

The Oath That Holds the Arrow: Kaparah of Land and People on the Seventh of Tishrei

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 18 September 2026

Ha'azinu Shishi · 7 Tishrei · kaparah of land and people

The Oath That Holds the Arrow: Kaparah of Land and People on the Seventh of Tishrei

Friday, 18 September 2026 · י' בתשרי ה'תשפ"ז · Erev Shabbat Shuva / Parashat Ha'azinu

Seasonal station: The month of Elul has closed. This is the seventh of the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah, three days before Yom Kippur. The King who walked the field in Elul is near in the sense of *Isaiah 55:6*: “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.” Tonight begins Shabbat Shuva.

Today's Daily Learning Portions

Chumash (Chitas / daily aliyah)

Parashat Ha'azinu, Shishi — *Devarim* 32:40–32:43.

Tehillim (monthly cycle)

Chapters 39–43.

Additional Tehillim (Baal Shem Tov custom, 1 Elul through Yom Kippur)

Chapters 106–108.

Tanya

Iggeret HaKodesh, middle of Epistle 20.

Hayom Yom (7 Tishrei)

Résumé of the fourth method of *teshuvah*: בכל דרכיך דעהו — “In all your ways, know Him.” *Teshuvah* that is born from seeing *hashgachah peratit*.

Rambam

- One chapter: *Hilkhhot Ishut* 22.
- Three chapters: *Hilkhhot Tum'at Okhalin* 13–15.
- *Sefer HaMitzvot*: Positive Commandment 98 — the laws of ritual impurity of food and drink.

Seasonal liturgy and custom

Psalm 130; *Avinu Malkeinu*; the Ten Days insertions in the Amidah. Candle lighting in Jerusalem tonight: 6:01 p.m. Shabbat ends Saturday 7:16 p.m. (Jerusalem). Yom Kippur begins Sunday night, 20 September / 9–10 Tishrei.

Historical note of the day

Birth of Zevulun son of Yaakov and Leah, tenth of the tribes (*Yalkut Shimoni*, *Shemot*, remez 162).

I. From the Field to the Threshold

Elul trained the ear for a King who could be approached without protocol. The Alter Rebbe's image — the King in the field — was never a cancellation of judgment. It was a change of *access*. The field is where ordinary traffic moves: trade, speech, fatigue, the unguarded word. There the Sovereign is visible without the palace screen.

On the seventh of Tishrei that training is not discarded. It is concentrated. The Sages identify these ten days with the verse “Seek the Lord while He may be found” (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a; *Yevamot* 49b). What Elul opened as walking-distance, the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah opens as *nearness that still requires seeking*. The gates have not slammed. They have narrowed into a corridor that leads, three days from now, to the fast from which — as the daily thought on the Chabad calendar records from *Likutei Torah* — even the body can draw life.

Ha'azinu Shishi is read today as the sixth of the week's seven aliyot. The Song is already past its indictment and past the remembered kindnesses. What remains is an oath, a grasped judgment, bloodied arrows, and a closing line that the tradition hears as *kaparah*: וְכָפַר אֲדָמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ.

That is the day's Torah. Everything else in the Chitas cycle gathers around it.

II. Ha'azinu Shishi: The Living Oath and the Retrievable Arrow

The text

כִּי־אֲשָׂא אֶל־שָׁמַיִם יָדִי וְאָמַרְתִּי חַי אֲנִכִּי לְעֹלָם.
אִם־שָׁנוֹתִי בְּרַק חֲרָבִי וְתֹאחֲזוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט יָדִי, אֲשִׁיב נָקָם לְצָרִי וְלִמְשֹׁנָאֵי אֲשֵׁלֵם.
אֲשַׁכִּיר חֲצִי מְדָם וְחֲרָבִי תֹאכַל בָּשָׂר, מְדָם חֲלָל וְשִׁבְיָהּ מְרֹאשׁ פְּרָעוֹת אוֹיֵב.
הֲרַנִּינוּ גוֹיִם עִמּוֹ, כִּי דָם־עֶבְדֶּיךָ יִקְוֶה, וְנָקָם יֵשִׁיב לְצָרָיו, וְכָפַר אֲדָמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ.

