

B'S'D' should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS HAAZINU SHABBOS SHUVA - 5757

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Torah Weekly - Ha'azinu

* TORAH WEEKLY * "ohr@jer1.co.il" Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiro Parshas Ha'azinu

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 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

Insights

Gardening - Jewish Style "May 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 Aggadita - the homiletic teachings. They will flower in his hands. However, if he concerns himself only with the 'dew' of the Torah, the Aggadita, 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

Divorce - Jewish Style - In times to come, when Israel is redeemed from among the nations and Hashem gathers us to Him, Israel will say "Master of the Universe, it's written in Your Torah that when a man divorces his wife and banishes her from his life, should the woman marry again and then divorce this second husband, she may never again return to her first husband. "You banished us to amongst the nations of the world. How is it possible for You to take us back?"

Hashem will say to them "It says in the laws of divorce: 'When a man will banish her from his house.' I am G-d, not man."

These words from the Midrash are most perplexing. The relationship between the Jewish People and Hashem is understood to be that of a marriage, of husband and wife. How can it possibly be that about this very subject Hashem would say "I am G-d, not man!"

Let us understand the Midrash thus: The Talmud teaches us that if a man throws a get, a bill of divorce, to his wife while she is in his yard, the divorce is not effective. For a get to work, it needs to be given. And since his wife is still in his yard, in his domain, there is a deficiency in the giving. It is as though the get never left the orbit of his influence.

Thus, with this principle in mind, we can understand what Hashem is saying: "I am G-d, not man. The universe is Mine. The whole world is 'My yard.' Thus I never really gave you a bill of divorce. I never really divorced you at all..." Chanukas Hatorah

Marriage - Jewish Style - One of the greatest figures in the history of Diaspora Jewry was Rabbeinu Gershom, who lived some one thousand years ago. He was given the title Meor Hagolah - the 'Illuminator of the Exile'. Why was this illustrious and august title given to him and not to Rashi, or Maimonides?

Rabbeinu Gershom instituted a number of bans, including one against divorcing a wife against her will, and one against having two wives at the same time. But why was that so special?

As we mentioned above, the relationship of the Jewish People to Hashem is that of a wife to a husband. Hashem 'married' the Jewish People at Sinai. Although we were exiled and it seemed He divorced us, these decrees of Rabbeinu Gershom also proclaim that Hashem will not divorce us against our will, nor will He 'take another wife' from amongst the nations.

It is for this reason that Rabbeinu Gershom is called the "Illuminator Of the Exile." Because of his decrees, however dark the Exile becomes, it has a silver lining in it. For eventually Hashem must take us back. We refuse to be divorced, and Hashem will 'marry' no other save His people Israel. Adapted from Rabbi Moshe Shapiro

Haftorah: Hoshea 14:2-10, Yoel 2:11-27, Michah 7:18:20

A Burning Sensation An unbelievable sight. A young fellow with all the visible signs of an Orthodox Jew walks into MacTreife's Burger Bar and orders a cheese-burger! He then proceeds to eat it in full view of everyone. Later he suffers tremendous heart-burn from the indigestible fast-food. Much later however, he suffers an even greater `burn' in the spiritual department...

The Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is called Shabbos Shuva - The Shabbos of Return. The name is taken from the first verse of the Haftorah "Return O Israel to Hashem for you have stumbled in your iniquity..."

The Meshech Chochma asks the question, what does it mean to `stumble' in `iniquity'. If a person is already doing something wrong, how can he make it worse by stumbling in it?

There are two aspects to wrong-doing. The offense in itself, and the desecration of Hashem's name that may result from it.

It's one thing for a Jew to slink into MacTreife's wearing jeans, in "plain-clothes". It's quite another to waltz in wearing full uniform. It's one thing to commit iniquity - to give in to one's desires, but it's quite another to stumble and desecrate Hashem's name in public. Heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations. Ribon Kol Haolamim - "Master of all the Worlds..."

I shall implore Your glowing countenance ... to find favor and understanding in your eyes and in the eyes of all men ... achaley fonecha ham'irim... limtzo chayn v'saychel tov b'aynecho uv'aynay chol b'nay adam

In reference to the Torah's account that "G-d blessed the seventh day" (Bereishis 2:3) the midrash explains that He blessed it with a glowing countenance -- a man's countenance glows on Shabbos in a way that it does not during the week. This has been suggested as the reason why we are able to say "sheva brachos" at the Shabbos meals even if no new guest is present as is required in the weekday meals honoring newlyweds in the week following their wedding. On the Shabbos everyone is considered to be "a new face" justifying the repetition of these blessings. We therefore implore Hashem to bestow some of His glowing countenance upon us so that our new, shining personalities will find favor in His eyes and everyone who sees us.

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HALACHA FOR 5756 SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS HA'AZINU By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

They would drink the wine of their libations... (32:38). From here we derive that it is prohibited to drink or derive benefit from wine made by non-Jews... (Avoda Zara 29:2).

PASTEURIZED WINE

QUESTION: If kosher pasteurized wine is touched by a non-Jew, does it become forbidden for a Jew to drink it?

DISCUSSION: Chazal forbade a Jew to drink wine which was touched(1) by a non-Jew. The reason for this prohibition is similar to the reason for the prohibition of eating bread and food items baked or cooked by non-Jews: To limit social contact between Jews and non-Jews. Chazal understood that partying or joining non-Jews for meals will ultimately lead to intermarriage and the self-destruction of the Jewish people.

?In earlier times, there was an additional reason for prohibiting non-Jewish wine since wine was often used in idol worship. In that case, the wine was prohibited for drinking nor could any benefit be derived from it. Nowadays, however, the Rama(2) rules that the Avoda Zara issue is not really relevant since idol worship is not common in the lands where we live. Although there are opinions to the contrary, most Poskim(3) rule that one may derive benefit from non-Jewish wine and business may be done with wines which were touched by a non-Jew.X

Shulchan Aruch(4) rules that cooked wine is not included in Chazal's prohibition. Cooked wine is not considered wine and one is allowed to drink it even if it was touched or drunk from by a non-Jew. Accordingly, wine makers today produce two kinds of wine, cooked and uncooked, in order to allow those who come in contact with non Jews to drink wine. For wine to be considered "cooked" in Halachah, it must be heated to at least 175 degrees F(5).

