

## Listening, Remembering and Doing In Memory of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg z/

This week's Torah portion, *Ha'azinu* (Deuteronomy 32:1-52), is the last portion that we will read as a part of the Shabbat cycle of readings. It contains the last message of Moses which is delivered as a song to his people shortly before he died.

א קִאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְּרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִי:  
ב יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטָר לְקַחֵי תִזְל כַּטַּל אִמְרֹתַי כְּשִׁעִירִם עַל־דְּשָׁא וְכַרְבִּיבִים עַל־עֵשׂוֹב:

<sup>1</sup> Give ear, O heavens, let me speak;

*Let the earth hear the words I utter!*

<sup>2</sup> May my teaching come down as the rain, my speech distill as dew,

*Like soft showers on young grass,*

*Like summer droplets on sturdy grass.*

Moses calls upon the heavens and earth to listen as he shares his final lesson. He tailors his message so that it could be comprehended by the young and the old, the new learner and the scholar. And knowing that he will not be around to personally guide them, he instructs the Children of Israel to engage parents and grandparents to gain wisdom and understanding.

ז זְכוֹר יָמוֹת עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שָׁנוֹת דֶּר וְדָר שְׂאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיְגִדְךָ זְקֵנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְךָ:

*<sup>7</sup> Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of ages past;  
Ask your father, he will inform you,  
Your elders, they will tell you.*

For God was with us when we were in the wilderness, “in an empty howling wasteland ( וּבְתֵהוּ יִלֵּל יִשְׁמַן ) and protected us and guarded us.

Yes, Moses, like a stern teacher, also included rebuke and warnings in his final message. But he concludes with hope that, with God’s help, we will ultimately survive and overcome all enemies and challenges. He wanted us to know that even after his passing, the principles and faith to which he devoted his life are now in our possession to learn, teach and practice.

The passing of a great leader and teacher brings anxiety and uncertainty. Our nation has just lost one of its greatest heros, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. A proud Jewish woman, she overcame sexist barriers, antisemitism, rejection from schools and law firms to rise to the highest court in the land. Chief Justice Roberts shared this tribute: “Her father was an immigrant from Odessa. Her mother was born four months after her family arrived from Poland.

Her mother later worked as a bookkeeper in Brooklyn. Ruth used to ask what is the difference between a bookkeeper in Brooklyn and a Supreme Court justice. Her answer: ‘one generation.’”

“Ask your parents and they will inform you, your elders and they will tell you.” Both Justice Ginsburg and Moses devoted their final messages urge us to listen, to remember, and to grow in wisdom. As we mourn her passing, we best honor her legacy by listening, learning, remembering and mustering the courage to stand strong during every challenge. And we carry forth her spirit by refusing to back down from bigots, racists, sexists, and antisemites.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is only the second woman to have her coffin lie in state in this nation’s Capitol. That is a sad testimony to the inequalities that have held women back in this country. Who was the other woman? Rosa Parks. Ruth and Rosa were two ground-breaking, courageous women who taught us and led us both through words and actions. The least we can do is humbly listen, learn, and strive to build on their legacy.

*Shabbat Shalom v'l'shana tovah tikateivu v'teichateimu,*

*Rick*

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