“For I lift My hand to heaven and say: As I live forever. When I sharpen My flashing sword and My hand grasps judgment, I will return vengeance to My adversaries and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh — from the blood of the slain and the captive, from the first breach of the enemy. Nations, acclaim His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, return vengeance to His adversaries, and atone / appease His land, His people.”

Rashi's two axes

Rashi on 32:40 reads the raised hand as an oath sworn in wrath, and חַי אֲנִכִּי לְעֹלָם as the formula of that oath: not a poetic flourish, but *shevuah*. The Living One binds speech to His own life.

On 32:41 he records the Mechilta's contrast. A human being looses an arrow and cannot call it back. The Holy One “grasps judgment in His hand”: the bolt is never out of reach. Lightning is His arrow; *mishpat* remains held. The same comment notes that when judgment is grasped it is grasped against those who “helped to do harm” beyond the measure of the original anger (*Zekhariah* 1:15). Divine *nekamah* here is not caprice. It is the retrieval of a justice that human power can only spend, never recall.

On 32:42, Sifrei: when punishment comes upon the nations it reaches back to “the first breach” they made in Israel. History is not reset by amnesia. It is answered.

On 32:43 Rashi gives the two tannaitic readings preserved in Sifrei. Rabbi Yehudah reads the section as addressed to Israel; Rabbi Nechemiah reads it as addressed to the nations. In the first, the nations themselves will one day praise Israel for not abandoning the Holy One through every suffering. In both readings the last clause is conciliatory: וְכָפַר is *kaparah* as appeasement, as in Yaakov's אֲכַפְּרָה פָּנָיו (Bereishit 32:21). “His land” is “His people.” When the nation is comforted, the land is comforted. Rashi cites *Tehillim* 85:2: “You have appeased Your land; You have returned the captivity of Yaakov.”

What the mefarshim press further

Ibn Ezra and Rashbam stay close to the oath-and-recompense frame: the Song ends not in Israel's self-vindication but in Hashem's public fidelity to the covenant. Ramban, reading Ha'azinu as a witness-document for the whole of history, hears in these verses the final movement of that document — the stage at which the nations recognize what they did not see, and the land itself is restored to *kaparah*. Sforno stresses that the sword is *mishpat*, not raw fury: judgment is taken in hand, which means it is measured.

The Sifrei's dispute between Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Nechemiah is not a curiosity. It is a standing question of the Ten Days. Is the last word of the Song a word *about us* or a word *about the world that must finally tell the truth about us*? Both are needed. A person in *cheshbon hanefesh* cannot wait for the nations to sing. A nation in *cheshbon* cannot pretend that its story is only private.

Chassidus on the closing chord

The Rebbe's sichot on Ha'azinu repeatedly return to the Song as testimony that remains in force after Moshe's death — a constitution that does not die with its human speaker. The oath הִי אֶנֶכִּי לְעֵלָם is the ground of that permanence. The King who could be met in the Elul field is the same King who swears by His own life. Accessibility did not mean that judgment was an illusion. It meant that the One who judges is the One who lives, and therefore the One who can still retrieve the arrow.

Likutei Sichot and the Ha'azinu maamarim treat וְכָפַר אֲדָמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ as a Yom Kippur verse hiding in plain sight. *Kaparah* of land and people together refuses the split between a “spiritual” atonement and a neglected earth, or between a private soul and a public *areivut*. The land is not a backdrop. It is implicated. The people are not an aggregate of private files. They are *amo*, His people, named in the same breath as the soil.

This is why the sixth aliyah of Ha'azinu, arriving on a Friday of the Ten Days, on the eve of Shabbat Shuva, is not an accident of the calendar. The Song is teaching the generation how judgment and mercy occupy one Hand.