There is, however, a controversy among contemporary Poskim if the pasteurized wine on the market today is considered "cooked" according to the Halachah. Although many Poskim hold that the pasteurization process is sufficient for the wine to be considered "cooked"(6), there are other Poskim(7) who do not. They contend that the process of cooking wine today is completely different from the process that existed in the days of Chazal. The old way consisted of cooking the wine in open vats, which caused much of the alcohol taste to dissipate. The entire texture of the wine was altered through the cooking process. Today, the process consists of heating the wine in enclosed pipes. The average person cannot tell the difference in taste between cooked wine and uncooked wine. In addition, the main reason that cooked wine was not included in the original decree of Chazal is that it was uncommon in those days to cook wine(8). Since Chazal generally do not concern themselves with uncommon situations, they did not include cooked wine in their decree. Today, however, it has become common to pasteurize almost all wine, and pasteurized wines are therefore included in the original decree that Chazal issued against non-Jewish wines.

L'hatchillah, therefore, it is proper to keep all wine and grape juice, even those that are pasteurized, away from non-Jews. Non-Jews should not, if possible, serve wine at weddings, etc. Wearing gloves does not circumvent the prohibition(9).

B'dieved, though, if pasteurized wine is touched or poured by a non-Jew, there are many Poskim who hold that the wine is considered 'cooked' and it may be drunk, as stated above.

According to most opinions, a Jew who violates the Shabbos, even though he does so to earn a livelihood, is considered like a non-Jew in regard to these Halachos(10). But nowadays, when many Jews are non-observant due to ignorance and not out of spite, there are numerous Poskim who rule that wine which is touched by them can be drunk, even though they are not Shabbos observers(11).

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 There are several detailed Halachos involved in what is considered 'touching' regarding this prohibition. They will be discussed at a later time.
- 2 YD 123:1. See Shach and Taz there
- 3 Chochmas Adam 75:14 (who advises a Baal Nefesh to refrain); Pischei Teshuva 123:1. See also Mahram Shik YD 150.
- 4 YD 123:3.
- 5 Igros Moshe YD 2:52. (In YD 3:31, he rules that 165 degrees is sufficient.) Yabia Omer 8:15.
- 6 Igros Moshe YD 3:31; Minchas Yitzchok 7:61; Yabia Omer 8:15.
- 7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shlomo 25); Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (written responsum quoted in Yabia Omer 8:15); Shevet Halevi 2:51; Teshuvos V'hanagos 2:401.
- 8 Rosh (Avoda Zara 2:12).
- 9 Igros Moshe YD 2:51.

10 See Darkei Teshuva 124:12 who quotes the various views on this issue. See also Har Tzvi YD 105 and Igros Moshe YD 1:46 and YD 2:132 who rule that a Mechalel Shabbos' wine is prohibited.

11 Shu"t Binyan Tzion 23; Achiezer 4:37; Chazon Ish YD 1:6; Chelkas Yaakov 1:76 and other Poskim. Not all Poskim agree with this leniency, see Shu"t Minchas Elozer 1:74 and Teshuvos V'hanagos 2:400.

<http://194.90.124.37/parsha/peninim/index.htm>

Peninim on the Torah
Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Hazinu

"The Rock! Perfect in His work, for all His paths are justice. A G-d of faith

without iniquity, righteous and fair is He." When you will listen to Hashem your

G-D...when you shall return to Hashem your G-D, with all your heart and all

your soul. (30:10)

Hashem's judgement is perfect! The fact that we may not understand His ways does not in any manner affect the righteousness of His judgement. We must view every decree that Hashem issues as perfect. The essence of emunah is our belief that Hashem in His infinite wisdom knows what is best for us. We find this concept expressed in the Talmud Avodah Zarah 18b in an incident concerning Rabbi Chaninah ben Tradyon. Together with his wife, he recited these pesukim as he was led to a most terrible and painful death. It is difficult for a human being with limited perspective to comprehend. We have lived in the spectre of the greatest calamity in Jewish history -the European Holocaust. We have heard stories from eyewitnesses who experienced the most inhuman and bestial persecutions. Is it any wonder that so many people ask the question, "why"?

Yet, those who adhere to a Torah orientation do not dare to question the ways of Hashem. The answer is - silence. Just as Aharon Ha'Kohen accepted Hashem's decree, when he faced the tragic death of his two sons with silence, so, too, must we trust in Hashem and remain silent. Chazal relate that when the Romans took the Asarah Harugei Malchus, ten Tanaim who were killed by the Romans, out to be executed in the most cruel manner, the angels screamed out as they witnessed the terrible torture, "Is this the reward for Torah learning?" Suddenly a Heavenly voice rang out, "If I hear another voice, I will return the world to emptiness and void. This is My decree and no one may ask any questions."

This may be a hard concept for many to accept, but the Jew does not question. He believes, he trusts, he has faith in the compassionate Father. We hope one day that Moshiach Tzidkeinu will arrive and reveal to us the secrets that are beyond our human ability to understand.

A very thoughtful analogy from the Chofetz Chaim demonstrates the degree to which Hashem's perspective is disparate from ours. A man once travelled to a distant community on a business trip. He entered the local synagogue to attend the Shabbos minyan. When it came time for Krias Ha'Torah, he noticed to his surprise that the aliyos were given out to the "common" people, as opposed to the more distinguished Rabbinic and lay leaders. He waited until the end of the davening to question the gabbaim, synagogue heads, regarding what he felt was their lack of respect toward the more eminent members of the congregation. They responded with a simple retort, "Had you been here last week you would have seen that the distinguished members of our synagogue were accorded the honor they are due. This week it is someone else's turn." One cannot make a decision or enter a criticism based upon incomplete information. We must closely examine the entire picture before we are qualified to express a critique.

So, too, comments the Chofetz Chaim, is man's sojourn upon the earth. We are here but for a short life span. Yet, we expect to be apprised of all the workings of this world retroactive to Creation! Indeed, we criticize, complain and disparage without being cognizant of all of the considerations involved in Hashem's decision.

This writer once heard a poignant analogy which attempts to address some of life's more trying situations. Life is compared to a needlepoint. One side has a beautiful tapestry, while on the other side are knotted strings of thread, some long, some short, most in disarray. What is in the disarray on one side becomes a beautiful picture on the other side. That represents the essence of life. What we observe here upon this world during our temporary stay is the disheveled side of the needlepoint. We hope for that glorious day when -- with the advent of Moshiach -- we will be able to see the beautiful picture of life wholistically.

