days Demand

Elul is the month of the King in the Field. The Alter Rebbe taught that in Elul the King leaves the palace and walks among the people; anyone may approach, without the protocols of the throne room, and the King receives all with a smiling countenance. That month has closed. Rosh Hashanah has been sounded. The Fast of Gedaliah has been observed. We now stand inside the Ten Days.

The work of Elul is not discarded. It is intensified. What was accessibility in the field becomes nearness in judgment. What was invitation becomes accountability. What was the possibility of return becomes the demand that return be enacted before the sealing. The daily portions do not change their cycle because the season changed; Chitas remains Chitas. Type 2 work means this: the same verses, the same Tanya, the same Hayom Yom, read now through the pressure and the mercy of these days.

The day's Chumash is not a gentle pastoral. It is the fourth movement of the Song of Ha'azinu: the hidden face, the generation of reversals, the fire that reaches Sheol, and then — suddenly — the Divine self-limitation that refuses annihilation lest the enemy say, "Our hand is high." The day's Tanya is not a meditation on mood. It is a metaphysics of *yesh me'ayin*: only the Essence can make something that appears to stand on its own. The day's Hayom Yom names a method of teshuvah that is not first tears and not first confession, but *Shiviti* — setting the Name that creates *ex nihilo* before one's eyes, always. These three texts, read together in the Ten Days, form a single claim: the face that is hidden is not an absent face; the *yesh* that looks autonomous is not a rival god; teshuvah is the recovery of counsel in a generation that Torah itself calls void of counsel.

II. Ha'azinu, Fourth Aliyah: The Hidden Face and the Restrained Hand

The movement of the verses

The Song has already called heaven and earth to witness. It has named the Rock whose work is perfect. It has charged Israel with ingratitude: "Is this how you repay Hashem, a vile and unwise people?" Now the fourth aliyah turns from accusation to consequence, and from consequence to a restraint that is itself a teaching.

"Hashem saw and spurned them, from the provocation of His sons and His daughters" (32:19). Rashi and the Sifrei hear here not a change in the Divine essence but a change in relation. Sons and daughters — the language of covenant, not of contract — have provoked. The response is not yet exile in the later prophetic sense; it is *hester panim*: "I will hide My face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a generation of reversals, children in whom there is no faithfulness" (32:20).

Hester panim is among the gravest sentences in the Torah. It is not the sentence of a tyrant who enjoys distance. It is the sentence of a Father who withdraws the felt nearness that had been taken for granted, in order that the children discover what they are when the smile of the field is no longer the climate of the day. "I will see what their end will be" is not voyeurism. It is the space in which free will is allowed to finish its sentence. The King who walked in the field in Elul does not cease to be King. He ceases, for a time, to make the field feel like a field.

Dor tahapuchot — the generation that turns things over

"A generation of reversals." The word *tahapuchot* is not merely "perverse." It is inversion. What is high is called low; what is cause is treated as effect; what is created is treated as self-made. The same generation that can invert can also invert again. That is the terrible mercy of the word. If the soul can turn a world upside down, it can turn it back. Bechirah is not denied in the accusation; it is presupposed by it. A generation without the capacity to reverse would not be charged with reversal.

"Children in whom there is no faithfulness" — *ein bahem emunah*. Emunah here is not a creed recited. It is reliability, the inner correspondence between what one has received and what one does. In the Ten Days, this verse is not an epitaph. It is a diagnosis that still permits a prescription. The prescription is not first a new emotion. It is the restoration of *emunah* as faithfulness — the alignment of the *yesh* with its Source.

Measure for measure, and the “no-people”

“They have made Me jealous with a non-god, provoked Me with their vanities; I will make them jealous with a non-people, provoke them with a foolish nation” (32:21). The *lo-el* is answered by the *lo-am*. Idolatry is not only bowing to stone. It is granting ultimacy to what has no being of its own. The vanities — *havaleihem* — are the things that look like weight and are wind. The answering “non-people” is not a racial insult. It is a theological mirror. When Israel treats the Source as optional, history supplies a people who treat Israel as optional. The measure is exact, and therefore it is also reversible. A people that returns from the *lo-el* is no longer answered by the *lo-am* in the same way.