III. Tehillim 39–43, and 106–108: The Mouth, the Thirst, the National Confession

The monthly Tehillim for the seventh of the month is already a *cheshbon* cycle.

Psalm 39 opens with a vow of guarded speech: “I said, I will guard my ways, that I not sin with my tongue.” The psalmist then measures life as a handbreadth and asks to know his end. Elul’s *cheshbon hanefesh* becomes, in the Ten Days, a reckoning of *speech*. The field was full of unguarded words. The corridor to Yom Kippur is lined with them.

Psalm 40 waits and is drawn up from the pit. “He set my feet upon a rock.” The movement is from mire to firm standing — the same grammar as *teshuvah* that is not only regret but re-footing.

Psalm 41 blesses the one who considers the poor (*maskil el-dal*). In the days when *Avinu Malkeinu* is said, the accounting is not only vertical. It is horizontal. *Teshuvah* that does not touch *tzedakah* and attention to the weak is still a draft.

Psalms 42–43 are the deer panting for water, the soul asking why it is downcast, the plea “Send Your light and Your truth; they shall lead me.” Shabbat Shuva will read *Shuvah Yisrael*. These chapters are already that thirst in lyric form. The Ten Days do not invent longing. They give it a deadline that is also a mercy.

The Baal Shem Tov’s three extra chapters today are **106–108**.

Psalm 106 is national confession in long form: the fathers at the Sea, the calf, the graves of desire, the mixing with the nations. It refuses the comforting lie that only this year’s file is open. *Cheshbon* that is only personal is incomplete; *cheshbon* that is only national becomes an abstraction. The psalm holds both.

Psalm 107 names the four who must give thanks — wilderness, prison, sickness, the sea — and the pattern of crying out and being answered. It is the psalm of *hashgachah* made visible in rescue. It will meet today’s Hayom Yom without strain.

Psalm 108: “My heart is steadfast, O God.” After confession and after thanksgiving, stability. Not naïveté. Steadfastness.

A Yeshiva ear already hears the order: guard the mouth; know the measure of days; consider the poor; thirst; confess the long story; give thanks for being taken out; set the heart.

IV. Tanya, *Iggeret HaKodesh* 20: A Soul That Will Not Become Separate

Today’s Tanya is the middle of Epistle 20. The Alter Rebbe is distinguishing modes of emanation. Souls of angels that issue from *zivug neshikin*, and souls of man that issue from the union of *Ze’er Anpin* and *Nukva* of Atzilut, are — while they remain in Atzilut, before descent into Beriah-Yetzirah-Asiyah — not counted as *yesh* and not as a thing separate in itself. They resemble Elokus in intense *tzimtzum*, like the *kelim* of the ten sefirot of Atzilut, which are Divinity and yet finite because of the contraction of the *kav*.

That contraction, he adds, is not a mere dimming. It is akin to the first *tzimtzum* that made a *chalal*, a space for worlds.

Then the line that the Ten Days cannot leave unused: even after the *nefesh-ruach-neshamah* of Atzilut descended into this world to the first *tzaddikim*, it is possible that their essence did not change into a separate thing from Elokus. Therefore those souls would withdraw from the body when they wished to sin, *before* they sinned. The *Tikkunei Zohar* is invoked: the Atzilut-level

departs rather than abide a severance. “Your sins have separated you from your God” (*Yeshayahu* 59:2) is read, in that key, as the description of a cleavage that the highest soul-level will not survive in place.

This is not a teaching that ordinary *baalei teshuvah* should imitate by dying. It is a teaching about what *sin* is. Sin is not only a bad mark in a ledger. It is a move toward *yesh nifrad* — a self that would rather be a separate thing. *Teshuvah*, in the vocabulary of this epistle, is the refusal of that separateness. The Elul field was the place where a Jew could meet the King without first becoming an angel. Epistle 20 now adds: the soul’s native climate is non-separation. Return is not an alien demand imposed from outside. It is the soul remembering what it is.