"Is He not your Father, your Master?" (32:6)

Horav Chaim Berlin, zl, translated the word "kanecha," as a derivative of the word "ken," nest. This would then mean that Hashem is Klal Yisrael's nest, their home, their source of sustenance and protection. He rendered this interpretation in light of an interesting story that occurred when he was Rav of Moscow. One day a Jew came to him and implored him to circumcise his newborn son - secretly. This strange behavior aroused the Rav's curiosity, and he questioned the man regarding his desire to keep his son's circumcision secret. The man responded that he was a totally assimilated Jew who had absolutely no desire to publicize his ancestry. "If you are so ashamed of your Jewishness," asked the Rav, "why do you want to circumcise the baby altogether?" "You are right," answered the man, "but I do not want to close the door to Judaism for my son." This poignant response indicates the reality that after all is said and done, every Jew, regardless of how far he has strayed from his people, maintains a spark of Yiddishkeit. His neshamah still glows with the warmth of Judaism. Horav Berlin then interpreted the phrase in Shir Ha'Shirim 1:15 "your eyes are like doves," in the following manner: A dove will stray from its nest only so far that it can still keep its nest in sight. The nest serves as a base. The nest radiates a sense of security which renders it indispensable to the bird. The same is true concerning Klal Yisrael. Although the individual Jew will, at times, surrender to his evil inclination and stray away from his roots, he never distances himself to the point of no return. He always leaves the option of teshuvah, repentance, open. This is the interpretation of our pasuk, "Is He not your father - your 'kanecha,' your nest": Regardless of how far you go away, your "nest" is always there - willing to take you back when you have acknowledged your errors. This awareness serves as a security so that the wayward Jew does not to wander too far from home.

"Ask your father and he will relate it to you, and your elders and they will tell you." (32:7)

The people are reproved for their unwillingness to take counsel, to listen to the voice of experience. Those who have lived through ordeals, who have experienced the ups and downs of life, who have seen the reward and punishment incurred by the behavior of previous generations, have advice for us. We must seek out their guidance and listen to their opinion. The voice of experience is not hypothetical. It has lived through various situations and has learned how to handle them.

Horav Aharon Walkin, zl, supplements this idea. The determining factor by which one can discern who is a chacham, wise man, or a rasha, wicked person, is the individual's ability and desire to question. The chacham seeks knowledge, delves into the profundities of Torah, leaves no stone unturned in his quest for perfection. The rasha, on the other hand, believes he has all of the answers. Attempting to "justify" all of his nefarious deeds, he offers an excuse for every one of his iniquitous actions. If he were to ask, he just "might" discover that the Torah frowns upon the action that he is contemplating. The rasha is no fool. He is aware that when he questions the permissibility of a given endeavor, he might receive a negative response. Thus, he refrains from asking.

This disparity between the chacham and rasha is manifest in the difference in attitudes between these two of the "four sons" mentioned in the Haggadah. The chacham questions, while the rasha just makes himself heard. He has no concern for the advice of others.

The pasuk advises us to "ask your father and he will tell you." When you have the sense to ask your father, he will tell you to approach "your elders and they will tell you." Your own father will encourage you to go to his father, your grandfather, for advice. Your own father will not render his own decision as long as he is aware of a voice of greater experience than his. One who has a great mind is inclined to take counsel from the individual who has more life experience than he.

"And Yeshurun became fat and wicked, you became fat, you became thick, you became corpulent. And it deserted G-d its Maker, and was contemptuous of the Rock of its salvation."(32:15,16)

Why is the text redundant? The Dvar Avraham explains that the second part of the pasuk states the reason for the nation's rebellion. What occurred that catalyzed Klal Yisrael's corpulence? What transformed them from G-d fearing, decent, refined human beings into ox-like personalities who would reject the yoke of Hashem? The answer lies in the "taf," the suffix of the words. This letter transforms the word into second person, which implies, you became thick, you became corpulent. Thinking only of yourself, you excluded yourself from the nation. This attitude of exclusivity led to the individuals completely separating themselves from the nation, its persona and its spiritual character. This, in turn, laid the groundwork for them to desert Hashem. When one thinks only of himself, he has not left any space for Hashem.

"When he sees that every power progresses, and none is saved or assisted."

(32:37)

The power of Klal Yisrael's enemies will have grown to the point that they are apparently unassailable. It seems as if there is no hope. In the Talmud Sanhedrin 96a, Chazal derive from this pasuk that Moshiach will not arrive until the Jewish people have given up hope for salvation. Specifically when the future looks the bleakest, Hashem will "step in." This is enigmatic! Is it necessary to forsake one of the thirteen principles of our faith, the belief in the advent of Moshiach, in order for him to arrive?

Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, addresses this question and offers an insightful response. He interprets Chazal's statement as assuring us that Hashem will grant us the redemption only when we give up hope for receiving any form of help from the outside world. Our greatest mistake has always been our trust in man in place of Hashem. We repeat this error constantly, whether our great source of hope is in the guise of the United Nations, friendly foreign countries, or on a personal level, such as the physician who is nothing more than Hashem's agent. True, we must be mishtadel, help ourselves to perform the endeavor, but we must remember that the only source of true deliverance is Hashem.

Horav Kamenetzky posits that this is why, after Hashem sent Moshe to Pharaoh demanding that he release the Jewish people from servitude, He hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would scoff at Moshe's demand. It was necessary that Klal Yisrael realize that all natural avenues of release were closed, all hope for redemption non-existent. Then, they would turn to Hashem in prayer. Let us hope that the time has arrived when we finally acknowledge that it is only Our Father in Heaven Who can and will redeem us.

Thoughts on the Haftorah SHABBOS SHUVAH HOSHEA 14:2 - 10; YOEL 2:11 - 27; MICHAH 7:18 - 20

The haftorah for Shabbos Shuvah emphasizes the seasonal message of teshuvah, the underlying motif of the Yomim Noraim season. The haftorah is selected from three different seforim of Trei Asar, the Twelve Prophets. Although it is not customary to read from more than one Navi, Chazal view the Trei Asar as a single book. The focus of the haftorah is the navi's call to teshuvah. Regardless of Klal Yisrael's iniquity, they remain essentially decent and pure. They have only to reach out to Hashem, Who will accept their repentance with forgiveness.

"Return O' Yisrael to Hashem your G-d."

In the Talmud Yuma 86a, Chazal state that teshuvah is so far-reaching that it can boost the individual to the heights of the Heavenly Throne itself. They cite the above pasuk from which they infer that "to Hashem your G-d" means that one can reach up to Hashem via the medium of teshuvah. Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, notes that even a tzaddik gamur, complete and righteous individual, cannot necessarily attain such spiritual distinction. He attributes the success of the baal teshuvah to the fact that Hashem Himself assists him from above. Indeed, is that not what teshuvah is all about - asking Hashem to help you return? Thus, such an individual possesses the capacity to attain greater spiritual heights than he who must work himself up, without Divine assistance.