The fire that follows (32:22–25) is the language of total exposure: Sheol, earth, produce, foundations of mountains, famine, pestilence, teeth of beasts, sword without and terror within, youth and maiden, suckling and gray hair. The Song refuses to sentimentalize consequence. Elul’s smile does not cancel Tishrei’s accounting. The field was never an amnesty. It was an approach.

The hinge: “I said I would scatter them... were it not”

Then the Song turns, and the turn is the theological center of the aliyah.

“I said I would scatter them, make their memory cease from mankind — were it not that I dreaded the enemy’s provocation, lest their adversaries misinterpret, lest they say: Our hand is high, and it is not Hashem who has done all this” (32:26–27).

Here the Torah teaches a doctrine of limited power under higher law, and it teaches it from the side of Heaven. The “I said” is the *middat hadin* speaking toward erasure. The “were it not” is not weakness. It is the binding of power to the sanctification of the Name. Annihilation that would be read as the triumph of a human hand is refused, because the world must not be allowed to learn the wrong lesson about who acts in history. The enemy’s theology is taken seriously enough to constrain the sentence. That is not sentimentality about enemies. It is jealousy for truth.

Rashi and the midrashim hear in this verse the reason Israel survives its own verdict. Survival is not proof of innocence. It is proof that the Name will not be handed over to a false reading. For a generation standing in the Ten Days, the verse cuts two ways. First: do not confuse continued life with completed teshuvah. The restraint is for the Name, not a certificate of our virtue. Second: the same restraint is an open gate. If Heaven binds *din* so that the story cannot be stolen by a human hand, then the time bought by that binding is time given for return.

“For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them” (32:28). The indictment is intellectual and moral together. *Avad eitzot* — counsel has perished. In biblical idiom, counsel is not cleverness. It is the capacity to read one’s situation in the light of the covenant. The Ten Days exist so that counsel can be recovered before Yom Kippur names the year.

III. Tehillim of the Day: Voice, Rescue, and the Teaching of the Humble

The daily chapters, 29 through 34, are not random neighbors of Ha’azinu. They are the liturgy of a people that has heard both the hidden face and the voice that still speaks.

Psalm 29 is all voice: the voice of Hashem upon the waters, breaking cedars, hewing flames, shaking the wilderness. In a week whose Torah speaks of fire kindled in wrath, the psalm insists that the same voice can give strength to His people and bless them with peace. The voice that judges is not a different voice from the voice that blesses.

Psalm 30 is the dedication of the house and the reversal of mourning into dancing. “You hid Your face, I was terrified” (30:8) is the exact interior of *hester panim*. The psalm does not deny the terror. It narrates the other side: “You turned my mourning into dancing.” In the Ten Days this is not optimism. It is the memory that hiddenness is a chapter, not the book.

Psalm 32 is the psalm of confession and covering: “Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven.” It is among the classic texts of teshuvah because it joins honesty (“I acknowledged my sin”) to relief. David’s *selah* here is Elul’s work arriving at Tishrei’s threshold.

Psalm 33 places counsel where Ha’azinu said counsel had died: “Hashem nullifies the counsel of nations... the counsel of Hashem stands forever.” The contrast is precise. Human *eitzah* that pretends to sovereignty is overturned. Divine *eitzah* is the ground on which a nation can have counsel again.

Psalm 34 is the psalm of the humble who hear and rejoice, of tasting that Hashem is good, of the nearness of Hashem to the brokenhearted. If Yeshayahu said “call upon Him when He is near,” this psalm describes the nearness from below: He is near to those who have let the heart break rather than harden.

The additional chapters, 100–102, continue the same arc. Psalm 100 is *todah* and the knowledge that “He made us, and we are His.” That single clause is already an answer to the *lo-el*. Psalm 101 is the king’s cheshbon hanefesh — the house that will not house deceit. Psalm 102 is the prayer of the afflicted when he wraps himself and pours out his complaint before Hashem: “You will arise and have mercy on Zion, for it is time to favor her.” Read on the fifth of Tishrei, it is not a tourist’s psalm about a city. It is the national half of the same teshuvah that Psalm 32 conducts in the singular.