Bechirah stands inside that claim, not outside it. If there were no free will, the first *tzaddikim* would not have “wished to sin.” The wish is real. The withdrawal is real. The possibility of remaining un-separate is real. The Ten Days take that possibility and press it into the hours that remain before the fast.

V. Hayom Yom, 7 Tishrei: *Teshuvah* from Seeing Providence

The Hayom Yom for this date — indexed to 7 Tishrei 5704, and learned on 7 Tishrei every year — completes a résumé of methods of *teshuvah*. The fourth:

B’chol derachecha da’ehu — “In all your ways, know Him” (Mishlei 3:6). A person who sets his heart and mind to observe all that happens to him and around him will perceive G-dliness tangibly in evidence. As the Mitteler Rebbe pointed out, men of affairs have an advantage over secluded scholars, in that the former can witness actual manifestations of G-dliness. This form of the service of teshuvah comes from one’s perceiving hashgachah peratit.

The Hebrew closes: עבודת התשובה הבאה מראיית השגחה פרטית.

Several claims are packed here, and they belong to this Friday.

First: *teshuvah* is not only a work of memory upon one’s own failures. It can be born from *seeing*. The world, attended to, becomes evidence. Elul’s King-in-the-field is precisely the claim that G-dliness is not confined to the *ohel*. The Mitteler Rebbe’s advantage of *baalei asakim* is the field-advantage: trade, risk, the unexpected turn, the invoice that should not have cleared, the danger that passed. Scholars can know; men of affairs can *see*.

Second: the seeing is itself *avodah* only when the heart and mind are *set* upon it. *Hashgachah peratit* is not a mood. It is a discipline of attention. The same discipline is *cheshbon hanefesh* turned outward — not scanning the self alone, but scanning the day for the signature of the One who lives forever.

Third: this is listed as a *method of teshuvah*. To see Providence and not change one’s ways is to have seen nothing. Recognition without return is aesthetics.

On the birthday of Zevulun — the brother of commerce who dwells at the shore and makes Torah possible for Yissakhar — the Hayom Yom is almost too exact. Zevulun’s portion is the port. The Mitteler Rebbe’s *baal eisek* is Zevulun’s heir. The Ten Days do not send the merchant out of the market. They ask him to read the market as a field in which the King is still near.

VI. Rambam and the Mitzvah of Distinguishing

The one-chapter cycle reaches *Hilkhos Ishut* 22: the husband's rights in his wife's estate, the moment inheritance attaches, what a sale before or after *nissu'in* can and cannot do, the *yevamah*, the *ketubah* as a lien. It is technical. It is also a map of *covenant under law*. A marriage does not create a private sovereignty. Claims are timed, limited, and reviewable. Even the strongest right in the chapter — inheritance — is an institution of *din*, not a license to dominate a person. In a season of *chesbon*, the Rambam's patience with boundaries is itself *mussar*: power that cannot state its legal hour is already a kind of theft.

The three-chapter cycle and *Sefer HaMitzvot* Positive 98 treat *tum'at okhalin* — food and drink that have contracted impurity, and the obligation to know and keep those laws. On the approach to a day whose first prohibition is eating, the halakhah of what may enter the mouth is not thematically foreign. Impurity here is not sin. It is a status that requires *havchanah*, discernment. Yom Kippur will demand a more severe *havchanah*: what the mouth will refuse entirely, so that the body itself can feel the day's nearness. The everyday mitzvah of not confusing the pure and the impure in food is a lower register of the same attention that Psalm 39 asked for the tongue.

One need not force the Rambam into a *derashah*. It is enough to let the cycle stand: covenant has legal shape; holiness has edible edges; both are forms of accountability.

VII. Approaches, Held Together

Four classical postures meet in today's portions. They should not be flattened.

The juridical posture (Rashi's oath, Sifrei's first breach, Rambam's timed rights). History and the household are under law. *Nekamah* is not mood. Inheritance is not appetite. A Jew in the Ten Days who will not accept that some things are *owed* has not yet begun *chesbon*.