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HUMBLE BEGINNINGS - DRASHA HAAZINU

Drasha by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky -- Parshas Haazinu Vol. 2 Issue 49

Humble Beginnings

This week, Moshe composes the song of Ha'azinu. It is a hauntingly prophetic piece replete with predictions and admonitions. It extols the virtues of Israel and forewarns them of a perilous future, if they disobey the Torah. He finishes the song, standing side by side with his disciple Yehoshua, as he prepares to transfer the mantle of leadership. Deuteronomy 32:34: "Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea the son of Nun." Moshe equates his own stature with that of his student in order to show the world his high regard for the future leader to whom he had entrusted his people. Yet there is something strange. Yehoshua is not referred to by the regal name that Moshe had long since given him; rather he is called Hoshea. Before the hazardous mission of the spies forty years prior, Moshe added the Hebrew letter yud to Hoshea's name. The yud represented the name of Hashem and served to protect Hoshea from the malicious intent of the slanderous spies. From that day on, Hoshea is always referred to as Yehoshua.

Why then at the height of Yehoshua's career, on the day he is to take over the reign of power, does the Torah refer to him as Hoshea? Is the Torah surreptitiously diminishing his stature? Isn't that exactly what the Torah would like to avoid?

On April 12, 1945, Vice-President Harry S. Truman was summoned to the White House. He was shown to the sitting room of the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. Gently, she told him that President Roosevelt was dead. After a few moments of stunned silence, Mr. Truman composed himself and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you, Mrs. Roosevelt?" The First Lady shook her head. "Is there anything we can do for you? For you are the one who is in trouble now."

Perhaps Yehoshua's crowning moment was also meant to be quite sobering. He was made to realize that the force behind his greatness would no longer be with him. The man who had crowned him with the glory of G-d's name was joining the Creator, leaving Yehoshua alone and diminished. He was now just, Hoshea.

It was now up to Yehoshua to remember from whence his greatness came. Often we bask in the spotlight of greatness and expect to glow when the radiance is turned off.

Unfortunately, we are not made of phosphorous. The time comes when our light must shine from within our own selves. Sure enough from that moment on, Hoshea shines as Yehoshua. Given the task we will shine too.

Dedicated by Dr. & Mrs. Dwight Herschman & Dr. & Mrs. Ronnie Herschman In memory of Paula and George Herschman

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NCYI Dvrei Torah for Haazinu
Parshat Ha'Azinu 8 Tishrei 5757 Saturday, September 21, 1996
Guest Rabbi: Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum Young Israel of
Lawrence-Cedarhurst, New York

Moshe describes HaShem as a G-d of faithfulness, without unjust decision. Since we can't easily ascribe to G-d the virtue of having faith in others, we assume that in the context of these p'sukim Moshe is declaring that HaShem deserves our faith in Him, rather than the other way around. (Derech Drash, one can infer that G-d does indeed have faith in His righteous people who will surely fulfill His Torah and not let Him down).

The Gemara in Masechet Ta'anit (11a) explains that faithfulness is an appropriate description because just as the wicked are sure to be punished for their sins when they come to the next world - even for minor sins - so too the righteous are punished in this world for their committing of even a minor sin. Kel Emunah means that HaShem is no Vatan, willing to look away from some small indiscretions here and there. No, the account of each human being has to be settled fairly & squarely, and no small deed goes unnoticed. The Gemara continues by explaining that Ein Oyl is an appropriate description because just like the righteous receive their reward in the next world, even for the smallest Mitzvah that they perform, so too the wicked are rewarded in this world for even a minor Mitzvah which they perform.

The "Faithfulness of G-d", therefore, is the guarantee we have that there is reward & punishment - S'char Veonesh - for our every action in this world. Use of the idea of Emunah, and of that particular word, to describe our belief in S'char Veonesh shouldn't surprise us. After all, in the Rambam's famous enumeration of the thirteen foundations of our Faith, he lists belief in S'char Veonesh as one of the "Ani Ma'amin" principles of Jewish life.

Where do we fit in? After all, "I'm no Tzaddik", we correctly say, and just as correctly we may assume that few if any of us can be described as wicked, Baruch HaShem. So does this pasuk describe the beliefs we must have concerning the consequences of our lives and how we choose to live?

Absolutely. The typical mix of what is in store for us in this world and in the next is a blend of those instances in which HaShem deems us worthy of immediate punishment, like that of a truly righteous individual, and those circumstances in which He justly deems our lot to be one of favor, or otherwise, in the world to come. There's a little of each kind of treatment used upon us, in correlation to the degree of righteousness or wickedness engendered by the choices we make. Always, HaShem's providential hand is guiding the events swirling around us in order to alternately punish or reward us as He, in His justness, sees fit.

Hashgachah Pratis is the direct decision of our circumstances as decreed by G-d. To translate this Hashgachah as "Fate" leaves one with the impression that we are dealing with decrees of matters that are preordained for reasons and higher purposes of HaShem's design alone. But, truthfully, Hashgachah Pratis means a lot more. The decree of HaShem is always crafted in such fashion as to guarantee the righteousness of HaShem's plans for us.

Whatever needs He may have us fill in His grand scheme, He will formulate our Olam Hazeh and our Olam Habah with attention to the minutest detail of our behavior at the very same time. If we cannot humanly determine the righteousness of HaShem's decree - as often occurs when we see what appears to be Tzaddik V'ra Lo B'Olam Hazeh - then we declare (as in the traditional Tziduk Hadin at a graveside, where the pasuk we are discussing is quoted) His plan as entirely just nevertheless. This is a test of our Faith: Do we believe that HaShem in His justness is wholly righteous in having sent us the specific portion in life that is ours?

In order to fortify our Emunah in HaShem's righteousness through His disbursal of S'char Veonesh, we are commanded by a Mitzvah of the Torah to believe in this construct of Jewish Faith and to seek out the truth of it. Which Mitzvah commands us to have belief in S'char Veonesh?

The answer: The very first commandment of the Aseret Hadibrot. After the first two Dibrot of Anoochee HaShem Elokechah and Lo Y'h'yeh Lechoh Elohim Acherim, HaShem tells us that He is a "Poked Avon" who is punishing to those who commit sin, and an "Oseh Chesed" who is kind to

those who love Him and obey His commandments. (The visiting of punishments of fathers upon their sons, the justness of which is discussed by Chazal and later commentaries, will necessarily be set aside for the purposes of this discussion.)

