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To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com  
From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON HAAZINU - 5762

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Parashah Talk - Parashas Haazinu

Excerpt from Kol Dodi on the Torah, by RABBI DAVID FEINSTEIN

And die on the mountain as your brother Aaron died (32:50).

In this verse, Hashem seems to promise Moshe that he would die in the same way as his brother. Rashi comments that Moshe envied the way in which Aaron died and desired the same death for himself. What was it about Aaron's death that Moshe so coveted?

As Rashi explains, just before Aaron died, Moshe dressed Aaron's son Elazar in the priestly garments so that Aaron would have the pleasure of seeing his son take over his position as High Priest while he was still alive. Similarly, in Parashas Pinchas (Bamidbar 27:16), when Hashem told Moshe that he would be permitted to see the land from the other side of the Jordan River before going to his death, Rashi says that Moshe asked Hashem to allow his sons to inherit his greatness.

This raises a question: Moshe desired to see his sons assume his role as leader of the people and envied his brother the privilege of seeing Elazar dressed in the garments of his office at the moment that he left the world. And here, Hashem seems to promise Moshe that he would be granted his desire to die in the same way Aaron did – yet, we know that Hashem did not allow Moshe's sons to take over leadership of the people and instead appointed Joshua. It is unthinkable that Hashem made a promise which He did not fulfill: How then did Moshe see his children inherit his greatness?

Moshe's greatness did not lie in his role as king or political leader. Instead, he was Moshe Rabbeinu, Moshe Our Teacher, the teacher of Torah par excellence, who first introduced the holy Torah to the Jewish people. Our Sages taught (Bava Metzia 33a) that a father gives his son a place in this world but a Torah teacher brings his students into the World to Come and gives them a place there. In the eternal world, a teacher is, in a very real sense, a father to all of his students.

Thus, as he left the world, Moshe was privileged to see his most devoted and beloved disciple, his "first-born son" so to speak, inherit his Torah leadership role, and all his "children," an entire nation of students, inherit his true greatness, the Torah which Hashem gave them through him. All of us are his heirs, and we have him to thank for the place which is waiting for students of Torah in the World to Come, as the Sages said, "All Israel has a share in the World to Come" (Sanhedrin 90a).

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu  
Subject: Torah Weekly - Ha'azinu  
\* TORAH WEEKLY \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion  
Parshat Ha=azinu

We continue to pray for the recovery of the wounded and offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks.

OVERVIEW

Almost all of Ha=azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world, and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation - that Hashem pulls the strings of world events so that Bnei Yisrael can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world.

Hashem's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods, and indulge in all kinds of depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental - that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

INSIGHTS

GARDENING - JEWISH STYLE

AMay My teaching drop like rain, may My utterance flow like the dew (32:1)

A violent storm. Winds howling. The rain lashes the ground. It seems as though the earth is being torn apart by the weather. And yet without this heavy downpour, nothing will grow properly. For if only the dew waters the ground, the heat of the sun will burn and shrivel the seeds.

Only if heavy rains water the ground will the dew do its job of bringing forth the flowering blossoms.

This is the way of Torah. If a person labors in the study of halacha, filling himself with the methodology and torrent of Talmudic logic, even though it may seem that he is struggling against a deluge, he will eventually bring forth healthy and beautiful flowers.

He may feel storm-driven and pounded by the rains. Nevertheless, the fruits of his labors will also include the esoteric parts of Torah, the >dew= of Aggadata - the homiletic teachings. They will flower in his hands.

However, if he concerns himself only with the >dew= of the Torah, the Aggadata, then in the withering >sun=, the bright lights of secular cynicism, his acquisition of Torah will wither and die, lacking the deep rain to nourish its roots.

Based on the Netziv, as heard from Rabbi Pinchas Kantrovitz

HAFTARAH

Shmuel II 1 - 51 The haftara for Ha=azinu is known as "The Song of David," which David wrote in his youth when he was beset by so many troubles. It is an all-inclusive psalm, relating to any possible evil which could occur during David's lifetime. He kept this psalm with him throughout life, reciting it in praise every time David experienced Hashem's salvation.

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Torahweb [from last year]

## RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER UNIQUE AND ISOLATED

How can we understand the strange phenomenon of anti-Semitism which has existed throughout the ages in all societies? In the Pesach haggadah we mention that, "Bechol dor vador omdim aleinu lechaloteinu," û in every generation there is some group attempting to wipe out the Jews. There can not be a sociological explanation for this phenomenon if it appears in so many different societies.

In Parshat Haazinu (32:12) we read, "Hashem badad yanchenu," - that G-d guides his nation all alone with no other power assisting Him. The Rabbis of the Talmud (Chagigah 3a) understood the meaning of "Shema Yisroel..Hashem echad" to be that not only is there only one god, as opposed to any number more than one; but also that G-d is unique. When the Jewish people proclaim Shema, we are proclaiming G-d as a unique Being.

When G-d proclaims, "Mi keamcha yisroel, goy echad baaretz," He is proclaiming the uniqueness of the Jewish people. Each is suigenerous. Bilaam (Bamidbar 23:9) described the uniqueness of the Jewish people with the same terminology used regarding G-d Himself, i.e., the nation dwells "levadad", "hen am levadad yishkon.." The Torah later (Devarim 33:28) picks up on this expression first used by Bilaam, "Vayishkon yisroel betach badad eyn yaakov," that the Jewish people indeed do live in this world in a state of isolation- badad û due to their uniqueness. All human beings were created betzelem elokim, but only Benei Yisroel are referred to as Banim LeMakom. They have received the genes of uniqueness, so to speak, from G-d Himself.

In our prayers we mention the fact that, "Veshimcha hagadol vehakadosh aleinu karata," that Hashem has incorporated the great and holy name into ours: We are called Am Hashem- the nation of G-d. We also mention in our prayers "Ushmeinu karata bishmecha," that He has also incorporated our name into His. G-d is known as Elokei Yisroel, the G-d of the Jewish People. In some countries the practice was for the wife to adopt the husband's family name, while in others the practice was for the husband to take the wife's family name. (Just to cite one famous example, the Maharsha took on his wife's family name, Edles.) The relationship between the Jewish people and G-d is commonly compared (by the Tanach) to that of a husband and wife. The compatibility of "the couple" lies in the fact that each one is badad- unique.

All people tend to distrust others who are different, and the Jewish people are always different. Despite the fact that in recent years one of the prime ministers of medinat yisrael declared in his inaugural address that, "We shall no longer be an am levadad yishkon," this situation will never change. It is built in by G-d, into the nature and the character of our people. We always have a totally different perspective on everything. When Rivka Imeinu was pregnant with her twin boys the Torah tells us that they were already fighting with each other, "vayitrotzetzu habanim bekirbah." The rabbis of the Talmud had an old tradition, "Halachah beyaduah sheesav sonah leyaakov."

In recent years, many Jews have been thinking according to what is "politically correct", as opposed to thinking correctly. The angel teaches every Jewish soul Torah before being born. We all have to learn Torah to orient ourselves towards "thinking Jewishly." The Torah is "G-d's way of thinking." The first steps in teshuvah are to learn more Torah. We pray every day, "Hashivenu avinu letoratecha..vehachzireinu betshuvah shlemah lefanecha." Please bring us back to Torah study so that we will be able to do complete teshuvah.