IV. Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh 20: The *Yesh* That Looks Like a G-d

The middle of Epistle 20 is occupied with a distinction that the day’s Chumash needs.

There is *ilah* and *alul* — cause and effect — in which the effect already existed in another state within the cause. And there is *beriah*: *yesh me’ayin*, something from nothing. The Ramban had already noted that in the Holy Tongue *beriah* is the term for absolutely innovative making. The Alter Rebbe presses the point further. Only One whose Being is of His Essence, not caused by another, can produce a *yesh* that appears to stand alone. Spiritual worlds, for all their luminosity, are still in the register of revelation. The physical, precisely because it conceals, is generated from a deeper place — from Atzmut itself.

That is why a created thing can look like a rival. The *yesh* is so successfully made that it can be mistaken for an *el*. Ha’azinu’s *lo-el* is not an accident of primitive religion. It is the occupational hazard of a world created *ex nihilo*. If the table did not seem to stand by itself, there would be no avodah in seeing that it does not. If history did not seem to be moved by “our hand,” there would be no sin in saying “our hand is high.”

Epistle 20 does not stop at metaphysics. Its pastoral force — the force the Frierdiker Rebbe said renewed Chasidim's performance of practical mitzvot — is that physical commandments engage this *yesh*. Tzedakah, tefillin, food taken in holiness, a body standing in prayer: these are not lower than contemplation. They take the very plane that can be idolized and return it to its Source. In the Ten Days this is not a theoretical upgrade of ritual. It is the method by which a generation of reversals begins to reverse.

The epistle also notes that what a person draws down by avodah exceeds what arrives as an unearned gift from above, as a planted tree exceeds the wild growth of the soil. Teshuvah in these days is not waiting for a mood to descend. It is sowing. The lights that come in response to work are of another order than the lights that come as climate.

V. Hayom Yom, 5 Tishrei: The Second Method — *Shiviti*

The Hayom Yom for this date is a résumé of the Rebbe Rashab's second method of teshuvah.

The first method, given on the adjacent day, is *Tamim tihyeh* — sincerity, wholeness of heart, the earnestness found in Avraham. The second is *Shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid*. The Name used is Havayah, the Name that indicates bringing forth and sustaining the universe. The gap bridged by that Name is infinite: from *ayin* to *yesh*. The avodah of teshuvah that belongs to this method is not first a catalogue of deeds. It is a constant awareness that the world and all that fills it is, at every instant, being brought into being.

This is the hinge between Ha'azinu and Tanya. Ha'azinu describes a generation that treats the *yesh* as self-sufficient and then suffers the hidden face. Tanya explains why the *yesh* can be so treated: it was made to look that way. Hayom Yom gives the repair. Set the creating Name before the eyes, always. Not as a slogan on a wall, though the verse has been written on walls for centuries, but as the recovered perception that the table, the hour, the child, the nation, and the fear itself do not hold themselves up.

In Elul, *Shiviti* is the King in the field: one can look up and find Him available. In the Ten Days, *Shiviti* is more severe and more intimate. The face may feel hidden. The Name is not. Teshuvah of the second method does not wait for the feeling of the field to return. It practices the knowledge that creation has not paused during *hester panim*. The hiding is itself a created relation. Even the concealment is from Him.

A Yeshiva-trained ear will hear the kinship with the *Nefesh HaChaim*'s insistence that the worlds stand only by the Divine speech that has not ceased, and with the Maggid's teaching that the *yesh* is a ray so contracted it can be held. The Hayom Yom is brief because it is a method, not a treatise. Methods are for use.

VI. Rambam and the Mitzvah of the Day: What May Be Taken In

The three-chapter cycle stands in Hilchot Tum'at Okhalin, chapters 7–9: the conditions under which foods receive impurity, the liquids that prepare produce to become susceptible, the distinctions that decide whether a thing is still food, still connected, still capable of conveying

what it has received. Sefer HaMitzvot records Positive Commandment 98: we are commanded concerning food and drink that have contracted impurity — that is, we must know and keep the laws that govern what has been touched.

It would be cheap to allegorize every detail of these chapters. They are law. Yet the placement of this law on this day of the year is not mute. Ha'azinu's generation takes in vanities. Tanya's *yesh* is the plane of eating and handling. The Ten Days ask what a person is prepared to receive. Tum'ah in these chapters is not melodrama. It is the recognition that contact changes status, that readiness to become impure is itself a legal fact (*hechsher*), and that not everything which looks like food is still under the category of food.

Hilchot Ishut, chapter 20, in the one-chapter cycle, treats the dowry of daughters — the father's estate bound by law to provision, the tenth allocated in sequence, the widow's support taking precedence, the limits on brothers who would rather keep than give. Here the Torah's republican nerve is visible without strain. Power over an estate is not ownership without remainder. It is stewardship under statutes that protect those who did not hold the title. A house that recites *Avinu Malkeinu* in the morning and ignores the legal claim of a daughter in the afternoon has not understood either text.

VII. The Day's Memory: Rabbi Akiva and Naftali

Rabbi Akiva was seized on this date. The Yom Kippur liturgy will soon place *Eleh Ezkarah* in the congregation's mouth: the ten martyrs, the flesh combed with iron, the *Shema* spoken at the end. Akiva's life is the refutation of a cheap reading of *hester panim*. The face was hidden enough that Rome could take a sage and kill him in public. The same Akiva taught that suffering can be beloved, that "all that the Merciful One does, He does for good," and that the verse "You shall love Hashem your G-d... with all your soul" includes the hour when the soul is taken. He did not call the concealment imaginary. He called it the place where love is proven.

Naftali's birth on this date is a quieter marker. "Naftali is a hind let loose; he gives goodly words" (Bereishit 49:21). Against Ha'azinu's "nation void of counsel," Naftali is speech that runs and arrives. The tribe's blessing is not power. It is utterance that is beautiful because it is true. In a week that accuses Israel of having no *eitzah*, the calendar remembers a son whose portion is good words.

Together the two memories refuse despair and refuse lightness. Akiva: the hidden face does not cancel avodah. Naftali: the repair of a nation without counsel begins in speech that is let loose in the right direction.

VIII. Approaches and a Constructive Synthesis

Classical *peshat* reads the aliyah as covenant history: infidelity, hiddenness, measure-for-measure, catastrophe, and the preservation of Israel for the sake of the Name. The mefarshim differ on the referent of the "foolish nation" and on whether 32:26–27 describes a thought of destruction never enacted or a pattern repeated in every exile. They do not differ on the moral structure.

The kabbalistic and Chassidic reading does not replace the history. It names the inner mechanism. *Hester panim* is a contraction within relation. The *lo-el* is the *yesh* worshiped as if it were Atzmut. Teshuvah is not only apology; it is the restoration of vision — *Shiviti* — so that the *yesh* is returned to its status as created.

Mussar reads the same verses as a manual of cheshbon hanefesh. A generation of reversals is first a person of reversals: calling appetite principle, calling fear prudence, calling delay wisdom. The Ten Days are the appointed time to invert the inversions while the gates are still named as near.

A constructive synthesis for this date does not choose one of these against the others. Peshat keeps the essay honest: these are words about a people in history, not only about a mood. Chassidus keeps the essay from becoming fatalism: the hidden face is still a face, and the *yesh* can be returned. Mussar keeps the essay from remaining a lecture: someone has to do the work this afternoon.

The Elul themes survive in this synthesis without costume. The King in the Field was the pedagogy of approachability. These days are the pedagogy of nearness-under-judgment. Free will remains the ground of both. A person who could not choose could not provoke, and could not return. Limited power under higher law appears first in Heaven's own "were it not," and therefore it can appear in human office, household, and commonwealth: no hand, even a strong hand, is permitted the last word if that word would teach a lie about who acts.

IX. Covenantal-Republican Resonance

The resonance is in the text; it does not need to be imported from a newspaper.

Non-domination, in the sense that no agent may hold another as subject to arbitrary will, has a theological original here. Even Divine *din* binds itself to the truth of the Name. The enemy may not be allowed to narrate Israel's ruin as the victory of a human hand. Still less may a Jewish hand, public or private, narrate its own strength as self-originating. "Our hand is high" is the sentence Heaven refuses to underwrite.