Why does HaShem choose this particular juncture to proclaim His character of one who justly disburses S'char V'onesh? It is because that is the very belief being commanded by "Anoochee HaShem Elokechah". (See Meshech Chochmah to Shmot 20:2) We are commanded to believe that all that will occur to us is decided upon and deemed righteous by HaShem Yisborach. But, one might ask, the commandments against idolatry intervene between "Anoochee" and HaShem's declaration of "Kee Anoochee Poked Avon Avos...."? Precisely. Belief in or fear of any other power or force implies that our lives and destinies are not in HaShem's hands alone, chas v'shalom. "Anoochee" is the Mitzvat Aseh of belief in Hashgacha Pratis of a Kel Emunah V'ein Avel, while "Lo Y'h'yeh Lechoh" is the Lo Sa'aseh against believing in the deciding power or influence of anyone or anything else. After commanding us to believe in Him and in none other, HaShem tells us that He rewards and punishes. Not because He does so for those who fulfill or violate the first two Commandments alone. He does so for all 613 Commandments. The reason HaShem says that He rewards and punishes, and places this statement after "Anoochee" and "Lo Y'h'iye Lechoh", is because belief in S'char Veonesh is the very substance of these Commandments. Rising as a daunting challenge to our faith in this area is the reality of how often HaShem's judgments seem to be incomprehensible. As a nation and as individuals, we experience times of suffering and of pain that seem totally undeserved. (Conversely, many wicked Reshaim seem "to get away with it," but that doesn't seem to shake our faith as violently). That is all the more reason why it is necessary for HaShem to command us - firstly and firmly - to maintain our faith in His righteous judgment. Trying times that seem uncalled for are Nityonot, events which are intended to test our faith in His being a Kel Emunah, and, specifically, Veein Oyl, the Yeshurin Shel Ahavah. Afflictions of love, will assuredly result in the substantial portion of reward in tev okug.

The trust we maintain in HaShem, and our reliance upon Him exclusively, is a guarantee of HaShem's continued care and attention to our destiny. In understanding the danger of ignoring what is implied by the Lo Sa'aseh of Lo Y'h'yeh Lochoh Elohim Acherim Al Ponai, we broaden the idea of what HaShem wants us to discount and not rely upon, and include not only idolatry, but other forms of seemingly successful alternatives to HaShem's kindness. Influential people, the right connections, financial means and much else might be sought out and turned to as sources of success, or in answer to certain needs. To rely upon them exclusively, to believe in their efficacy alone, is to violate the faith we must have in HaShem's decision to provide for us.

A parting thought: Rabbeinu Sadya Gaon wrote that if we trust in other sources to the extent that we deny the true role of HaShem in our lives, then HaShem will leave us to the whim of whatever we have chosen to replace Him!

That may well be the meaning of Yirmiyahu HaNavi's words: Baruch Hagever Asher Yivtach B'Hashem....Arur Hagever Asher Yivtach B'Adam V'Sam Basar Zro'oh.....

B"H
Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by
Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

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HAAZINU

The Sidra of Haazinu begins with Moses' great oration, "Give ear, ye heavens . . . and let the earth hear." The Midrash, with its usual sensitivity to the nuances of language, notes that Moses seems to be talking in terms of intimacy towards the heavens, and of distance towards the earth.

There is an almost exactly opposite verse in Isaiah, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," in which Isaiah expresses closeness to earth and distance from heaven. Which path is the Jew to follow?

Is he to strive towards heaven and keep himself aloof from worldly events? Or is he, like Isaiah, to find his spiritual home in the things of the earth? And what bearing does this dilemma have on the time in which the Sidra is usually read, the Ten Days of Repentance, and the days immediately following Yom Kippur, the supreme moments of self-examination in the Jewish year?

WORDS OF CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE

The Midrash tells us that Moses was "close to heaven" and "far from the earth," and this is why he said, "Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth."

"Give ear" speaks in the tone of closeness, "let the earth hear" bears the accent of distance. In the same way, the Midrash says that Isaiah was "far from the heavens... and close to the earth," for he said, in exact opposition to Moses, "Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth."

But this opposition is a surprising one. "Torah" means "teaching," and all its words are words of instruction for every Jew. When Moses said, "Give ear, ye heavens... and let the earth hear" the implication was that every Jew should strive to be close to heaven, and to liberate himself from the constraints of earth.

If Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, could not reach this, how then can the Torah demand it of every Jew?

And, if closeness to heaven is, in fact, within the reach of every Jew through the inspiration of Moses which is "within" every Jew, why had Isaiah failed to reach this level?

The matter is all the more strange since - as the Midrash says - Isaiah's words were spoken as a continuation of Moses' address. Speaking as he was under the direct inspiration of Moses, it should have been all the easier for Isaiah to rise to his heights.

We are forced to conclude, then, that Isaiah was not outlining a lower level, but an even higher one, than that of which Moses had spoken. It was in this sense that he was continuing where Moses left off. Reaching upwards to Moses' heights, "close to heaven," he was able to strain to a yet greater achievement, of being "close to earth." And since Isaiah's words, too, are part of the Torah, they form a universal message to the Jew.

We must also realize that, since every teaching of the Torah has a special relevance to the time of the year when it is read, these words of Moses and their continuation in Isaiah are of particular significance to the time between Rosh Hashanah and Succot, during which they are always read.

Days of Weeping

Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the Ari, said, "Whoever does not shed tears during the Ten Days of Repentance - his soul is imperfect." The simple meaning of this is that during these days G-d is close to every Jew with, ?in the Chassidic phraseX, "the closeness of the luminary to the spark."

If, even in such a time of grace, a Jew is not moved to the tears of repentance, there is an imperfection in his soul. Nothing wakes it to return to its source. It has moved far indeed from its destiny.

But the Ari suggests, by saying "Whoever does not shed tears," that this applies to every Jew, even to the perfectly righteous. And yet repentance, certainly when accompanied by tears, is about sin, transgression, wrongdoing, of which the righteous man is innocent. How can we expect that he repent, and so much so that there must be some imperfection in his soul if he is not moved to penitential tears?

We could understand the Ari's remark if it referred to the "benoni," the Jew who has never sinned, even in thought, but who has not yet removed the

desire to do wrong, even though it is kept in continual suppression.

For in him there is always the possibility of sin, and this alone is enough for tears in these supreme days of self-examination. But the completely righteous, whose nature is unstirred by even the trace of misguided desire, would seem to have no need, no cause for tears.

