

## **D'var Torah Nidhe Israel**

**Devarim/Shabbat Hazon and (Tish'a B'Av): “These are the words which Moses spoke unto all Israel beyond the Jordan; .....” (Deuteronomy 1:1).**

**Isaiah 1:1-The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.**

Last week having finished the reading of the Book of Numbers we are now commencing Devarim, the last and fifth Book of Moses. Here Moses recaps his life as leader of Israel and as we know, these are his good byes to both his people and knowing thatch will not enter the Land for which he has sacrificed so much.

Somehow the life of Moses and his sadness merges with the struggles and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The defeat and enslavement was brought about by the disunity and bitter disagreements of the tribes of Israel.

My friend and colleague Rabbi Jeremy Rosen has written a most revealing blog a couple of weeks ago with regards to the kings and rulers of the Southern and Northern Kingdoms showing the mess and the disarray that the Jewish people had got themselves into.

He writes: “If you look at the early history of the Jewish people three thousand years ago, as recorded in the Bible, you cannot fail to notice what a mess our kings, priests, judges, and tribal chieftains made of everything, time and time and time again. Sure they thought they were making the right decisions. But it turns out they rarely were.”

There has not been a period of absolute peace and unity amongst the Jewish people, save some during the two great kings David and Solomon. However after their deaths, the Kingdom was divided into two, Northern Kingdom with Jerusalem as its Capital. The two kingdoms never really liked one another, on the contrary were constantly battling.

As this Saturday is also Shabbat Hazon ‘Vision’ we read the opening chapters of the Book of Isaiah. It is now assumed that there were two Isaiahs one living in the 8th Century and the other during the 6th

Century BCE, the Exile period. The Book has given us an amazing insight to the history of the Jews and to their emotional state including their political and religious struggles. It is not surprising, that Christianity also considers the Book of Isaiah as very important, because it contains both lamentations and warnings as well as expressions of hope and optimism. With regards to the latter we read some of the Isaiah passages prior to Rosh Hashanah, but this time of the year the Haftorah to be read, comes from the other parts of the Book talking about upset, sadness and admonition of the Jewish people. These readings mirror the events of Tisha B'Av, when we remember the destruction of the Temples. The 1st chapters talk how the Jewish people are chastised and called to account for their sins. Nevertheless in spite of this we can perceive, that as a parent who loves, supports and does not abandon his child so God loves His children even if it results in punishment.

This week's portion shows how Moses who must have been bitterly disappointed for his punishment in not entering the Promised Land, must have also been saddened by the internal fights and dissatisfaction which accompanied the Jewish people during his leadership, nevertheless, and in spite of all of that, he has never abandoned them, on the contrary been constantly at the helm and then ensuring their future by appointing Joshua as a new leader.

In spite of the destruction of the Temples and inspire of the fights of kings, judges and priests Judaism has not given up on hope. as indeed the survival of the Jewish people gives rise to hope, light and reason for optimism. However recalling the last words of Moses as well as the words of admonishment of Isaiah and seeing the disagreements which swept and still are part of the Jewish people we need to have that tacit faith which has led the Jewish people through all of the dark moments in its history, able to survive and overcome.

I hope and pray that we will at one point stop bickering, unite and work together as people both in the Diaspora and Israel. I know you might say well it did not happen to date so will it ever happen. Well as we believe in the idea of the Messianic period so we need to keep our faith that one day we shall be a people who built two Synagogues on an Island of One will want the One to attend both synagogues, all be it on different days or at different times.

Shabbat Shalom  
B'Shalom Rabbi Thomas