The conciliatory posture (Rashi's *vechipper* as appeasement, Tehillim 85 as proof-text, the land comforted when the people are comforted). Judgment is not the last word even when it is a true word. *Kaparah* is relational. It restores a face.

The contemplative-Chassidic posture (Tanya's non-separate soul; Hayom Yom's seeing). The deepest problem is not the ledger. It is *perud*. The deepest repair is not a transaction. It is the recovery of a soul that does not need to be a thing apart. Seeing *hashgachah* is already a form of that recovery.

The national-historical posture (Psalm 106; Rabbi Nechemiah's reading of the Song as speech about the nations; Zevulun as a tribe, not only a person). Return is never only mine. *Amo* and *admato* arrive in one clause.

A constructive synthesis for the seventh of Tishrei would run as follows. Elul taught access. The Ten Days teach that access does not abolish *mishpat*; it places *mishpat* in a Hand that can still retrieve the arrow. The soul's work is to refuse *yesh nifrad*. The day's work is to see Providence in the actual traffic of one's ways. The people's work is to stand toward *kaparah* that includes the land and does not stop at the private heart. None of these cancels the others. The Song, the

psalms, the epistle, and the Hayom Yom are one day's Torah because a human being is all of these at once: a legal subject, a thirsty soul, a member of a people, and a walker in a field that still belongs to a living King.

VIII. Covenantal Resonance — Only Where the Text Gives It

The Song's oath is the clearest civic-theological fact on the page. The Sovereign swears by His own life. Unlimited being accepts the bond of speech. Human rule that will not bind itself by law is, by this measure, a parody of kingship.

The Mechilta's arrow is the second fact. Human power spends itself. It cannot recall what it has loosed. Divine *mishpat* remains in Hand. A politics that pretends human decrees are irreversible without remainder has forgotten the difference between a creature and the One who lives forever. Limited authority under higher law is not a modern import laid on the parashah. It is the contrast the Mechilta already draws.

Vechipper admato amo is the third. Reconciliation is of people *and* land. A covenant that saves souls and strips soil, or that defends territory and abandons persons, is not the closing of Ha'azinu.

Bechirah is the fourth, from Tanya and from the whole season. Consent that cannot be refused is not consent. Return that cannot be refused is not *teshuvah*. The first *tzaddikim* could wish to sin; therefore their remaining un-separate was an act, not a mechanism. Republican language for this is non-domination: no power, including one's own impulse, is entitled to an unanswerable hold. The Torah's language is simpler. There is a King. He is near. The arrow is still in His Hand. Choose.

These are resonances, not a substitute for the *peshat*.

IX. Avodah and Chinuch for This Friday

Before candle lighting. Read Shishi of Ha'azinu aloud, slowly, through *vechipper admato amo*. Ask one question only: where, this year, have I loosed an arrow I cannot retrieve — a word, a coldness, a postponement of *teshuvah* — and what would it mean to place that arrow back into a Hand that can still hold *mishpat* with mercy?

Speech. Psalm 39 is the day's first practical. Choose one recurring sentence in the house — sarcasm, panic, the shrug that ends a child's question — and retire it for Shabbat Shuva.

Seeing. Hayom Yom requires a set mind. On the walk to shul, or at the table, name one concrete turn of the week that was not owed to you. Do not decorate it. Just name it. That naming is the fourth method of *teshuvah*.

Family chinuch. Zevulun's birthday is a gift for the table. Tell the children that there is a holiness of the port as well as of the tent; that seeing Hashem in parnassah is not a lesser Torah; that Shabbat Shuva is named for return, not for mood. With older children, read 32:43 and ask what it would mean for a land and a people to be atoned *together*. Do not force an answer.

The poor. Psalm 41. Before Yom Kippur, close one open *tzedakah* that has been waiting for a more convenient hour. The hour is not convenient. It is near.

