



CANDLE LIGHTING 7:17 PM | 16 ELUL | AUGUST 29, 2026 | HAVDALA 8:19 PM

שבת פרשת כי תבא SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TAVO

Haftorah is Isaiah 60:1-22 (קומי). Pirkei Avot Chs. 3 & 4.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 7:20 PM

SHKIA 7:35 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 8:15 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR ≈9:30 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:39 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR ≈11:30 AM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 6:25 PM

MINCHA 7:05 PM

SHKIA 7:34 PM

MAARIV 8:19 PM

KIDDUSH



Kiddush is sponsored in honor of the Caruso family to wish them bracha, hatzlacha and yishuv tov on moving to Israel.

ONE WEEK AWAY - CAMP SHABBAT FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER

Camp Shabbat Friday Night Outdoor Dinner, to be preceded by a musical davening. RSVP here : [CAMP](#).

TZEITCHEM L'SHALOM

Tzeitchem L'Shalom to Julia Brenenson, Coby Finkelstein, and Eden Riskin who are heading to Israel for a year of study.

YOMIM NORAIM 5787

To be in your Shabbat seats for the Yomim Noraim, please reserve your seats no later than Tuesday, September 1. You may register online here: [Yomim Noraim Seats](#). There will be age-appropriate professionally led groups for children ages 2-12. Register by Tuesday, September 1, by clicking here: [Childcare](#). Any Misheberach requests for 5787 must be submitted anew by emailing Marty at thegabbai@aol.com.

ROSH HASHANAH SCROLL/ YIZKOR MEMORIAL BOOKLET

To partake in our cherished tradition of extending a "Shanah Tova" to your fellow shul members by listing your name by Sept. 1 in the Rosh Hashanah scroll, click here: [Rosh Hashanah Scroll](#). For listings in the Yizkor Memorial booklet by Sept. 1, click here: [Yizkor](#).

SUKKAH CONSTRUCTION AND SUKKAH HOP

We are looking for volunteers to help us assemble the Shul Sukkah on Sunday morning, September 20, at 9:00 AM. For our "Sukkah Hop" on the first day of Sukkot (September 26), we are looking for hosts. If you are available to assemble the Sukkah or be a Sukkah Hop host, contact Elliot Greene by voice or text at 201-519-7951.



\$50+ DONATION/RECEIVE 5% OFF AT FOOD SHOWCASE

To take advantage of this offer, and to see the terms, conditions and limitations thereof, click here: [Food Showcase](#).



SUNDAY
8/30

MONDAY
8/31

TUESDAY
9/1

WEDNESDAY
9/2

THURSDAY
9/3

FRIDAY
9/4

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:20 PM	7:18 PM	7:17 PM	7:15 PM	7:14 PM	7:10 PM

ZMANIM

Earliest Talit	5:22 AM	5:24 AM	5:25 AM	5:26 AM	5:27 AM	5:28 AM
Gedolah	1:30 PM	1:29 PM	1:29 PM	1:28 PM	1:28 PM	1:27 PM
Shkia	7:32 PM	7:30 PM	7:29 PM	7:27 PM	7:26 PM	
Tzait	8:12 PM	8:10 PM	8:09 PM	8:07 PM	8:06 PM	

Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Jay Herman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 4 - Camp Shabbat Friday Night Outdoor Dinner, with a musical davening. RSVP here : [CAMP](#).

Sept. 19 - Kohelet Round Robin. Click here to sign up to discuss a chapter: [KOHELET](#).

Sept. 20 - Sukkah assembly.

Oct. 11 - Sukkah dismantling after Shacharit.

IN OUR FUTURE - KIDDUSH, SEUDAH SHLISHIT, & ETC.



Sept. 5 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Agress family commemorating the Yahrzeit of Amy's father, הרב ישראל יהודה בן אפרים, מיכל הלוי יל, & the Greene family commemorating the Yahrzeit of Elliot's father, Harold Greene ז"ל (Tzvi Hersch ben Shimon).

Sept. 19 - Birthday & Anniversary Kiddush

Sept. 27 - Kiddush is sponsored by the Winchester family on the Yahrzeit of Steve's mother Helen Winchester ז"ל, Miriam Hendl bas Shimon.

Oct. 17 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by David & Lori Garfunkel in memory of both Jonathan ז"ל and Lori's mother ברנאיא ז"ל, Tootsie Markovitz ז"ל.

Oct. 24 - Kiddush is sponsored by Lori & David Garfunkel celebrating Uri's Auf Ruf and upcoming wedding to Abby Elson.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH



To add a birthday/anniversary to upcoming lists (next Kiddush on Shabbat, Sept. 19), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the Sept. birthday/anniversary Kiddush by Sun. night, Sept. 13.

BOARD MEETINGS - 8:30 PM

- **September 1**
- **Oct. 13, Nov. 24, Dec. 29, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 30, May 11, June 29**

SHIURIM



- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, click here: [Parsha](#).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via Whatsapp, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs).
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **SANHEDRIN CH. 1**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit.
- BEGINNER CLASS ON HOW TO READ HEBREW, Monday nights, 8:45 PM, at the shul. To sign up, click here: [Hebrew](#).



OU INITIATIVES

As a means of helping single parent families, if you have a child (or know of a child) who won't have someone to sit with them during davening and you'd like the OU to arrange someone, please click here: [Makom Kevuah](#).

INTRODUCING...

Makom Kavuah

BECAUSE EVERY CHILD SHOULD HAVE A PLACE IN SHUL.

Are you a single parent unable to sit with your child on the other side of the mechitza?

Would you like a *Shul Mentor*, a caring, responsible shul member to sit with your child in shul?

SHUL MENTORS ARE:

☑ Handpicked ☑ Trained ☑ Professionally supported

Have someone in mind who'd be a great fit for your child? Let your shul coordinator know.

To find out more, contact your shul coordinator:
Steven Plotnick
seplotnick@gmail.com



אחבת אחים
תחילת אהבת אחים
תחילת אהבת אדם

A project of Kol Echad,
an initiative of the OU





GITA COOPERWASSER ז"ל YOUTH EVENTS

Aug. 29 - Perek in the Park, 4:15 PM.

Sept. 5 - Pre-RH program/dinner, 3:30-5:30 PM

Sept. 13 - Youth playground meet up at 3:45 PM, followed by Tashlich for families with young children.

Sept. 20 - Donuts/Sukkah decoration 10 AM

Sept. 28 - Youth Sukkah Hop, with dinner at the last stop, 4:15 PM.

Oct. 3 - Simchat Torah Farewell to Sukkah & Kinderkafot.

Nov. 14 - Parent/Child Learning.

Dec. 5 - Chanukah program with children's seudah shlishit, followed by musical havdalah.

Dec. 19 - Parent/Child Learning.

Jan. 2 - Parent/Child Learning.

GITA COOPERWASSER ז"ל SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



• SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:

3RD-5TH: ALEXA & ISABELLA

K-2ND: ALICIA & ABBY

3 YRS-PRE-K: DIAMOND & PERRI

- Youth groups for 3rd through 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- HIATUS UNTIL FALL - Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

שְׁשֵׁנוּ וְשִׁמְחוּ בְּשִׂמְחַת הַתּוֹרָה



קהילת עץ חיים ד'פאסיק-קליפאון
Kehilas Eitz Chaim of Passaic-Clifton

**DEDICATED BY SHIRLEY E.
AND AVROM R. VANN**

IN MEMORY OF THEIR SON

לע"נ יצחק דוד ז"ל בן ר' אברהם הי"ו

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

כ"ד אלול תשפ"ו

כתיבת אותיות

AT THE VANN HOME

392 TERHUNE AVENUE, PASSAIC

STARTING AT 3:00 PM

הכנסת הספר

PROCESSION AT 5:00 PM

TO KEHILAS EITZ CHAIM

371 BROOK AVE, PASSAIC



יִשְׂשַׁכֵּל אָדָם הָאָרִיד אִפּוֹ וּתְפָאֲרָתוֹ עֶבֶר עַל-פִּשְׁעוֹ: יִגְהַם בְּכַפִּיר וְעַף מִלֶּקֶד וַיִּכְטֹל עַל-עֶשְׂב רָצוֹנוֹ: יִהְיֶה לְאָבִיו בֶּן כְּפִיסַל וְגִלְף טָרֵד מִדְּבַי: אִשָּׁה: "בֵּית נְהוֹן נִחֲלַת אֲבוֹת וּמִן-ה-ו-ה אִשָּׁה מִשְׁפָּלַת: יַעֲזֹלָה תִפְּיֵל תִּרְדָּמָה וְנָפֶשׁ רַמְיָה תִרְעַב: יִשְׁמֵר מִצְוָה שֹׁמֵר נִפְשׁוֹ בּוֹזֵה דְרָכָיו יָמָיו (כְּתִיב יוֹמָת): "מִלְּנָה ה-ה-ה חֲנוּן גֵּל וְגִמְלוֹ יִשְׁלֵם-לוֹ: יִסְפֹּר בְּנֵה פִי-נֶשׁ תִּמְנוֹה וְאֶל-הַמִּיתוֹ אֶל-תִּשְׁאֵן נִפְשָׁה: יִגְדֹל (כְּתִיב גֵּרֵל) חֲמָה נִשָּׂא עֵנֶשׁ כִּי אִם-תִּצְלִי וְעוֹד תִּוֹסֵף: יִשְׁמַע עֲצָה וְקִבֵּל מוֹסֵר לְמַעַן תִּחַבֵּם בְּאַחֲרִיתָהּ: -

11It is prudent for a man to be slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook an offense. 12The king's fury is like a lion's roar, but his good will is like dew upon the grass. 13A foolish son is the heartbreak of his father, and a nagging wife is like an endless dripping of water. 14A house and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord. 15Laziness induces a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. 16One who heeds a commandment safeguards his soul; but one who despises proper ways will die. 17 One who is generous to the poor makes a loan to the Lord, and for what he has given he will be repaid what is due him. 18Chastise your son for there is still hope, but do not set your heart on his destruction. 19A hot-tempered man shall suffer the penalty, and if you try to save him from it you will only make it worse. 20Listen to counsel and accept discipline, in order that you may be wise in the end.¹

A. Verse 11 of chapter 19 applauds a man for showing restraint, and lauds him when he can move past even justified anger. The middle of chapter 19 then examines/differentiates this idea in different contexts.

- V. 11 → It is prudent for a man to be slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook an offense.
 - “You shall neither take revenge nor bear a grudge against your people; you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”²
 - Mishlei, perhaps more than any other book of Tanach, tries to motivate the reader to observe mitzvot (*see, e.g.,* v. 19:16, discussed below) by making rational/philosophical arguments in the favor of their observance. Here, however, this pasuk does not appear to be said in direct support of the observance of the mitzvah to not bear a grudge, etc., but to prevent you from ever getting to an emotional place that the mitzvah is relevant.
 - In that regard, the Vilna Gaon says that the ability to overlook an offense is the greatest of all character traits, and a person who possesses this trait merits the atonement of all his sins. As we learned in the Mishnah discussed at Sota 8b, “[w]ith the measure that a person measures [others], so will he be measured by it.”
- V. 12 → The king's fury is like a lion's roar, but his good will is like dew upon the grass.
 - The Daat Sofrim seems to see this as an exception to the previous pasuk, as a king must be known as one whose will cannot be contested without facing his wrath, but who at heart should have compassion for his subjects.
- V. 13 → A foolish son is the heartbreak of his father, and a nagging wife is like an endless dripping of water.
- V. 15 → Laziness induces a deep sleep, and the idle soul shall suffer hunger.
- V. 18 → Chastise your son for there is still hope, but do not set your heart on his destruction.
- V. 19 → A hot-tempered man shall suffer the penalty, and if you try to save him from it you will only make it worse.
- V. 20 → Listen to counsel and accept discipline, in order that you may be wise in the end.

¹ Mishlei Chapter 19.

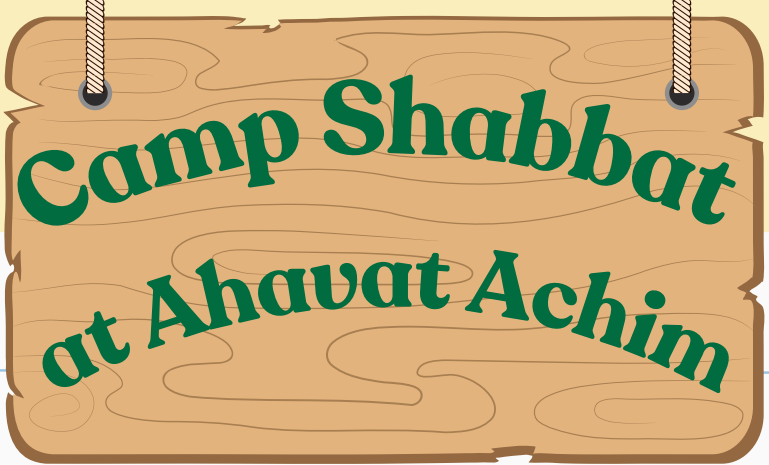
² Vayikra 19:18.

- The aphorisms set forth in verse 11 would appear to now be challenged/examined in “real life” scenarios. As before, for our analysis we will follow Malbim’s understanding of the term “fool (כֹּחַל)” as being an intelligent person that has surrendered to his yetzer hora.
- One “interpretive” way of understanding/reordering these pasukim might be as follows: (1) A man’s son was lazy (v. 15), (2) this caused him to make foolish choices (v. 13) perhaps seeking an easier path to wealth (Rabbeinu Yonah), etc., (3) while it is generally good to overlook an offense (v. 11), here a man should chastise his son while hope exists, as long as that chastisement is rehabilitative and not destructive (v. 18), (4) a nagging wife can make this a more difficult task (v. 13), and perhaps created the atmosphere that led the son towards foolishness (Chevel Nachalah) in the first place, but it does not change the directive, (5) we are given an example of when we should not chastise our son as he is beyond hope, namely if he is hot-tempered and any chastisement will only make it worse (v. 19), and (6) even if the father should back away, Shlomo is giving advice to the son that he should accept the mussar of his father, and thereby become wise (v. 20).

B. Mishlei reminds us how to avoid this family drama in the first place.

- V. 14 → A house and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.
 - In verse 13 we are introduced to a nagging wife, and verse 14 we have a contrast to a prudent wife coming “from” Hashem, and they are separated by a statement that inheritances come from fathers.³
 - Alshich sees this as advice to a man to not allow economic considerations to dictate his choice of a wife, and to instead accept the gift of a prudent wife from Hashem.
- V. 16 → One who heeds a commandment safeguards his soul; but one who despises proper ways will die.
 - After condemning laziness in v. 15, we are taught that the modest act of observing a single commandment safeguards one’s soul.
 - At Sanhedrin 90a we are taught that “all of the Jewish people have a share in the world to come”, but the Mishnah then provides a list of exceptions (*e.g.*, one who says there is no resurrection of the dead per the Torah, one who says the Torah did not originate from Heaven, and an apikoros). It seems to me that Shlomo is reminding us here how easy it is for one to keep a share of the world to come.
- V. 17 → One who is generous to the poor makes a loan to the Lord, and for what he has given he will be repaid what he is due.
 - For years Jack Bickel stressed that giving Tzedakah would never result in a loss, often quoting Malachi 3:10, where Hashem challenges us in the case of ma’aser (which many see as extending to tzedakah) to “test Me”, and see if he will not “open the windows of heaven, and pour out for you blessing immeasurable.” And this is also emphasized in the context of giving to the poor at Devarim 15:10, where Hashem says that to those that give to the poor He “will bless you in all your work and in all your endeavors.”
 - But here, even if interest is generally forbidden, in the context of tzedakah to the poor, the Akeidah (Sefer HaAkeidah Section 69) sees Mishlei as saying that the blessings will be even greater than what was given to the poor (*i.e.*, loaned to Hashem).

³ And note that v. 15 then follows the mentioning of an inheritance in v. 14 with a condemnation of laziness.



Camp Shabbat at Ahavat Achim



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL

Ahavat Achim is bringing that
"camp feeling" to shul on

Friday, Sept 4 & Saturday, Sept 5!

From Shabbat-A-Grams, musical Kabbalat Shabbat (which will be outside, weather dependent!), a community Shabbat dinner (with zemirot, ruach, and the traditional "Kool-Aid"), to Shabbat shacharit with kid participation, and a singing seudah shlishit, we are bringing that "camp feeling" to Fair Lawn!

Come for it all or choose your favorite
activity!

RSVP by 8/25!

tinyurl.com/AACampShabbat

Volunteer to help!



HIGH HOLIDAY CHILDCARE

Drop off groups for children ages 2-12

Rosh Hashana @ 8:45 AM

Kol Nidre

Yom Kippur @ 8:45 AM

Mincha/Neilah

All groups end when davening ends

Shofar blowing for youth after mussaf.
Davening will take place during groups.

Sign up [here!](#)

Early bird (by August 30th): \$18

After August 30th: \$30

No prior registration: \$40

Use of the parent & me room is free for
those who only have child(ren) under 2

*must purchase seats to sign up



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

KIDS PLAYGROUND

Meet Up!

**2ND DAY OF
ROSH
HASHANAH
9/13 @ 3:45 PM**

**@ the Ahavat Achim Playground
Followed by community-wide
Tashlich @ 4:45 PM**



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Join us for

DONUTS & SUKKAH DECORATIONS

SUNDAY, 9/20 FROM 10-11 AM

DAVID SCHWITZER SOCIAL HALL

CRAFT OPTIONS FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES!

BRING A PHOTO OF YOUR CHILD FOR
A SPECIAL PROJECT!

Sponsorship
opportunities
are available! E-mail
youth@ahavatachim.org
to learn more.

RSVP here
by 9/10

INTRODUCING...

Makom Kavuah

**BECAUSE EVERY CHILD
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AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

YOUR FAMILY SHUL

A project of Kol Echad,
an initiative of the OU





Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

KI TAVO • כִּי תָבֹא

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS זצ"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. "I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks זצ"ל in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

A Sense of History

Ki Tavo begins with the ceremony of bringing first-fruits to the Temple. The Mishnah gives a detailed account of what happened:

Those that were near to Jerusalem brought fresh figs and grapes, and those that were far away brought dried figs and raisins. Before them went the ox, its horns overlaid with gold, and with a wreath of olive leaves on its head.

The flute was played before them until they approached Jerusalem. When they were near to Jerusalem, they sent messengers before them and bedecked their first-fruits. The rulers and the prefects and the treasurers of the Temple went forth to meet them. According to the honour due to those that came in, they used to go forth in that order. All the craftsmen in Jerusalem used to rise for them, and greet them, saying, "*Brothers, men of such-and-such a place, you are welcome.*"

Bikkurim 3:3

The flute was played before them until they reached the Temple Mount. When they reached the Temple Mount, even King

Agrippa would take his basket on his shoulder and enter in as far as the Temple Court. It was a magnificent ceremony. In historical context, however, its most significant aspect was the declaration that each individual had to make:

"My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous... Then the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders."

Deut. 26:5-10

This passage is well-known. It became the text expounded as part of the Haggadah on Seder night at the beginning of Pesach. Its familiarity, though, should not blind us to its revolutionary character. Listening to these words, we are in the presence of one of the greatest revolutions in the history of thought.

The ancients saw the gods in nature, never more so than in thinking about the harvest and all that accompanied it. Nature does not change. Natural time is cyclical - the seasons

of the year, the revolution of the planets, the cycle of birth, death, and new life. When the ancients thought about the past, it was not the historical but a mythical/metaphysical/cosmological past – the primeval time-before-time when the world was formed out of the struggle between the elements.