Humility may lead him to them. Even the great Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai wept and said, "When there are two ways before me, one leading to Paradise, and the other to Gehinnom, and I do not know by which I shall be taken, shall I not weep?"

In their fervor, the righteous may mistakenly think themselves unworthy. But why should the Ari suggest not that they can sometimes weep, but that they should? For self-knowledge is a virtue, and it is no duty to think oneself worse than one is.

TEARS OF JOY AND BITTERNESS

The Alter Rebbe explained that the tears of which the Ari spoke were not tears of bitterness and self-recrimination, but tears like those which Rabbi Akiva shed when he penetrated the secret mysteries of the Torah - tears of intense joy.

But these cannot be the only tears which the righteous shed, or it would transpire that the Ari using one word to denote two opposites - the joyous tears of the righteous and the bitter tears of other Jews. The first would express a closeness to G-d, the second a sense of distance.

THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN

The explanation is that teshuvah is not merely repentance, something which comes only where there was sin. It means the return of the soul to its source. "And the spirit shall return to G-d who gave it." Even the righteous man who serves G-d with love and fear and the totality of his being has not yet reached that stage of complete closeness to Him, which the soul experienced before birth.

Earthly existence creates a distance between the soul and G-d which not even righteousness can wholly bridge, and this is the grief of the righteous and the source of his tears. He senses, even in the highest human life, a descent of the soul from its heavenly enthronement. His tears, like those of the ordinary Jew, are born of a consciousness of distance from G-d.

Tears of Effacement

But even this answer will not suffice. For the righteous would then be grieving over the inevitable: The fact that bodily existence sets a distance between G-d and the soul. This is a fact that man cannot change. And what man cannot alter, he cannot blame himself for. If the righteous man were thinking about his own spiritual satisfaction he might feel embittered that birth was a loss to the soul. He might, without feeling guilty, feel aggrieved. But the righteous do not think of themselves. They think instead of the Divine will, which is that their soul should live within the world's narrow boundaries. Why, then, should they weep over their situation?

Perhaps it might be that the righteous weep because they have not (yet) fulfilled their mission. For the descent of the soul is not an end in itself; it is a means to a yet greater ascent, a complete self-effacement as the soul recognizes its nothingness and the all-embracing reality of G-d. And since the righteous man has some reality in his own eyes, he is not yet at his journey's end. He still has cause for tears.

And yet, if even the greatest man cannot reach this stage, how can we say he ought to? We cannot demand the impossible.

The truth is that the Jew is a part of G-d. He can rise above the ordinary spiritual possibilities of the world. And he sheds tears at his human limitations, because this is the way to overcome them.

"From my confinement I called upon the L-rd: The L-rd answered me with enlargement." It is the sense that after all the achievements of a righteous life one is still in a "confinement," that brings about the "enlargement" which is the loss of man's self-consciousness and his assimilation into the Divine.

ONENESS WITH G-D WITHIN THE WORLD

This is the significance of the Ten Days of Teshuvah, the time when G-d is at His closest to man, although teshuvah is always important.

For these days not only accord it special favor; they elevate it to a new degree. It becomes more than repentance for sin; it becomes the returning of

the soul to G-d, the end of spiritual alienation. This sudden possibility allows man to see his human limitations as no longer inevitable. They can be transcended. And therefore they can be wept over - by every Jew.

When man achieves this self-transcendence, he has made a break-through which is possible only to the soul in its earthly existence. He has become one with the Infinite in the very midst of the finite. He thus reveals that the soul's union with G-d has no limitations whatsoever, for he has reached union with G-d without forsaking the world.

"From my confinement I called upon the L-rd," and within this body, this narrow world, "the L-rd answered me with enlargement."

THE SHOFAR

This explains the meaning of the shofar blown on Rosh Hashanah.

Through the shofar (whose physical shape indicates "confinement" at one end and "enlargement" at the other) we evoke the kingship of G-d. And as the Talmud reports, that G-d says, "Recite before Me on Rosh Hashanah verses of kingship, remembrance and the shofar. Kingship - so that you may make Me king over you... and through what? Through the shofar."

The statement is puzzling, because the natural order would be first to proclaim G-d as our king, and then to obey His decrees.

How can we evoke G-d's desire to be our king through performing one of His decrees, which assumes that He is already our King?

The explanation lies in our prayer before the Shofar is blown: "From my confinement I called upon the L-rd...."

Our "confinement" is not simply our sins, but our very existence as beings-in-ourselves, as people who feel that we are separate from G-d, and as long as this is true, we have not admitted G-d as our king. But when we stand in this "confinement" and yet "call upon the L-rd" we reach the very Essence of G-dliness, and bring G-d's "enlargement" into the heart of human life. This is the making of G-d's kingship. He is king within the world, not above it.

THE CONFINES OF THE WORLD AND ITS ENLARGEMENT

The relation between the Sidra of Haazinu - of Moses' call and Isaiah's completion of it - and the Ten Days of Teshuvah (as well as the four days following Yom Kippur), is now clear.

Throughout the year our religious life is concerned with things of the "earth," the study of the Torah and the practical performance of the commandments. Even the "duties of the heart" belong to our human personality, our intellect, our temperament.

But during the Ten Days, "the spirit shall return to G-d who gave it." Every Jew must become aware of the "confinement" which the world represents: Aware to the point of tears. He must "call upon the L-rd," with a thrust and desire to become one with G-d.

A man is where his will is. And by this very act of shedding tears over his "confinement," he takes himself beyond it. He becomes "close to heaven" and "far from earth." His overpowering desire is to be "close to heaven": And that is where he is.

G-d's response is to "answer me with enlargement," that is with His presence within the earth, which reveals the true Essence of G-d, as above. The Infinite enters his human habitation. And then he finds G-d "close to the earth" and "far from heaven."

THE LESSON OF ISAIAH

This is true throughout a Jew's life.

"Heaven" is the Torah, the word of G-d. "Earth" is the commandments, the actions of man. Through learning Torah a Jew draws close to G-d. Through the commandments, he draws G-d into the world.

At first, he must be "close to heaven." Though he must keep the commandments, his heart must be in the study of Torah.

But this is only the first stage. He must come in time to know that "not learning but doing is the essential thing," for the real task of man is to change the world, to make it G-d's dwelling.

It needed Isaiah to give us this second stage. For the Torah was received by Moses. But to Isaiah fell the prophecy of the future redemption, the time when the world will be G-d's dwelling-place, when "every form shall know that You have formed it." When the form of the world will be fused with the Infinity of G-d. May we merit this now.

(Source. Likkutei Sichot, Vol. IX, pp. 204-214.)