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From: National Council of Young Israel  
[SMTP:YI\_Torah@lb.bcentral.com]

Parshat Ha=azinu 12 Tishrei 5762 September 29, 2001 Daf Yomi:  
Baba Kama 64

Guest Rabbi: RABBI ZVI LEHRER Young Israel of Mapleton  
Park, NY

Today=s Torah reading of Ha=azinu is the last Shabbat Sidra read in our yearly cycle. The next Torah reading of V=zoth HaBracha may be the final Sidra, but it is unique because, unlike all previous Sidrot, it is not read on a Shabbat; it will be read on Simchat Torah and, at that time, the first chapter of the Sidra of Breishit will be read as well. This is done to teach us that Torah is eternal. No sooner do we conclude the Torah, we begin it anew; for there is no end to Torah study and observance.

This year, the reading of Ha=azinu is read between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. This occurs when Rosh HaShana falls on a Monday or Tuesday. When Rosh Hashana falls on a Thursday or on Shabbat, Ha=azinu is read on Shabbat Shuva. It is noteworthy that the Jewish calendar is constructed in such a manner that Rosh HaShana can never fall on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday.

Almost the entire Sidra of Ha=azinu consists of the song that Moshe Rabbeinu sang to B=nai Yisrael on the 7th day of Adar in the year 2488 û the last day of his life. In verse one of this prophetic poem, Moshe summoned Heaven and Earth to bear witness that he warned the people to keep the Torah. He chose these witnesses because they would be around until the end of time. Also, the people would be blessed or punished by the witnesses themselves, depending on their observance of the covenant. Finally, the B=nai Yisrael should take a lesson from these witnesses. Just as these natural bodies are constant in fulfilling the will of their Master, so too, the B=nai Yisrael should be loyal in their devotion to fulfilling HaShem=s Torah.

In verse two, Moshe Rabbeinu praised the Torah and compared it to life-giving rain and the morning dew. In verse three, Moshe requested that whenever he mentions HaShem=s name, the people should praise HaShem by saying **AAmen.**@ Then, in verse four, Moshe instructs the B=nai Yisrael to always be mindful of a basic tenant of our Jewish faith: **AThe Rock! Perfect is His work, for all His paths are Justice.**@

In trying to understand the events and destiny of our lives as individuals and as a Jewish nation, there will be time when we will be baffled by the age-old problem: the suffering of the righteous and seemingly good fortune of the wicked. Throughout these difficult times, we must realize that our human intelligence is limited. Humankind simply cannot comprehend the totality of our world. Only the Omniscient HaShem who is perfect and grasps the total picture can truly act in a just manner.

In fact, Moshe Rabeinu draws from his personal example in teaching this valuable lesson. He chose the metaphor, **ARock,**@ for HaShem to emphasize His abundant strength of character and to demonstrate that he accepted the Divine decree of not entering Eretz Yisrael for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. Although Moshe prayed 515 times to have the Divine decree removed (the word **Avetchanan**@ in gematria is equal to 515), HaShem refused to alter His judgement.

Verse 4 also serves as the opening of the prayer Tzakok Hadin - **AThe Acceptance of HaShem=s Judgement**@ which is recited at the most tragic time in our life. It is the prayer recited over the fresh grave when the judgement of HaShem is accepted unquestioningly with perfect faith. In numerous verses that follow, Moshe Rabeinu describes to Bnai Yisrael the many troubles that will befall them as a people in the future. In the end, however, the oppressors of the Jewish people will perish and we will thrive. Then, HaShem will redeem us with the complete redemption as stated in verse 39:

See Now! Behold it is I! I am Heû And no god is with Me I put to death and I give life I struck down and I will heal And no one can be rescued from My hand.

In regard to this passage, the Chatam Sofer explains that at the beginning of Jewish history, when HaShem redeemed the Bnai Yisrael from bondage. He said: **AI** will be as I will be.@ (Shemot 3:14). Rashi explains: **AI** will be with them in their hour of need and I will be with them at other times of their need.@ Here in verse 39 the reference is to the future redemption where HaShem is telling us, **ASee now! Behold it**

is I! I am He...@ Then I spoke in the future tense but now the time has come and I am speaking in the present tense, **AB**ehold it is I! I am He...@ Now is the time of the complete redemption!

In conclusion, just as the prophetic poem of Ha =azinu has been fulfilled up to now without exception, let us hope and pray that we see the remainder of Moshe Rabeinu = s prophecy speedily in our times. May HaShem bring us the Geulah Shleima, Bimhera B = Yomeinu Amen.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] To: parasha-qa@ohr.edu Subject: Parsha Q&A - Ha'azinu \* PARSHA Q&A \* In-Depth Questions on the Parsha and Rashi's commentary. Parshat Ha'azinu

We continue to pray for the recovery of the wounded and offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks.

#### I DID NOT KNOW THAT!

"Ha Lashem Tigmalu Zot?" (32:6) The above verse starts with an unusual letter "hey." It is unusual in two ways: It is larger than normal, and it is written far away from the word that it goes with. The Midrash sees this as a hint to Moshe's name, as follows: Start from the beginning of the parsha and take the first letter of each verse. Do this up to and including the above verse. Now take the numerical value of those letters and you get 345, which equals the numerical value of "Moshe." Thus, Moshe "signed" his name in this song at the end of the Torah. (Taking after Moshe's example, Jewish poets through the ages have encoded their names into their works.) \* Based on Midrash Tanchuma

RECOMMENDED READING LIST Ramban 32:1 Biblical Witnesses 32:16 The Rebuke of Ha'azinu 32:40 The Testimony of Ha'azinu Sforno 32:2 Waters of the Torah 32:13 Purpose of Eretz Yisrael 32:19 Purpose of Galus 32:27 Salvation of Dispersion

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses? 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. How is the Torah like rain? 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. How is Hashem "faithful without injustice"? 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. Why is Hashem called "tzaddik"? 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world? 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noah.
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Eliyahu "My Father." (Melachim II 2:12).
7. Why did Hashem separate the world's nations into exactly 70? 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 Bnei Yisrael who entered Egypt.
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"? 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the Avot.
9. How is Hashem's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring? 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings."
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, Hashem says "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase? 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People? 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. Hashem would not let His name be desecrated like this.

12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People? 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.

13. When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute? 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.

14. When Hashem punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment? 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.

15. How will Hashem's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People? 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to Hashem.

16. On what day was Ha'azinu taught to the Jewish People? 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.

17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why? 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.

18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean? 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.

19. Why did Hashem tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon? 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.

20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned? 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so should they.

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY rmk@torah.org  
To: drasha@torah.org Subject: Drasha - Parshas Haazinu -- Echoes from Heaven

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Parshas Haazinu -- Echoes from Heaven

This week's portion begins with Moshe's poetic plea, "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth." (Deuteronomy 32:1)

The verb tense differs dramatically from the beginning of the sentence to the end. Normally a plea is said in the active tense. It is uttered as a command. "Give ear O heavens." "Listen my people." "Lend me your ear." When it comes to the heavens, Moshe expresses his appeal in an active manner. When it comes to the earth however, the expression becomes passive: "May the earth hear." It is almost as if he is not commanding but submissively acquiescing. "I cannot command the earth to pay attention, rather, may it overhear my pleas."

The Ohr HaChaim points out this anomaly and wonders why Moshe tells the heavens to listen, but he does not include the earth in that directive. Instead Moshe says that the earth shall hear, almost as if the proverbial earth is listening in the background to the prophecy he directed toward their heavenly counterparts.

Rabbi Yissachar Frand, Magid Shiur in Yeshiva Ner Israel, Baltimore, and noted author and lecturer, tells a story that he heard from a Rabbi in Dallas, Texas.

One day a man walked into the office of his orthodox shul in Dallas. The man was obviously not an observant Jew. In fact, the Rabbi never saw him in the synagogue before.

"Rabbi," he said, "I'd like to make a contribution." He proceeded to hand over a check for ten thousand dollars.

The rabbi was flabbergasted. He did not know this man, nor had the man ever seen the Rabbi. Yet, he just handed over a tremendous gift to the synagogue. "Please," said the rabbi. "There must be a reason. After

all, you are giving this donation to a rabbi whom you do not know and to a shul in which you do not participate. Please tell me the reason."

"The man answered very simply. "Not long ago I was in Israel. I went to the Wall. There I saw a man. He was obviously a very observant Jew. He was praying with such fervor, with unparalleled enthusiasm and feeling. I just stood there and listened. I heard his pleas and supplications, I saw him sway with all his might, I saw his outpouring of faith, love, and devotion all harmoniously blending as an offering to G-d. From the day I saw that man pray, I could not get him out of my mind. If this is Judaism, I want to be part of it. I want to help perpetuate it." Perhaps Moshe is teaching us the significance of an active, forceful, message and its passive ramifications. Effective influence may not only come when talking to a particular individual, rather it may also come when others hear.

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky of blessed memory, explains that the word for influence in the Hebrew language, hashpa'ah, comes from the same root as the word slant or incline, shipuah. There are two ways to water a garden; one is to douse the vegetation directly. That takes effort and constant wetting. A better way that is more practical is to build a slated roof from which the steady flow of rain will irrigate the vegetation. Moshe teaches us that to the heavens we may have to shout. But we don't have to shout at the earth. Because when we speak to the heavens with fervor and enthusiasm, the earth listens as well. Good Shabbos 1 2001 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Dedicated by Mark and Deedee Honigsfeld & family in memory of Paul & Bluma Honigsfeld

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From: Aish.com[SMTP:newsletterServer@aish.com] Subject: MiOray HaAish - Ha'azinu  
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Parsha: Ha'azinu (Deuteronomy 32)

The Straight and Just Path

By: Rabbi Ari Kahn

Parshat Ha'azinu stands out from other sections of the Torah due to its form. Parshat Ha'azinu is a song/poem written by Moses and lists the penultimate actions taken by Moses prior to his death.

Moses accepts his lot with dignity, pronouncing an acceptance of G-d's judgement,<sup>1</sup> as other Jews on their deathbeds will pronounce throughout the centuries.<sup>2</sup>

We get the sense that the song/poem is not said in resignation, rather it is an ecstatic expression of Moses's sublime spiritual psyche. Many commentaries have occupied themselves with attempts to decipher the religious message contained in the song/poem. One fairly recent commentator who lived in the 19th century, Rav Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, known by his acronym Netziv, offered a unique approach to this section.

The Netziv felt that the section hints at the destruction of the two Temples, the subsequent exile and the eventual rebuilding. Some of the verses refer to the First Temple period while others refer to the Second Temple. For example, a verse at the outset declares:

He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice; a G-d of truth and without iniquity, just and straight is He. (Deut. 32:4)

The verse refers to G-d, and seems unexceptional in terms of pointing at future events. However, the next verse contrasts G-d's attributes with the attributes of a twisted generation which would exist in the future:

Not His [is] the corruption, but his children are blemished; they are a perverse and crooked generation. (Deut. 32:5)

The just and straight nature of G-d are directly contrasted with the perversity and crookedness of the people. This, according to the Netziv, describes the generation that caused, and lived through, the destruction of the Second Temple.

These comments are said in passing in the Netziv's local commentary in Deuteronomy. However, in his introduction to the Book of Genesis, the Netziv explains the concept in greater depth.

#### THE BOOK OF THE STRAIGHT

The Book of Genesis is also known as the "Book of the Straight" (Sefer HaYashar). What is the exact meaning of this word "straight" (yashar)?

The Netziv explains that the people who lived during the waning years of the Second Temple were tzadikim -- fastidious in their performance of commandments. Nonetheless, there was something twisted about them. They were not yashar.

They were righteous and pious and diligent in Torah - but they were not straight in their dealings in the ways of the world. Because of the hatred in their hearts they suspected anyone, who was not identical to themselves in service of G-d, of being a Sadducee or a heretic. This led to the spilling of blood and further division and all calamities in the world, until the Temple was destroyed...

G-d is yashar and does not tolerate such tzadikim, only those that travel a straight path also in worldly matters, and not in crookedness even if it is for the "sake of heaven", for this [trait] causes destruction...(Introduction of Netziv to Book of Genesis)

#### FALSE PIETY

In this extraordinary analysis the Netziv forcefully attacks false piety. The ends do not justify the means. Real tzadikim have a completely different type of relationship with people around them. The Netziv explains that the most important teaching of the Book of Genesis is the upstanding behavior of the forefathers, hence the name Sefer HaYashar.

Abraham was spiritually tortured and morally repulsed by the behavior of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet when G-d tells him of the impending destruction, he does not celebrate. He prays that the inhabitants be spared. The Netziv intimates that other tzadikim would bask in the Divine vengeance, their own ways vindicated, the hated sinners obliterated and punished. Abraham was yashar. Arguably, even before Abraham was a tzadik he was yashar.

#### RABBI AKIVA

The Talmud tells the tale of a simple laborer who was similarly straight:

Our Rabbis taught: "He who judges his neighbor in the scale of merit is himself judged favorably. Thus a story is told of a certain man who descended from Upper Galilee and worked for an individual in the South for three years. On the eve of the Day of Atonement he requested of him, 'Give me my wages that I may go and support my wife and children.' 'I have no money,' answered he. 'Give me produce,' he demanded; 'I have none,' he replied. 'Give me land.' - 'I have none.' 'Give me cattle.' - 'I have none.' 'Give me pillows and bedding.' - 'I have none.' [So] he slung his things behind him and went home with a sorrowful heart.

"After the Festival his employer took his wages in his hand together with three laden asses, one bearing food, another drink, and the third various sweetmeats, and went to his house. After they had eaten and drunk, he gave him his wages. Said he to him, 'When you asked me,

"Give me my wages," and I answered you, "I have no money," of what did you suspect me?" I thought, Perhaps you came across cheap merchandise and had purchased it therewith.' And when you requested me, "Give me cattle," and I answered, "I have no cattle," of what did you suspect me?" I thought, they may be hired to others.' When you asked me, "Give me land," and I told you, "I have no land," of what did you suspect me?" I thought, perhaps it is leased to others.' And when I told you, "I have no produce," of what did you suspect me?" I thought, Perhaps they are not tithed.' And when I told you, "I have no pillows or bedding," of what did you suspect me?" I thought, perhaps he has sanctified all his property to Heaven.' By the [Temple] service!' exclaimed he, 'it was even so; I vowed away all my property because of my son Hyrcanus, who would not occupy himself with the Torah, but when I went to my companions in the South they absolved me of all my vows. And as for you, just as you judged me favorably, so may the Omnipresent judge you favorably.'" (Talmud Shabbat 127b)

A simple worker with a good heart, he left with sadness but without anger. Instead of an altercation or bloodshed he left for home empty-handed after three hard years of labor yet nothing to show for the sweat of his brow. This man displayed incredible greatness of spirit in justifying his employer, and bore no anger in his heart. Despite seeing produce and knowing that there were tracts of land - which he himself had worked for three years - he accepted his employer's answers at face value and returned to his home.