The mouth and the fast. Positive Commandment 98 is not the Avodah of Yom Kippur. It is a reminder that holiness already has a relationship with food. Prepare the fast as a meeting, not as an endurance trial. The calendar's daily thought is exact: on that day the body itself can receive life from not eating.

National confession without theatricality. Psalm 106 does not require a speech. It requires that the family's *cheshbon* include the people, not only the household.

Shabbat Shuva. Tonight's Shabbat is named for Hoshea 14. The derashah in shul will do its work. The home's work is to let the Song's last word — *kaparah* of land and people — set the tone of the meal. Less noise. More *Har'ninu*.

X. Closing

The seventh of Tishrei is not Elul. It is Elul's fruit under pressure. The field-King is the oath-King. The businessman who can see Elokus *mamash* is the same Jew whose soul, in Tanya's account, was never meant to become a separate thing. The flashing sword is still in Hand. The land and the people are named in one *kaparah*.

Three days remain until the fast. The portions do not ask for originality. They ask for attention: to the oath, to the mouth, to the traffic of one's ways, and to a return that includes *admato* and *amo* together.

Har'ninu goyim amo.

Vechipper admato amo.

Extended Bibliography

Tanakh and classical parshanut

- *Devarim* 32:40–43, with Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Sforno. Sefaria, Ha'azinu
- Sifrei Devarim on Ha'azinu 32:40–43. Sefaria, Sifrei Devarim
- Mechilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, *Beshalach*, on the contrast of human and Divine “arrows” (as cited by Rashi to 32:41).
- *Yalkut Shimoni*, Shemot, remez 162 (birth of Zevulun).
- *Yeshayahu* 55:6; 59:2. Sefaria, Isaiah 55
- *Hoshea* 14:2 (*Shuvah Yisrael*). Sefaria, Hosea 14
- *Tehillim* 39–43; 85:2; 106–108; 130. Sefaria, Psalms
- *Mishlei* 3:6. Sefaria, Proverbs 3.6
- *Zekhariah* 1:15; *Yoel* 4:19; *Ovadiah* 1:10 (as cited by Rashi).
- *Bereishit* 32:21 (*akhaprah fanav*).

Talmud and halakhah

- *Rosh Hashanah* 18a; *Yevamot* 49b — “Seek the Lord while He may be found” as the Ten Days.
- Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhos Ishut* 22. Sefaria / Chabad
- Rambam, *Hilkhos Tum'at Okhalin* 13–15.
- Rambam, *Sefer HaMitzvot*, Positive Commandment 98. Chabad, Positive 98

Kabbalah and Chassidus

- *Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 20. Chabad Tanya daily
- *Tikkunei Zohar* (as cited in Tanya, Epistle 20, on the departure of the Atzilut-soul before sin).
- *Hayom Yom*, 7 Tishrei. Chabad Hayom Yom
- Rabbi Dovber Schneuri (Mitteler Rebbe), on the advantage of men of affairs in perceiving Elokus (as cited in Hayom Yom).
- *Likutei Torah*, Shir HaShirim 14b (Yom Kippur and the body receiving life from the fast).
- Lubavitcher Rebbe, *Likutei Sichot*, Ha'azinu volumes — the Song as enduring testimony; *vechipper admato amo*.
- Calendar and custom: Ten Days of Teshuvah; Baal Shem Tov extra Tehillim. Chabad, 7 Tishrei 5787

High Holiday and Elul foundations carried into Tishrei

- Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, *Likkutei Torah* and *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* (on *teshuvah* as return of the soul, not only pardon of deed).
- *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim 602–606 (practices of the Ten Days).
- Isaiah's "while He is near" as the Sages' charter for these days.

Covenantal and political-theory conversation (secondary, for resonance only)

- Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (non-domination as the absence of unanswerable power).
- Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel* (covenant as the political grammar of limited rule under higher law).
- Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* and related essays on people and land as joined political facts — to be read only as a conversation partner with *admato amo*, never as a replacement for peshat.

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI.