

Beware the Four Horsemen (Haazinu)

“I’m not afraid to die, I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” – Woody Allen

Death chases us all down like an implacable horseman; it is merely the time and the manner of the dying that is a variable. The famed Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, or of Death, are drawn from the verses of the New Testament, but there are earlier echoes of the concept in our Torah.

Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 32:24 draws our attention to what he calls the four agents of death: Famine, Plague, Wild Beasts and the Sword.

God sends these as a direct consequence for our wrongdoings, not to destroy the world, but as both personal and communal punishments for choosing the wrong path. The frightening image is also a reminder that our actions have consequences, sometimes far beyond what we imagine when making the choice. The Torah therefore places responsibility squarely in our hands.

To be spared from these terrible endings, the Torah suggests a very simple solution: Follow God’s commandments. Let’s take the opportunity of this Yom Kippur to review the commandments we should be working on, correct the paths that need correcting, and reestablish that God is the boss.

Shabbat Shalom and Gemar Chatima Tovah

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To the 20,000 Olim (immigrants to Israel) this past year, from over 100(!) countries. Welcome home! <https://www.jpost.com/aliyah/article-908049>