The Talmud does not share with us the identity of this worker or the employer; they remain anonymous characters serving as a vehicle for a powerful message. Yet from the text we may surmise that the Temple still stood at the time of this incident. All that we know is that the employer had a son named Hyrcanus who did not wish to dedicate himself to Torah.

The story is also recorded in the Sheiltot of Rav Achai Gaon (Parshat Sh'mot section 40), one of the most ancient post-Talmudic texts extant. Here, the names of the owner and the worker are revealed. The owner was Rabbi Eliezer the son of Hyrcanus, who named his son after his own father. He is known as "Rebbi Eliezer HaGadol," the great Rebbi Eliezer, and was one of the most important and impressive figure of the Talmudic age.

The worker was one Akiva the son of Yosef - the illustrious Rabbi Akiva.

#### SUPERIOR SPIRIT

The Netziv, who also wrote a commentary on the Sheiltot,<sup>3</sup> comments that this story is a rare documentation of the period in Rabbi Akiva's life prior to his metamorphosis to learned sage; he was still an ignorant worker. Yet although he may have been ignorant, he was of superior spirit. He possessed greatness of heart. He was yashar. Apparently, the Talmud protects the identity of the characters to protect the innocent. Yet the fact that Rabbi Akiva had superior moral qualities prior to his education is clear from other Talmudic sources:

Rabbi Akiva was a shepherd of Ben Kalba Savua. The latter's daughter, seeing how modest and noble [the shepherd] was, said to him, "Were I to be betrothed to you would you go away to [study at] an academy?" "Yes," he replied. (Ketuvot 62b)

Rabbi Akiva was ignorant, yet he was modest and noble. Rabbi Akiva's personal change transpired in the same time-frame as the destruction of the Second Temple. As we saw above, the tzaddikim of that time were not necessarily on the same moral level as this ignorant shepherd. This observation allows us to understand an incredible statement made by Rabbi Akiva himself about his days as a simple man.

It was taught, R. Akiva said: "When I was an am ha-arez, I said: 'If I had a scholar [before me], and I would maul him like a donkey.'" Said his disciples to him, "Rabbi, say like a dog!" He answered them: "The former bites and breaks the bones, while the latter bites but does not break the bones." (Pesachim 49b)

While we may understand tensions between different socio-economic classes, hatred seems much more difficult to explain. Why did Rabbi Akiva not tolerate the scholars, the intellectual and religious elite? We must recall that the scholars of that age were the ones described by the Netziv as careful in their relationship with G-d but twisted in their interpersonal relationships. The ignorant Akiva - the am ha'aretz - was of morally superior character. He was yashar. He could not tolerate the tzaddik who was not yashar.

His wife convinced him that the cause of the hypocrisy he saw around him was not the study of Torah. Knowledge of Torah makes the morally-challenged more responsible for their actions, and may lead to punishment and destruction. When a morally superior person like Akiva learns Torah, he will flourish.<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Akiva eventually becomes both yashar and a tzaddik.

#### OR ZARUA

Hundreds of years ago a book on the commandants was written, and it was called "Or Zarua." The author, who was associated with the school of Tosafists, was named Rav Yitzchak from Vienna. In his introduction he explains why he chose the name "Or Zarua" for his work:

I called the work as I did due to great love for the verse and that intimated in the verse: 'Or Zarua Latzaddik uliyishrai lev simcha' - Light is sown for the just, and gladness for the straight in heart. (Psalm 97:11) The end of each word spells R' Akiva - clearly. (Introduction to Or Zarua)

While finding a reference to Rabbi Akiva was surely interesting, what was it that so excited Rav Yitzchak? Surely it was the content of the verse. Light is sown for the just, and gladness for the straight in heart. The verse refers to the tzaddik and the yashar; what better description could there be of Rabbi Akiva?

Rabbi Akiva, perhaps more than any other person, represented the eternal optimist. His spirit could not be dampened. He always retained the pure heart - a heart of gold.

#### A HEART OF GOLD

Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rav, citing Rabbi Meir, and so it was taught in the name of Rabbi Akiva:

"A man should always accustom himself to say 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good', [as exemplified in] the following incident. Rabbi Akiva was once going along the road and he came to a certain town and looked for lodgings but was everywhere refused. He said 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good', and he went and spent the night in the open field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey and a lamp. A gust of wind came and blew out the lamp, a weasel came and ate the rooster, a lion came and ate the donkey. He said: 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good'. The same night some brigands came and carried off the inhabitants of the town. He said to them: Did I not say to you, 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is all for good?'" (Berachot 60b)

When others see destruction, Rabbi Akiva sees salvation: Long ago, as Rabban Gamaliel, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Akiva were walking on the road, they heard the noise of the crowds at Rome [on travelling] from Puteoli, a hundred and twenty miles away. They all fell a-weeping, but Rabbi Akiva seemed merry. Said they to him: "Wherefore are you merry?" Said he to them: "Wherefore are you weeping?" Said they: "These heathens who bow down to images and burn incense to idols live in safety and ease, whereas our Temple, the footstool of our G-d, is burnt down by fire, and should we then not weep?" He replied: "Therefore, am I merry. If they that offend Him fare thus, how much better shall fare they that do obey Him!"

Once again they were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They fell a-weeping and Rabbi Akiva seemed merry. They said they to him, "Why are you merry?" Said he: "Wherefore are you weeping?" Said they to him: "A place of which it was once said, And the common man that draweth nigh shall be put to death, is now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep?" Said he to them: "Therefore am I merry; for it is written, And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to

record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the Son of Yevarechiah. Now what connection has this Uriah the priest with Zechariah? Uriah lived during the times of the First Temple, while [the other.] Zechariah lived [and prophesied] during the Second Temple; but Holy-Writ linked the [later] prophecy of Zechariah with the [earlier] prophecy of Uriah, In the [earlier] prophecy [in the days] of Uriah it is written, Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field etc. In Zechariah it is written, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem. So long as Uriah's prophecy had not had its fulfillment, I had misgivings lest Zechariah's prophecy might not be fulfilled; now that Uriah's prophecy has been [literally] fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zechariah's prophecy also is to find its literal fulfillment." Said they to him: "Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva, you have comforted us!" (Makkoth 24b)

Even with his life ebbing away Rabbi Akiva retained dignity and his smile:

When Rabbi Akiva was taken out for execution, it was the hour for the recital of the Shema, and while they combed his flesh with iron combs, he was accepting upon himself the Kingship of Heaven. His disciples said to him: "Our teacher, even to this point?" He said to them: "All my days I have been troubled by this verse, with all your soul, [which I interpret,] even if He takes your soul. I said: 'When shall I have the opportunity of fulfilling this?' Now that I have the opportunity shall I not fulfill it?" He prolonged the word ehad until he expired while saying it.

A voice went forth and proclaimed: "Happy art you, Akiva, that your soul has departed with the word ehad!" The ministering angels said before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Such Torah, and such a reward? [He should have been] from them that die by Your hand, O Lord." He replied to them: "Their portion is in life." A voice went forth and proclaimed, "Happy art you, Rabbi Akiva, that you art destined for the life of the world to come."

#### SOURCE OF JOY

Now we understand why Rav Yitzchak of Vienna thought that this verse was so appropriate for Rabbi Akiva Or Zarua Latzaddik uliyishrai lev simcha - "Light is sown for the just, and gladness for the straight in heart." Who more than Rabbi Akiva exemplified these qualities while retaining gladness?

Rabbi Akiva, in his early years, was yashar but not a tzaddik. It was only when the two traits became combined that the joy with which Rabbi Akiva is so closely identified, became manifest. Even when he heroically turned his back and went home, he did so with a heavy heart, "he slung his things behind him and went home with a sorrowful heart."

The Rabbi Akiva with whom we later become acquainted never loses his smile. Or Zarua Latzaddik uliyishrai lev simcha - "Light is sown for the just, and gladness for the straight in heart."

On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, we begin the prayers with a statement of incredible hope. We must understand, especially in these Ten Days of Teshuva, that to be a tzaddik is within our reach. We also must remember that the only way to become a true tzaddik is by having first created the proper moral and spiritual infrastructure. First we must be yashar - straight: not conniving, not dishonest, not deceitful, not calculating, not disingenuous. We must be yashar like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. And even like a simple laborer-shepherd, Akiva.

Or Zarua Latzaddik uliyishrai lev simcha - "Light is sown for the just, and gladness for the straight in heart."

#### NOTES

See Avoda Zara 18a. (return to text)

This aspect of the verse is borne out by the Midrash Rabbah - Deut. 11:10. (return to text)

"Haemek Shaayla" Mosed Harav Kook edition. (return to text)

I heard this explanation from Rav Mordechai Elon. He was speaking in the context of the death of Rabbi Akiva's students who failed morally

as well, despite the insistence of Rabbi Akiva that "Loving one's neighbor" is the most important of commandments. (return to text)

Rabbi Ari Kahn serves as Director of Foreign Student Programs at Bar Ilan University in Israel, and is a featured lecturer at Aish Jerusalem. You can contact him directly at: AKahn@aish.com See the full Parsha Archives: [http://aish.com/torahportion/pArchive\\_hp.asp](http://aish.com/torahportion/pArchive_hp.asp) (C) 2001 Aish HaTorah International - All rights reserved. Email: [webmaster@aish.com](mailto:webmaster@aish.com) Home Page: <http://aish.com>

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This article is online at: <http://aish.com/torahportion/mayanot/showArticle.asp>

Parsha: Ha'azinu (Deuteronomy 32)

Apocalypse Now?

By: Rabbi Noson Weisz

See now, that I, I am He - and no god is with Me. I put to death and bring life, I struck down and I will heal, and there is no rescuer from My hand. (Deut. 32:39)

The above verse is from the ending of the song of Parshat Ha'azinu, which amounts to a poetic eulogy of human history.

The message that this particular verse conveys is that human history cannot culminate till humanity reaches the clarity of vision to acknowledge that G-d has exclusive control over life and death, over sickness and health.

Last week the world took a giant step in the direction of attaining this clarity. To fully appreciate the impact of the terrible events that have washed over us, we must understand the profound importance our modern society places on the feeling of being in control and how this feeling influences our attitude towards G-d.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW

In the conception of sociologists, human religious feeling is inversely proportional to the human sense of control. Thus primitive man was intensely religious because he understood very little about the workings of the universe and consequently had zero control over natural processes. He didn't know how or why people were born or died, he didn't understand why the seasons changed, or why people got sick or how to cure them. It is difficult for humans to live with mysteries because it puts them into a state of anxiety. We can only plan for the future and invest today in whatever will produce a better tomorrow if we are confident that there will be a world out there tomorrow. As long as we understand and control nothing in our world we have nothing on which to base this confidence.

Consequently according to the sociologists, we human beings invented G-d.

The G-d-hypothesis was the perfect answer to our primitive anxieties. We invented a man-like G-d Who created the world and controls it. We understand His motives which are very like our own motives, and consequently, because He is predictable and He is in control, we are able to face the future with a sense of security.

Of course, He invariably has some demands, but meeting G-d's demands is a small price to pay for the security of a predictable future. While G-d is only predictable in a very broad sense (since you can never say for certain what G-d will do in each individual case), nevertheless inventing G-d was the best method primitive man had at his disposal to stave off his anxieties. On the whole it worked.

We have come an enormous way from that primitive man in the last 5,000 years. We have unraveled the mysteries of the physical world, and we are well on our way to unraveling the complexities of the human character as well through the development of the social sciences. We have even managed to get a grip on the world economy through the developments of post Keynesian economics. We are in control of our futures. We no longer need the G-d-hypothesis to feel secure.

Consequently Western society has abandoned it and turned militantly secular.

It's not a matter of whether modern man believes in G-d or not. The issue doesn't even arise today; the possibility of the existence of a controlling Divinity has become irrelevant.

#### DEMOCRATIC VIEW

There is another non-religious dimension to this notion of control as well. Our society is liberal, tolerant and democratic. We look with a favorable eye at our neighbors; we are genuinely dedicated to helping everyone attain a share of the good life.

This attitude, which is the bedrock of Western democratic societies, is based on the assumption that it is within our power to keep our economies ever expanding, so that the social pie will continue to grow endlessly. As more and more will always be available, we are able to be liberal and generous and keep including ever increasing numbers of people within the American or European dream. But what if our confidence in this bubble of optimism were pricked, and the Western world would be filled with anxiety and uncertainty about the future?

To the degree that the average person would grow increasingly concerned about the welfare and security of his own immediate family, his generous feeling toward his fellow man would fade. A feeling of "either you or I" would inevitably result in the adoption of policies of exclusion, which in turn would literally destroy the whole fabric of the social contract that underlies our political system.

Thus, being in control not only determines how we feel about G-d, the feeling of being in control is the very life blood of the modern world that we have constructed.

#### ENEMIES OF SOCIETY

Now let us study the enemies of our society, the people who are responsible for terrorism. What is their interest? Are they merely interested in destruction for its own sake?

As long as terrorism was directed mainly against Israel, much of the liberal intelligentsia of the Western world managed to persuade themselves that even terrorism had a rational basis. There was no other recourse for deprived people lacking military resources. Their only chance was to demoralize their much more powerful enemy through savage acts of terror that would rob that enemy of his sense of security. The effects of terrorist acts might be unpleasantly gory, but from a distance the intelligentsia found it easy to sympathize with the terrorist.

Fundamentalist terrorism exposed its true face on a grand scale in the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon.

Many thousands of innocent lives were wiped out for no apparent positive purpose. The United States was not at war with any of the countries or peoples apparently responsible, and they had no apparent strategic gain from planting the seeds of fear and terror in the streets of America. So why did they do it? The answer is that the terrorists also subscribe to the sociologist theory of religion.

The uninterrupted success of the Western world, especially now that it has emerged triumphant over Communism, is an existential threat to the continued existence of fundamentalist primitive societies.

In the information age, it is quite impossible to isolate pockets of the world from the main body of humanity. If the development of the Western world and the spread of its ideology continued unabated, it would not take that long for the repressed populations of fundamentalist societies to catch on to the fact that a better future was available around the corner for anyone who was willing to master the information necessary to learn how to control his world. Such a conclusion is the death knell of a fundamentalist regime.

How can fundamentalists protect themselves? By exposing the weakness of Western society. This weakness, as is very often the case, is the opposite side of the coin of its strength - its utter lack of belief in anything other than its own ability to control the world. The minute that anxiety spreads and the sense of being in control weakens, Western society begins to totter.

#### POWER OF A TERRORIST

Without control you need something to believe in and Western man as a social being is faithless.

Terrorism is not inherently threatening. Even if the power of the terrorist - always at its highest when he is totally unexpected as he was in this instance - would continue to be applied full force, he could not truly threaten the national survival of a powerful modern nation seriously.

But he doesn't need to.

The power of the terrorist is psychological. He destroys the feeling of being in control and induces a feeling of anxiety. For people who are entirely dependent on the bubble of confidence, this conveys a very real sense of danger.

Western society and its arch enemy, the fundamentalist society, both really share a common outlook with regard to religion. They both subscribe to the sociological notion that belief in G-d is inversely proportional to man's sense of being in control of his world.

We Jews do not subscribe to this attitude. We did not invent G-d to stave off our feelings of anxiety. Even 4,000 years ago, Abraham was a modern individual. He projected the success of Western society and he found it empty of content. He saw no point in investing all his energy into developing a world where the pinnacle of success would be the ability to guarantee 70 years of relatively trouble-free existence. It just wasn't enough. He turned to G-d out of a desire for more, not out of fear. He was after everlasting life, something over which man has zero control by definition.

#### ABRAHAM'S WORLDVIEW

Abraham's worldview necessitates the handing over of all control to G-d by definition. Man turns to G-d not to allay his anxieties, but to hand Him back a world over which man is in total control (on the grounds that such a world simply isn't enough).

Abraham could only do this effectively when everything in his own little world was in order and under total control.

Maimonides explains (Laws of Repentance, 9:1-2) that this is the reason the Torah is replete with promises of worldly well-being for the conscientiously observant, although this clearly cannot be on the grounds of reward as true reward is only attainable in the next world. G-d told humanity that He designed this world as a tool. When used properly to accomplish the task for which it was designed, it works well, but when it is allocated to other tasks it will surely break down.

But when the well-being in this world becomes the goal of humanity, the sociologists' view is validated; there is no need of G-d.

Parshat Ha'azinu informs us that such a world must ultimately break down.

#### THE TROUBLES IN ISRAEL

The troubles in Israel broke out immediately prior to the Rosh Hashana of this past year. In retrospect they were clearly a signal that the secular Zionist dream was being brought to an end.

The philosophy of "never again" (referring to the Holocaust) which drives modern Jews to control their own fate with technological superiority and military might has been demonstrated to be an empty bubble by the events of the past year.

In the view of the farsighted person, the face of the world has permanently changed in the space of one short year for the Jewish people. We may still have a lot of travail to face before the message penetrates, but the pattern is already set - crystal clear to anyone who is willing to look with an open mind.

The fact that G-d sent another powerful signal immediately prior to this Rosh Hashana, this time to the Western world, is frightening to say the least.

American reaction has so far followed the Israeli reaction almost to the letter. Buoyed by a resurgent tide of patriotism, president Bush is getting set to take care of the problem of terrorism with American might and know-how. His message is clear: "We can handle this."

But the descendant of Abraham watching from the sidelines cannot help but tremble.

#### BRUTE FORCE

Human beings always need a unifying idea they can believe in to found successful societies. Keeping people in line by brute force does not work over long periods of time. The breakup of the Soviet Union amply testifies to the chaos that results when the rule of brute force runs out of steam.

Torah tradition teaches that there are only four secular unifying ideas, each representing one of the "four kingdoms." As follows:

The first idea, the greatness of the power of civilization was embodied in the Babylonian Empire. The power organized by this early civilization swept the ancient world and provided the first successful alternative to a G-d-centered world, symbolized by the destruction of the first Temple.

The next unifying idea to come along was the power of wealth. Properly organized, a steadily-expanding economy can provide the promise of the good life for all of humanity without the need for conquest. This idea was symbolized by Achashverosh's empire in Persia, embracing a federation of 127 countries.

The ancient Greek empire stood for the power of science and culture, and it swept through the world like a powerful fire during the short life of Alexander the Great. Each of these ideas incorporated its predecessors' experience and built on it.

According to Jewish tradition the fourth and final kingdom, upon whose fall the world will return to the knowledge of G-d (expressed in the verse quoted in the beginning of this essay), represents the power of all these ideas combined. This is our own modern Western world, a world that was founded upon the remnants of the Roman Empire which destroyed the Second Temple.

Our world indeed believes that the power of modern civilization with its market-driven economy and ever expanding frontiers of knowledge and technology can eventually deliver Utopia. When G-d begins picking apart this final idea, it is a sign that the end is near. When it breaks down, there is nothing beyond but chaos.

#### THE POWER OF IDEAS

Ideas are spiritual things. They cannot be destroyed by physical force. An idea must be logically refuted. It must collapse from within. The loss of confidence that results from impotence in the face of terror can rapidly bring the Western world to its knees.

As anxious people withdraw their money from investment in equities, companies begin to shrink and contract. The result is deflation and depression. Without the prospect of a better world tomorrow, the political structure on which our society is based will collapse. Beyond it is chaos and the void.

No one is saying that this will happen tomorrow. Deeply held beliefs take time to disintegrate. People cling stubbornly to the worldview that sustains them.

But once again the pattern is clear. It is all too easy for G-d to allow the terrorists to succeed just a few more times on a mass scale, and this is all that will be necessary to bring our world to its knees.

#### THE SOLUTION

Is there anything we can do? Of course there is! Yom Kippur is upon us. There is nothing to prevent us from realizing what G-d is showing us that He can do now. We do not need to wait years while the scenario slowly and painfully plays itself out.

The Torah informs us that all our troubles are a result of refusing to follow in the steps of Abraham. We have been drawn in by the notion that we can control our own future without G-d's help.

We are all well aware that there is no real promise out there in the secular world. It is as true as it ever was that the secular world has very little to offer in the way of permanent happiness, while it brings much in the way of pain and suffering.

We have surrendered a great deal for the sake of the illusion of being able to control our own fate without anyone's help.

Let us be wise and voluntarily abandon the illusion now. Let us do teshuva this Yom Kippur and stand before our Creator and inform Him that He has shown us enough. There is no need for more - we get the message. Please spare us the rest.

For I shall raise My hand to heaven and say, "As I live forever, if I sharpen My flashing sword and My hand grasps judgment, I shall return vengeance upon My enemies and upon those that hate Me shall I bring retribution, I shall intoxicate My arrows with blood and My sword shall devour flesh, because of the blood of corpse and captive, because of the earliest depredations of the enemy."

O nations -- sing the praises of His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants; He will bring retribution upon His foes, and He will appease His land and His people. (Deut. 32:40-43)

Mayanot, which literally means "wellsprings," is a deeper examination of the parsha with a philosophical/kabbalistic bent. Rabbi Noson Weisz is a Toronto native with degrees in microbiology, international relations, and law. You can contact him directly at: NWeisz@aish.com See the full Parsha Archives: aish.com/torahportion/pArchive\_hp.asp (C) 2001 Aish HaTorah International - All rights reserved. Email: webmaster@aish.com Home Page: <http://aish.com>

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Subj: Parshat Haazinu To: yhe-parsha@vbm-torah.org  
PARASHAT HA'AZINU  
by RAV EZRA BICK

As we all know, Ha'azinu is "shira," a song. Un like the other songs in the Torah, which fulfill a historical purpose - the Jews really did sing a song of rejoicing after the splitting of the sea, Ha'azinu is a "song on demand" - G-d told Moshe to compose the song. One simple question - why? Or, in other words, what is the meaning of a "song" in the context of Moshe's farewell speeches to the Jewish people?