"dgreen@ucs.net" "dvartorah@torah.org" A Matter of Perspective
The Chofetz Chaim in his work on the Chumash (Pentateuch) shares with us a novel approach to suffering. He bases his words on the following passage in this week's parsha. The deeds of the Mighty One are perfect, for all his ways are just (Deuteronomy 32:4). This is understood to mean that all of the things which G-d (Hashem) causes to happen in this world are with perfect justification. This is not the "G-d is punishing you for your sins" speech. Justification doesn't necessarily mean someone has done something for which he/she is being punished. It means that there is just cause. It could be any of a number of reasons that constitutes just cause.

No pain no gain, is a famous line people use. It reflects a true attitude that when something is very worth while having, it's worth while working for, even to the extent of suffering. We see Olympians using their last ounce of strength toward attaining their goals. We see people giving their lives fighting for their ideals (whether we agree with them or not). The bottom line is that when we experience purposeful suffering we accept it knowing that it is justified. This passage in our parsha teaches us that whatever we experience from G-d is purposeful and justified. Nothing is without purpose. Needless to say, this is the attitude every person should take about his/her own suffering. Regarding other people, the Torah attitude is to join with them in their suffering, and share in their pain. It's their job to justify their own pain.

In one of his famous parables the Chofetz Chaim explains this passage. The was once a man who rented a house and its surrounding courtyard from a powerful and wealthy landowner. The relationship was good, and the price was fair. The renter was careful to make his payments on time. It happened that the landowner needed to be away for an extended period of time, so he placed the management of his landholdings in the hands of an executor. This executor was a nasty, abusive person, and he immediately raised the rent astronomically. The renter was placed under great pressure to raise the money he now needed to pay the rent. When the time came to pay the rent, the executor refused to give him time, and he ordered to have him whipped 20 times to make up for the 20 dinar (or whatever monetary units they used in those days) that he was missing.

The exploitation continued, and soon the executor became wealthy off of the backs all of the people he was robbing. The renter suffered greatly from the pressure that was placed upon him. He finally decided to go see the landowner, and he related to him the entire episode. The landowner was incensed. He immediately ordered in writing that the executor should pay the renter 100 dinar for each of the 20 lashes he received. This sum equalled 1/2 of the value of the piece of land the executor had purchased for himself with all of the money he extorted from his defenseless tenants.

The renter went home with the written decree in hand, and found his wife waiting for him. She noticed that her husband looked quite upset. "What happened?" asked his wife, and he related the entire story. "Why are you upset? You should be dancing in the streets!" she said. "I'll tell you, my dear wife. The 20 lashes I received have long healed, and the pain is now passed. If I would have gotten 40 lashes, the pain would still be over and done with, and now I would have been rewarded with the executor's entire courtyard. If only I had received 40 lashes!" Good Shabbos!

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Ha'azinu

"Consider the years of generation after generation . . ." (32,7)

The Chidushei HaRi"m, using the fact that 'binu' - 'consider' also means 'understand,' explains that in every generation and in every epoch, there comes from Heaven a new understanding of the Torah which is fitting for that generation, and the righteous of every generation (gain) an understanding of

the Torah which conforms to what is required to teach the people of their generation.

"And they sacrificed to demons . . . new (things) which have come recently, (which) your fathers did not fear." (32,17)

The Chasam Sofer elaborates that we know and see that (successive) generations diminish in their knowledge of the Torah and the fear of Heaven, and everyone is afraid that his children will not match him (in these qualities, and even more so) his children's children.

However, it never occurred to anyone that there would be such a great deterioration; that the father would be righteous and virtuous, suffused with shas and poskim, and his son would be an apostate who desecrates Shabbos.

This is the fulfillment of "New (things) which have come recently, (which) your fathers did not envisage." (32,17) (The word 'se'arum', which Rash"i interprets 'to fear,' becomes 'she'arum' - 'consider, estimate, envisage' if we change the 'shin' to a 'sin' DR).

The Chidushei HaRi"m and the Chasam Sofer were virtual contemporaries; (they both lived well into their 70's, and the Chidushei HaRi"m was only about 25 years younger). Their generation was that of the *haskalah*, the so called enlightenment, (although *endarkenment* would be a far more appropriate term),

which decimated the illustrious Torah congregations of Europe. The echoes of this awesome tragedy reverberate through the words of the Chasam Sofer, who seems to view it as being preordained; yet the Chidushei HaRi"m appears to assert that the *haskalah* should never have occurred, for the sages of the generation had everything required to lead their congregations in absolutely the most appropriate way.

However, there is really no contradiction at all; on the contrary, the insights of these two Torah giants complement each other.

Had the *haskalah* been 'inevitable' in that generation because of some alleged 'shortcoming' on the part of the leaders and teachers, the perpetrators (or better perpetrators) could have exonerated themselves with the claim that they were the victims of circumstances not of their choosing and beyond their control. The Chidushei HaRi"m stresses that this could not be the case. Their education and guidance was tailor made for their needs. The fault lay squarely with them, and nowhere else.

HaShem obviously foresaw what was going to happen, and hinted at it in the Torah but that is in no way a contradiction to free will and accountability for one's deeds. (Compare Ramba"n Shmos 7,3 "He disclosed to Moshe what would be done to him - Paroh - in the future . . .") The Ohr Sameach (Hil. Tshuva 4,4) has a deep and detailed discussion of this problematic issue, but it is beyond the scope of this D'var Torah. Another possible explanation is that, even if it were 'inevitable,' it did not 'have' to occur in this particular generation, or these individuals did not 'have' to be the ones who did it.

The message that comes out of these two insights is that no-one can absolve himself with the excuse that the prevailing circumstances forced him to do such and such. Every person carries the responsibility for the choices that he makes. Dov Rabinowitz

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YESHIVAT SHA'ALVIM PARASHAT HASHAVUAH

A chumash is helpful but not essential for the understanding of this shiur. Please send any questions or comments about this shiur, or any of Yeshivat Sha'alvim's shiurim or services to <shaalvim@virtual.co.il>

Parashat Ha'azinu: Malchut Hahsem

by Aaron Weiss

At the very end of Parashat Vayelech, Moshe described the "song" that is Parashat Ha'azinu as a testament of reproach to the future generations of B'nei Yisrael for becoming corrupt and leaving Hashem. "...and I will call heaven and earth as witnesses against them. For I know that after my death you will corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the eyes of Hashem to anger Him with the work of your hands. And Moshe spoke in the ears of the congregation of Israel the words of this song to their end [Dvarim 31:28 - 30]."