That is precisely what did not happen in Ancient Israel. It might have been otherwise. Had Judaism been a different kind of religion, the people bringing first-fruits might have recited a song of praise to God as the Author of creation and Sustainer of life. We find several such songs in the Book of Psalms:

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp. He covers the sky with clouds; He supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills and bread that sustains His heart.

Ps. 147:7-8

The significance of the first-fruits declaration is that it is not about nature but about history: a thumbnail sketch of the sequence of events from the days of the patriarchs to the Exodus and then conquest of the Land. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi gave the best analysis of the intellectual transformation this involved:

It was Ancient Israel that first assigned a decisive significance to history and thus forged a new world-view ... Suddenly, as it were, the crucial encounter between man and the Divine shifted away from the realm of nature and the cosmos to the plane of history, conceived now in terms of Divine challenge and human response ... Rituals and festivals in Ancient Israel are themselves no longer primarily repetitions of mythic archetypes meant to annihilate historical time. Where they evoke the past, it is not the primeval but the historical past, in which the great and critical moments of Israel's history were

fulfilled ... Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to *remember* felt as a religious imperative to an entire people.

Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, pp. 8-9

This history was not academic, the province of scholars or a literary elite. It belonged to everyone. The declaration was recited by everyone. Knowing the story of one's people was an essential part of citizenship in the community of faith. Not only that, but it was also said in the first person: "My father ... Then the Lord brought us out of Egypt... He brought us to this place". It is this internalisation of history that led the rabbis to say: "In each generation, every person should see himself as if he personally came out of Egypt" (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5). This is history transformed into memory.

To be a Jew is to be part of a story that extends across forty centuries and almost every land on the face of the earth. As Isaiah Berlin put it:

All Jews who are at all conscious of their identity as Jews are steeped in history. They have longer memories, they are aware of a longer continuity as a community than any other which has survived ... Whatever other factors may have entered into the unique amalgam which, if not always Jews themselves, at any rate the rest of the world instantly recognizes as the Jewish People, historical consciousness – sense of continuity with the past – is among the most powerful.

Against the Current, p. 252

Despite Judaism's emphasis on the individual, it has a distinctive sense of what an individual is. We are not alone. There is no sense in Judaism of the atomic individual – the self in and for itself – we encounter in Western philosophy from Hobbes onwards.

Instead, our identity is bound up horizontally with other individuals: our parents, spouse, children, neighbours, members of the community, fellow citizens, fellow Jews. We are also joined vertically to those who came before us, whose story we make our own. To be a Jew is to be a link in the chain of the generations, a character in a drama that began long before we were born and will continue long after our death.

Memory is essential to identity – so Judaism insists. We did not come from nowhere; nor does our story end with us. We are leaves on an ancient tree, chapters in a long and still-being-written story, a letter in the scroll of the book of the people of the Book.

There is something momentous about this historical sense. It reflects the fact – itself one of the great themes of the Bible – that it takes time for human beings to learn, to grow, to rise beyond our often dysfunctional and destructive instincts, to reach moral and spiritual maturity and create a society of dignity and generosity. That is why the covenant is extended over time and why – according to the Sages – the only adequate

guarantors of the covenant at Mount Sinai were the children yet to be born.

That is as near as we get to immortality on earth: to know that we are the guardians of the hopes of our ancestors, and the trustees of the covenant for the sake of the future. That is what happened in Temple times when people brought their first-fruits to Jerusalem and, instead of celebrating nature, celebrated the history of their people from the days when “My father was a wandering Aramean” to the present. As Moses said in some of his last words to posterity:

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.

Deut. 32:7

To be a Jew is to know that the history of our people lives on in us.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. How does knowing where we come from shape who we are and the choices we make today?
2. Why might Judaism place such a strong emphasis on remembering the past?
3. What does it mean to see yourself as a “link in the chain of the generations” – and what responsibilities might that create?

● These questions come from this week’s **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks’ Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/ki-tavo/a-sense-of-history/>