Consent and return belong together. Teshuvah is not a coerced verdict written onto a soul that cannot choose. It is the act of a being who was made able to reverse. A politics that treats persons as material to be managed has already joined the *lo-el*: it has granted ultimacy to technique. A household that treats children as extensions of parental will has done the same on a smaller scale. Chinuch worthy of these days forms choosers who can set the Name before them, not subjects who can only repeat.

Civic and national responsibility follow from 32:28 as directly as from any treatise. A nation void of counsel is not a nation lacking experts. It is a nation that has lost the capacity to interpret its life under covenant. Recovery of counsel is therefore a public as well as a private labor: honest speech, refusal of fashionable inversions, provision for those the law names as claimants upon the estate, attention to what a people takes in.

None of this requires a geopolitical frame. It requires that the verses be allowed to finish their sentence.

X. Practical Avodah and Chinuch for the Remainder of the Ten Days

1. Practice the second method for a measured time.

Choose one interval — the walk to shul, the first ten minutes after waking, the blessing after bread — and keep *Shiviti* as awareness of continuous creation, not as a phrase. When the mind returns to the *yesh* as self-standing, return the mind. That is teshuvah of the second method, scaled to a Wednesday.

****2. Make a cheshbon that matches *dor tahapuchot*.**

Do not begin with the sins that everyone already admits. Begin with one inversion: a place where appetite was called principle, or delay was called depth, or sharpness was called honesty. Name the inversion in words. That is the beginning of counsel.

3. Confess where Psalm 32 requires speech.

Silent regret is not the psalm's method. "I acknowledged my sin to You." In these days the spoken viduy of the liturgy is not theater. It is the legal and spiritual act of taking the *yesh* of speech and pointing it at the truth.

4. Attend to what is taken in.

Tum'at Okhalin is law for its own sake. Its mussar is not hidden: contact matters; preparation to receive matters; not everything offered as nourishment is nourishment. In a house this can be as concrete as the tone of a meal, the images permitted on a screen, the conversation that is allowed to season the food.

5. Teach the children the difference between Elul and these days without frightening them out of hope.

Elul: the King is in the field; you may approach. These days: He is near; approaching now has the weight of a year. Both are kindness. A child can understand that a parent who sits on the floor and a parent who sits in judgment are the same parent, and that the second sitting is not hatred.

6. Read 32:27 as a limit on one's own mouth.

"Lest they say, our hand is high." Before crediting oneself, a party, a tactic, or an enemy with the last word in a story, stop. The verse was written to prevent a false theology of history. It also prevents a false theology of the self.

7. Keep the additional Tehillim.

Chapters 100–102 are not extra credit. They are the Baal Shem Tov's structure for arriving at Yom Kippur with the book completed. A family that reads them aloud after the daily chapters has already done a piece of national and personal work.

8. Let Rabbi Akiva set the ceiling of complaint.

The day remembers a man who said *Shema* under iron. Most lives will not be asked for that. Most lives are asked not to treat ordinary hiddenness as proof that the Name has left the room.

XI. Closing

The fourth aliyah of Ha'azinu is a hard portion for a hard week. It says that a people can provoke, that a face can be hidden, that fire can be kindled, and that counsel can die. It also says that annihilation is refused so that the Name not be stolen, and therefore that time remains.

Tanya explains why the world can be mistaken for a god: it was created from so deep that it looks like it stands alone. Hayom Yom gives the repair that belongs to this exact date: set the creating Name before the eyes, always. That is teshuvah as recovered perception, which then becomes teshuvah as recovered deed.

Elul taught approach. These days teach nearness. Yom Kippur will teach sealing. The work between them is not theatrical. It is the quiet inversion of inversions, the spoken admission, the food taken in holiness, the estate bound by law, the psalm added, the Name set in front of a life that had begun to set itself in front of the Name.

The gates that opened in the field have not closed. They have changed temperature. Seek Hashem when He is to be found. Call upon Him when He is near.

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