

A Weekly Message of Torah from Rabbi Rheins

## The Final Song of Moses

This week's Torah portion, *Ha'azinu* (Deuteronomy 32:1-52), is the last *parashah* in our annual cycle of Shabbat morning readings. (The very last section of the Torah is called *V'zot ha-B'rakhah* and it is read as a part of the *Simchat Torah* celebration.)

After the grandeur and awesomeness of the High Holy Days, the moving message of *Ha'azinu* is often overlooked. Tickets won't be required to attend the services of this Shabbat! The heightened music and liturgy of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur *Machzor* will be lovingly packed away until next year, replaced by our familiar *Siddur*, our prayer book with its beloved melodies and readings that welcome us throughout the year. And instead of a major sermon, we'll read the words of *Ha'azinu*, the last "poem-song" of Moses.

In this, his final sermon, Moses brings everything he has got: he teaches, he cajoles, he criticizes, he warns about the future and gives hope to the children and their children's children that God will always be there for them. His final words to them are quite moving:

<sup>45</sup> And when Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel,

<sup>46</sup> he said to them: "**Take to heart** all the words with which I have warned you this day. Enjoin them upon your children that they may observe faithfully all the terms of this Teaching.

<sup>47</sup> For this is not a trifling thing for you: it is your very life; through it you shall long endure on the land that you are to possess upon crossing the Jordan." (Deuteronomy 32:45-47)

With his last breaths of life, Moses pleads with his people: “Take to heart, *Simu I’vavkhem*”: put these words on your heart so that you will never forget them; know that you will face many unforeseen challenges, know that things will not always go your way, know that there will be some who will give up faith or hope. And yet, consider the miraculous journey you and your ancestors have traveled so far. God supported and guided you from the earliest days: through the desert and a howling waste land, from slavery and against horrible assaults, against all odds you made it and here you are, on the border of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 32:10 ff).

This timeless message resonates with every generation. Each one faces circumstances that can overwhelm. But in every generation we have found the courage, the strength, the faith and the wisdom to meet every challenge. We have done much more than simply survive. Rather, the Children of Israel have thrived and will continue to thrive as long as we answer the call of the moment by proudly declaring with the word of readiness spoken by our people in every generation: *Hineini! Here I am!*

Just a friendly reminder: **the First Day of Sukkot begins Sunday night, October 13 with a service at 6pm. On Monday morning our Festival service will be at 10am.** Share time with us under the beautiful Temple Sinai Sukkah, lift up the Lulav and Etrog and participate in this most joyous Biblical Festival!

*Shabbat Shalom v’Chag Sukkot Sameiach!*

*Rick*

Rabbi Rick Rheins