The first two psukim of Shirat Ha'azinu - the song of Ha'azinu - introduce the song and develop its context. "Give ear O heavens and I will speak, and the earth shall hear the sayings of my mouth. My lesson shall drop as the rain, fall as the dew my speech; as storms on the herbs, and showers on the grass. [Dvarim 32:1,2]."

The next pasuk is also an introduction to the song, "When I call the Name of Hashem; ascribe greatness unto our G-d [Dvarim 32:3]."

Although the meaning of the pasuk in and of itself seems for the most part clear, it seems to have nothing to do with its context, Shirat Ha'azinu. Eben Ezra explains that this pasuk refers back to the previous two. Just as Moshe called on heaven and earth to be witnesses by virtue of their presence, in the same way they should ascribe greatness to Hashem.

Rashi, and Ramban understand that Moshe was speaking not to heaven and earth, but rather to B'nei Yisrael. However, they do not explain what this pasuk means in context. The source of their interpretation is the Gemara (Yoma 37a).

At the heart of the Chazan's repetition of Musaf on Yom Kippur stands the recital of the "seder avodah" - procedure of sacrificial services - that the Kohen Gadol performed in the Beit Hamikdash on Yom Kippur. In our prayers we recite a description of the sacrifices themselves, as well as the "vidui" - confession - the Kohen Gadol made with each of the sacrifices. During the confession the Kohen Gadol would pronounce the "Shem Hamiforash" - The Explicit Name of Hashem.

"And the Kohanim and the congregation standing in the courtyard, upon hearing the "Shem Hamiforash" leaving the mouth of the Kohen Gadol in holiness and purity, would kneel, and bow, and give thanks, and fall on their faces, and say: Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever [Yom Kippur prayers]."

The Gemara (Yoma 37a) quotes a brayta as the source of this practice. "Rebbi says: 'When I call the Name of Hashem - ascribe greatness unto our G-d.' Moshe said to Yisrael: Whenever I mention the name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, you ascribe greatness [to him]."

Likewise, this pasuk is used in a number of similar drashot to learn that a response is called for upon hearing the name of Hashem.

"How do we know that when those who stand in the synagogue and call out, 'Bless Hashem Who is blessed.' we must answer 'Bless Hashem Who is blessed for ever and ever.'? Because it is written: 'When I call the Name of Hashem - ascribe greatness unto our G-d.' [Sifrei]"

"How do we know that when one says, 'Yehei Shmei Rabba m'vorach' that we must answer, 'l'olam ul'almei almaya'? Because it is written: 'ascribe greatness unto our G-d.' [Sifrei]"

"From here we learn that in response to every bracha one hears he must reply Blessed is He and blessed is His name." [Respona of the Rosh]

All of these drashot clearly indicate that Moshe was instructing B'nei Yisrael to respond to the mention of Hashem's name by "ascribing greatness" to Him, but what does this have to do with Shirat Ha'azinu?

To answer this question we need to understand the nature of "shira" - song or verse - in biblical times (and most probably even later). The Gemara (Sota 30b) writes: "How did Yisrael recite shira on the sea

("Shirat Hayam", the song they sang after seeing the Egyptians drown in the Red Sea)? ...Moshe said, 'Ashira laHashem', and they answered, 'Ashira laHashem'. Moshe said, 'Ki ga'o ga'a', and they answered, 'Ashira laHashem'." The way these songs were sung was for one person to lead the song and the rest to follow by repeating the refrain at specific intervals. In the case of Shirat Hayam the refrain was "Ashira laHashem" - "I will sing out to Hashem", and was repeated after every phrase. Apparently, according to the Gemara Yoma, in the case of Shirat Ha'azinu the refrain was "Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever," and was said in response to the mention of Hashem's name. When "Moshe said to Yisrael: Whenever I mention the name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, you ascribe greatness [to him]," he was delineating the statement/response structure of the song he was about to sing. This pasuk is therefore part of the shira by way of introduction, just as the first two psukim are.

There are two problems with this explanation. Firstly, it seems unlikely that the people were supposed to respond at points that fall in the middle of phrases, which is where the four subsequent appearances of Shem Hashem fall out in Shirat Ha'azinu. In the case of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur the people's response was clearly made at a point where the Kohen Gadol could not pause, but the people's statement was not a part of that of the Kohen Gadol. However, in the case of shira, the refrain is a part of the song, and although it is not a continuation of the statement of the one leading the song, it still must fall at a point where the leader makes a logical pause.

The second problem is the placement of the pasuk. If it is the peoples instructions on how to respond to the song, then it should be the first of the two introductions, much as "Laminatzaiach (for the conductor) ..." begins many psalms. Instead it is included as part of the things that heaven and earth should hear and attest to. In other words, Moshe's call for a response is a part of the song.

It therefore appears that Moshe was not calling on B'nei Yisrael to answer after every mention of Hashem's name, and in fact was not calling for a vocal response at all. All of the shirot in Tanach were sung as songs of triumph. Shirat Hayam was sung as he result of the victory over the Egyptians. Shirat ha'b'er (Bamidbar 21:17-19) was sung as he result of the victory over the Emory (see Rashi on Bamidbar 21: 15-17) Shirat D'vora (Shoftim chap. 5) was sung as the result of the victory over Sisra and the Cna'anim.

Shirat Ha'azinu was also sung as a song of triumph, not a physical triumph, but a spiritual one. Shirat Ha'azinu is a description of Hashem's historical treatment of B'nei Yisrael, from the time they stray from mitzvot Hashem, to the end of days when Hashem will redeem them and pass judgment on the other nations. As such, it is all one stanza, because the victory being sung is only mentioned at the end, and there is therefore only room for one refrain.

Nevertheless, the call for the refrain is itself a part of the song.

The topic sentence of the shira follows the three introductory p'sukim. "The Rock - His ways are whole, and all of His paths are just." The fact that we don't see Hashem's will being done is not due to any flaw of Hashem's, but rather to Hashem's response to our flaws. The ultimate victory is not going to be a change in Hashem's rule, it will be a revelation of the rule that existed all along.

The message of Shirat Ha'azinu and the refrain are thus one and the same. Hashem's victory is really just our proclamation of Hashem's rule. The time for that proclamation is not is not only the end of days, but whenever we recognize the glory of Hashem.

"When I call the Name of Hashem - ascribe greatness unto our G-d."

"From here we learn that in response to every bracha one hears he must reply Blessed is He and blessed is His name."

Shabbat Shalom. Ktiva u'Chatima Tova

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