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GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT HA'AZINU

Our Unique Music

A group of kids once rushed to share a new hit song with their father. Bursting with excitement, they asked, "Doesn't this song move you?" The father listened patiently, shook his head, and said with disbelief, "You call this music?"

That's the paradox of music. On the one hand, when done right, music has the power to bypass the intellect, pierce the heart, and stir the soul. On the other hand, it is deeply generational. The ballads of the '60s, the anthems of the '90s, the beats of the 2000s and 2010s — each decade carries its own sound, rhythm, and way of reaching people.

Perhaps this is why, in this week's parsha, on the final day of his life, Moshe chose to hand over the Torah to the Jewish people in the form of a song. The words remain eternal, the wisdom timeless, yet every generation must discover its own melody. Each era must find the tune that allows the Torah's eternal message to speak to its hearts, in its language, in its way.

As we emerge from Yom Kippur and step into a new Shabbat, the question for us is: what is the music that will carry us forward? What melody of Torah, of prayer, of connection, can break through the noise of the world and truly penetrate our souls?

(Based on a dvar Torah shared by R' Eitiel Goldwicht)

An Unconditional Homecoming

We have so many miracles in our history that we don't mark with a holiday. There isn't a festival dedicated to the manna, for example. So why do we celebrate the Clouds of Glory with an entire week of Sukkot?

R' Shlomo Farhi shared an astounding idea. One of the deepest messages of the Clouds of Glory was that Hashem took the Jewish people into His embrace immediately after they left Egypt. At that time, they had no mitzvot to their name, no merits to rely on. Hashem even gave them a single command so that they could have at least one mitzvah in their hands. And yet, despite their emptiness, He surrounded them with His presence.

The miracle of the Clouds of Glory wasn't just about protection from heat, sun, or enemies. It was G-d saying: "Even when you feel unworthy, even when you have no accomplishments to your name — I still want you close. I still bring you into My embrace."

That's why when a Jew enters the sukkah for the first time, the feeling should be one of deep, overflowing gratitude. Our family, friends, and neighbors may not see our flaws, but Hashem knows every deficiency. And still, He invited us into His court on Rosh Hashanah, He forgave us on Yom Kippur, and now, on Sukkot, He welcomes us into His very home.

When we truly internalize this, the natural response is almost physical — like stretching out our arms to hug Him back. Sitting in the sukkah becomes the experience of coming home to a loving Father who accepts you, cherishes you, and simply asks: "Look up. Remember Who shelters you."

"True joy is achieved by finding the good in everything." (Ba'al Shem Tov)

Unforsaken

Matt Levin, a Holocaust survivor, once shared a story that left an indelible mark on all who heard it. It was Erev Yom Kippur in Auschwitz. He had nothing to eat before the fast. Desperate, he lifted his eyes and whispered a prayer:

"Ribono shel Olam, it's Erev Yom Kippur. Tomorrow I'll be forced to work 10-12 hours. How can I possibly fast without food? I have never missed the Yom Kippur fast!"

Moments later, as he crossed the street, something completely unexpected happened. A large truck carrying supplies rumbled past, and suddenly — out of nowhere — a cabbage tumbled off and landed directly at his feet. For a split second he froze, terrified. If anyone had seen him pick it up, it would have meant certain death. But by some miracle, the camp was momentarily empty. He snatched it quickly, tucking it under his arm.

Then, as if guided by a whisper from Heaven, he felt compelled to cut the cabbage in two. One half he ate at 4:00 that afternoon to prepare for the fast. The other half he saved for the next day, breaking his fast after hours of grueling labor.

Years later, as he recounted the story, Matt's voice trembled. In that cabbage, he saw Hashem's hand. At the darkest time, G-d appeared right before his side.

This is our message in the days after Yom Kippur. The fast may be behind us, but its lesson is meant to go forward. Hashem is not just present in the synagogue on the holiest day of the year — He is present in the quiet Tuesdays and Thursdays, in the moments we feel empty, uninspired, or alone. Just as G-d was with Matt in Auschwitz, He is with us now, in the ordinary days that follow.

Yom Kippur does not end when we break our fasts. Its power lies in carrying forward the faith that every prayer matters, every moment of connection counts, and Hashem walks with us even when we return to our daily struggles. The challenge now is to hold on to that awareness and to bring Yom Kippur into the year ahead. Because the true power of Yom Kippur isn't just in how we fasted yesterday — it's in how we live tomorrow.