#### A. Witnessing

First, we have to understand what is the basic theme of Ha'azinu. I think it is fair to say that the basic theme of "shirat ha-yam" (the song of the sea) is praise of G-d, as a response to the miracle. This is the standard meaning of shira, as a halakic concept, in general - one utters shira after a great miracle of redemption (hallel). But clearly, Ha'azinu does not have that character, both by an even superficial internal text reading, and in the absence of a miracle to which the song is in response.

In fact, the Torah explicitly and repeatedly defines the nature of Ha'azinu.

And I shall surely hide My face on that day, because of all the evil that (the people) have done, for they have turned to other gods. Therefore ("ve ata"), write for yourselves this song, and teach it to the Jews to place in their mouths, in order that THIS SONG BE A WITNESS FOR ME AGAINST THE JEWS (31,18-19). And when many evils and troubles shall befall them, then THIS SONG SHALL ANSWER THEM AS A WITNESS, for it shall not be forgotten from their seed... (31,21). Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, and I shall speak in their ears these things, and I SHALL CALL THE HEAVENS AND EARTH AS WITNESSES AGAINST THEM; for I know that after my death you shall become corrupt, and leave the way which I have commanded you... (31,28-29).

(Accordingly, the opening lines of Ha'azinu "Listen heavens, and I shall speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth" - are not merely a poetic opening, but represent the crux of the song - a calling of witnesses who will be able to testify when the time comes.)

The song is to be a future witness, connected to the evil deeds of future generations, and to the evil that will befall them as a result. We can now define our questions more exactly:

1. What is the purpose or need for a "witness?" To what does the song witness?
2. Why is it in the form of a song?
3. What is the difference between the prose "tokhecha" of Parasha t Ki Tavo, which spells out exactly what will be the terrible consequences of not following the Torah, and the "shira" of Ha'azinu?

#### B. Song

What is the difference between a situation described in prose and one presented in song? Let us examine a very suggestive midrash.

Chizkiyahu should have said shira over the fall of Sancheriv, as is written, "But Chizkiyahu did not render according to the benefit he had received, for his heart has lifted up" (Divrei Ha-yamim II 32,25). We know Chizkiyahu was a righteous king, and yet it is written that his heart has lifted up (haughty)? It means his heart was haughty and did not say shira. Yeshayahu came to him and said: "Sing to G-d" (Yesh. 12,5). He answered: Why? [Yeshayahu answered]: "For He has done mighty things" (ibid.). [Chizkiyahu] said to him: This is already "known throughout the land" (ibid.). R. Levi said: Chizkiyahu said, Why should we say retell the greatness and miracles of G-d, when this is already well-known from one end of the world to the other. Has not the sun stood still in the center



of the heaven, and G-d's miracles were seen from one of the world to the other. (Shir HaShirim Raba, 4, "Iti Mivlanon," 3)

(The gemara in Sanhedrin 94a states that for this reason Chizkiyahu was not declared Mashiach).

Chizkiyahu, the personality whose heart is not able to say shira, does not see why the well-known historical facts of G-d's miracles need to be repeated every time G-d performs another one. In other words, shira does not carry any new information. Prose states the timeless truth. Shira expresses the truth of this particular second, the immediate reaction to the unique moment in history. To the prosaic eye, there is nothing essentially new in the downfall of Sancheriv that was not already demonstrated in the drowning of Par'o. To the shira personality, the defeat of Sancheriv requires an immediate reaction, for the truth of this moment is unique. Shira is spontaneous, prose is eternal.

The Tokhecha in Ki Tavo expressed the timeless truth of the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people. It was a BRIT - these are the conditions by which you are My people and I am your G-d. There is a law that decrees that if you abandon G-d, you will be punished, by sword, disease, and exile. To this, Ha'azinu has nothing to add. Ha'azinu is shira, though a very unusual one. It is written not for the Jews of the desert generation. It is written for "when many evils and troubles shall befall them, THEN this song shall answer them as a witness" (31,21). Today, you read it and study it only so that it should be ready "in their mouths" (31,19), so that "it will not be forgotten from their seed" (31,21). At that future time, this song will suddenly become terribly relevant - it will then be the WITNESS who comes to testify. Ha'azinu is a case of prepared and studied spontaneity.

Notice that though Ha'azinu, like the rest of Sefer Devarim, is a speech of Moshe, here there is an explicit indication that it is composed by G-d and not by Moshe himself. True, it does not say, "Vayedaber HaShem el Moshe leimor." Moshe says to the Leviim that "I will call the heaven and the earth to testify" (31,28). The shira itself is in first person, at least at the beginning "Listen heavens and I will speak." But this is preceded by the a command of G-d to Moshe: "G-d said to Moshe, you shall rest with your fathers, and this people shall rise and where after the foreign gods of the land.... Now write THIS SONG for yourselves and teach it to the Jews to place in their mouths, so that this song be a witness for Me against the Jews" (31, 16-19). This is immediately followed by the statement that "Moshe wrote THIS SONG ON THAT DAY, and taught it to the Jews" (31,22). The song THIS SONG - is something already existing in some sense when G-d speaks to Moshe.

Had Moshe composed the song, it would have been the song of THAT DAY. The "Song of Sea" was song "THEN" (AZ yashir Moshe). Ha'azinu is the song of some future moment. G-d then has to write it and it is taught to the Jews, so that when it will suddenly reach its magical moment, its one second of destiny, it will spring forth to testify AT THAT MOMENT. It is a song that exists in prophecy from ancient times, but whose moment of life is in the future.

What then is the meaning of that special song, that testimony, at that moment? If we examine the content of Ha'azinu, it is not different in outline than the Tokhecha. It says that you abandoned G-d, so you were punished. If I were Chizkiyahu, I would say that there is nothing new here. The difference is not in the dry content, but in something else. What is that something else?

#### C. Witness

In G-d's introduction to the need for the shira in last week's parasha, we find the following verses (Notice the specific time references - THAT DAY! - the brit of Ki Tavo, you will remember, was contracted on THIS DAY, a phrase repeated over and over again in Ki Tavo, Nitzavim, and Vayelekh):

G-d said to Moshe, you shall rest with your fathers, and this people shall rise and where after the foreign gods of the land to where he is coming in its midst, and he will abandon me and transgress the covenant which I made with him.

An My anger shall burn ON THAT DAY, and I shall abandon them, and shall hide MY face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles will find them; And he will say on THAT DAY: it is because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have found me.

And I will hide My face on THAT DAY, because of all the evil that he have done for he has turned to other gods.

Therefore (Ve-ata), write this song for yourselves... as a witness against the Jews. (31,1619) Why does G-d say that the Jews will state that "because G-d is not in my midst that all these evils have found me?" Off hand, this sounds like an expression of repentance. The people recognize that their troubles are because of their poor relationship with G-d. But if so, the verse is out of place. In context, the verses describe the sin and the consequence, continuing on with "I will hide my face." There is no hint of repentance anywhere in these sections. The summary verse of what the Jews have done is that they "turned to other gods."

I would like to suggest that the verse does not express repentance but blame - it is true, the people say, that we have problems, but that is G-d's fault, it is because HE HAS ABANDONED US. This statement is an accusation, against G-d. In response, G-d brings witnesses, the song, the heavens and earth, to rebut the accusation - your troubles are because YOU have abandoned G-d.

Objectively and outwardly, there is not much difference between G-d abandoning the Jews and the Jews abandoning G-d, other than the question of who did what first. We all know that in questions like this it is more a matter of interpretation than bald facts. The song is designed to teach enlightenment rather than facts, to lead to true understanding rather than a broader knowledge.

#### D. The Contents of Ha'azinu

This explains the most obvious difference between the Ha'azinu and the tokhecha. Ha'azinu is based on experience (future experience, for the most part, in relation to the Jews of the desert), rather than theory or rational explanation. There is a difference between comprehending (and believing) facts that are explained to us, and the understanding that comes from personal experience. Ha'azinu contains primarily a recapitulation of Jewish

experience and history - "Remember the days of old, understand the years of generations" (32,7). In Ki Tavo, the theory of the covenant is laid out and the Jews say Amen - they accept it in their heads. But G-d says, and Moshe repeats, that He knows that after Moshe's death they will be corrupted. Only after the entire cycle of mutual abandonment will they be able to truly understand, from within their own long personal experience, the truth of the eternal theory of Ki Tavo. That is when the song will spring to life. The song appeals not to the intellect, but to the heart - "Do you do this to G-d, you foolish people and not wise, is He not your father who fashioned you, He made you and established you" (32,6). The song is meant not to make you feel obligated, but to feel BAD, to feel foolish, like one feels when one wakes up and realizes that he has wasted his life, and all the things that seemed important were foolish and worthless.

There is, in Vayelekh and Ha'azinu, a feeling that we can only describe as a sense of frustration. G-d knows that the Jews will be corrupted - and it is as though there is nothing He can do about it now. He has explained all He can, executed the brit, warned them, shown them. But G-d knows that experience is larger and deeper than explanation. The shira waits, waits for a time when it will be right, not because there is some new idea there that the Jews were not intellectually ready for, but because while ideas are eternal and unchanging, the depth dimension of truth is part of time and experience. Only when the fullness of despair and life are reached in their cycle will the song become a witness rather than a prophecy.

#### E. Abandonment and Presence

There is one further aspect of a song. If I claim or explain that G-d is present in the Jewish people, my claim does not change the facts. The Jews said - G-d has abandoned us. G-d answers, in Vayelekh, that He has (indeed) hidden His face (31,19). Is that confirmation or rebuttal of the people's claim?

Ha'azinu has one element, at the end of the shira, that is lacking in the tokhecha. It is a kind of consolation, but differs from the consolation that appears, for instance, at the end of the tokhecha of Bechukotai. G-d says, in effect, that the enemies of the Jews will be punished, and He will avenge His people. Since Ha'azinu does not contain the promise of repentance, there can be no promise of redemption. That is not the point, and would only conflict with the purpose of eliciting understanding of the terrible waste and destruction of history. The shira has the ability to demonstrate that G-d IS close to the Jews, even when they sinned - not by denying the facts that He has left them to their enemies, but by showing, by eliciting the feeling, that His presence exists even in such times.

How can one pursue a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, if not that their Rock has sold them, and G-d given them over.... By Me is found vengeance and payment, for when their legs will fail, for the day of their grief is near, and the future comes quickly. For when G-d shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when he sees that the hand is helpless, and there is none shut up or left.... Rejoice nations with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and return vengeance to His oppressors, and will render atonement to His land, His people. (32,30-43). In a seamless, almost indistinguishable manner, the song moves from punishment to atonement. Indeed, the commentators are unclear where the switch begins - see Rashi 32,35 and 43. There is no break in this case - it is not, as in Bechukotai, that AFTER the punishment there will come repentance, you will change your ways and G-d will then remember you. Here, from within the punishment itself arises the feelings of vengeance and identification with HIS people. As an eternal idea, punishment and return, abandonment and presence, are two different ideas. As part of the song, they are both parts of one complex relationship between G-d and His people. The very recitation of the song AT THAT TIME produces the presence of G-d - not merely testifies to it, but because the song IS the response of the moment, it becomes part of the experience.

This is part of the meaning of the term "hester panim" - G-d's hiding His face - which is G-d's answer to the accusation that He has abandoned His people. Practically, it is the same as abandonment - but it hints at presence as well. G-d is near, close, so close that in order to express His anger He has to cover His face. Were He really far away, detached from the people who were once His, He would not have to do that. But in fact, the "abandonment" is deliberate and measured. The result is, that the very acts called forth by the abandonment - that a thousand flee one enemy - elicit a contrary response from the G-d of Israel, one of anger at the enemy. The song tries to express G-d's emotions, as it were, a complex and contradictory love and anger at the Jews. If only they could understand! How is it that they do not understand! But you - enemies who kill - what part do you have in the relationship of G-d and His people?

In this sense, the shira is a witness and answer to the complaint that the bad things happen because G-d is not with us. G-d answers - or rather, will answer THEN, when you will be able to truly understand it - that He is with us, even as He has abandoned us, for He has hidden His face. The difference is experiential, not intellectual; in other words, it is a difference of shira, not prose.

See (not know, but see) now (now, after all has happened) that I, I am He (not a statement with much intellectual content, is it?), and there is no other god with Me; I shall kill and give life, I crush and I shall heal, and there is none who can deliver from My hand (32,39).

#### F. Moshe and G-d

It is interesting to consider the relationship between Moshe and G-d concerning the shira. The shira is, as we claimed, a future truth. It can only come from G-d, and not from within the experience of the desert generation themselves. But G-d tells Moshe to recite it and teach it to the Jews, and Moshe does so in his own name, in first person. Moshe is he who the heavens and the earth to testify. The frustration of G-d expressed in 31,16 - "G-d said to Moshe, you shall rest with your fathers, and this people shall rise and where after the foreign gods of the land" - is mirrored by Moshe when he speaks to the Leviim - "For I know that after my death you will surely be corrupted, and leave the way that I have commanded you" (31,29).

The explanation is simple. Sefer Devarim is Moshe trying to ensure that the Torah which HE HAS taught the Jews will succeed. Throughout the sefer, Moshe speaks of what "I" have taught you. The frustration with the fact that no amount of TEACHING can fully

guarantee true understanding is a challenge to the meaning of Moshe's life and mission. The shira, then, is the finishing touch on G-d's Torah and Moshe's life-mission - beyond the intellectual eternal teaching of the Torah, there is an element of life-experience, of Jewish history, that must be learnt through disaster and triumph, through tears and even suffering. This is at once not part of the Torah and the culmination of it. The Torah itself, in prophecy sets down the basis for this shira, this song of life, and in the same way that G-d finishes His Torah by including this part, so too Moshe concludes his mission, his "failed" mission (for he knows that after his death, it will "all fall apart" - you will surely be corrupted), with the future success, with the groundwork, in prophecy, of what cannot be included as such in the present, but waits, in trust with the heaven and the earth, for its proper moment of truth.

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH

ALON SHEVUT, GUSH ETZION 90433 E-MAIL: [YHE@ETZION.ORG.IL](mailto:YHE@ETZION.ORG.IL) or

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