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ON HAAZINU -
SHABBOS SHUVA - 5767

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From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2006 8:36 PM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Haazinu**

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Haazinu -

Rav Gedaliah Schorr on Revealed and Hidden Manifestations of G-d
The pasuk [verse] says "See now that I myself (Ani, Ani) am the One, there is no other god with me; I will kill and I will resurrect. I will hit and I will also heal, there is no one to save from My Hand." [32:39]

The commentaries are bothered by the two "Ani"s. Why doesn't the pasuk simply say the word Ani once?

The Kli Yakar explains that the intent of the pasuk is to contradict those schools of thought who believe that there are two Supreme Forces in the world: The Force that Gives us Good and the Force that Gives us Evil. The pasuk is teaching that the same G-d that kills is the G-d that resurrects. The

same G-d that gives illness is the G-d that heals. Ani Ani Hu. (I, myself, am the One). There are no two "Domains".

Rav Gedaliah Schorr, zt"l says that the Kaballistic works discuss two ways in which G-d deals with the world -- the Revealed Way (Gilui) and the Hidden Way (Hester). The Revealed Way is referred to in this literature as "Ani" -- we can see clearly that it is "I - G-d" who is dealing with us. But the Hidden Way is referred to as "Hu" -- the third person, as if it were not G-d acting, but another Force, as it were, -- "Him" not "I".

Using these terms, Rav Schorr offers a beautiful interpretation of the pasuk: The meaning of "Ani, Ani, Hu" is that the attribute that deals with you as "Ani" is in fact identical to the attribute that deals with you as "Hu". When G-d deals with us in a mysterious way, such that we cannot understand His Ways, we must nevertheless believe that it is the same Force; the same Ribbono Shel Olam [Master of the World] as the one Whose Presence is clearly evident to us.

During this period of the year, we beat our breasts with the confession for the "sins we have committed against You with Timhon levav". The meaning of 'Timhon Levav' is that we have 'Temihos' (questions) because we have not seen the Ribbono Shel Olam as the First Person (I), but as the Hidden Third Person (Hu); we have failed to believe with a complete belief that the Hidden and the Revealed manifestations are from one and the same Ribbono Shel Olam.

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DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 67, The Mitzvah of Writing a Sefer Torah. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

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Subject: Rabbi Wein - Haazinu
www.RabbiWein.com
Jerusalem Post 8 Tishri 5767 / 30 September 2006 FORGIVING AND FORGETTING

<http://www.rbbiwein.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2127> There are many angry bumper stickers on cars in Israel today. In fact there have been many angry bumper stickers around here in our country for quite a number of years. The theme of all of them is "we will not forgive, we will not forget." What is not being forgiven or forgotten ranges from the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin to the ill-advised evacuation from Gaza. I think that in this period of time when we are occupied with requesting heavenly forgiveness for our own personal failings and transgressions we should take a more focused look at forgiving and forgetting. The Jewish attitude towards forgiveness is that it is a Godly virtue. Even though Avimelech, the king of the Philistines, abducted our mother Sarah for immoral purposes Avraham forgave him and prayed for the restoration of his health and the health of his court. Forgiveness is truly an imitation of the divine nature implanted within our souls. However, forgetting is an entirely different matter. In Judaism it is not the victim that is commanded not to forget the wrong done. The perpetrator of that wrong is the one bidden not to forget. Therefore, we find Avraham, after praying for Avimelech and his court, severely reproving him for his behavior. In the words of the Talmud Avraham tells him: "A stranger arrives in town searching for lodging and hospitality and the only thing

you are interested in is the woman who accompanies him." Avraham wants Avimelech to remember the incident. Without that memory the forgiveness part is almost worthless. One cannot forgive a serial criminal. Only the guilty one who remembers the wrong done and pledges not to allow it to recur is truly capable of being forgiven in the eyes of man and Heaven as well.

In Proverbs we are told that "that one who admits one's wrongdoing and forsakes repeating such behavior will be mercifully forgiven." Contriteness and apology, humility and self-analysis are deserving of forgiveness. Arrogance and blustering, lying and bull-headedness, never bring about forgiveness and healing. Such traits are symptomatic that the perpetrator has forgotten the wrong that was done. Denial of wrongs committed, ignoring obvious mistakes that were made and instead repeating them again certainly cannot hope to bring about forgiveness and harmony in individual or societal relations. King David in Psalms proclaims: "My sins are before me always." Even after being punished and forgiven for those sins, David does not allow himself to forget them. By his not forgetting his wrongs that he committed guarantees that he will not repeat those wrongs and that the forgiveness extended to him will be permanent and valid.

In this week's parsha we read that G-d granted humans the immeasurably great gift of forgetfulness. Being able to forget is the one thing that allows us to live normal productive lives. If we remembered every moment of pain and embarrassment in our lives we would be unable to leave our beds in the morning. Yet the Torah teaches us that Israel, in its very selective memory, chose to forget the G-d that had granted them this great gift of being able to forget. The great maggid of Dubnow, Rabbi Yaakov Krantz used a parable to illustrate this behavior. Once there was a man who was heavily in debt and was constantly being hounded by his creditors who gave him no peace day or night. His friend, who was also owed money by this debtor, nevertheless gave him some advice as to how to relieve the situation. "Pretend you are insane. They will soon give up and leave you alone." The debtor took the advice and started to behave in a crazy fashion, rolling on the floor and frothing at the mouth. Sure enough, the creditors one by one despaired of the situation and stopped bothering him. As the debtor slowly regained his prosperity, the friend who gave him the advice appeared and asked that his loan be repaid. The debtor went into his crazy act. The friend said to him: "Don't pull that act on me! I am the one who taught it to you." So too, the Lord has blessed us with forgetfulness but we should not pull that act on Him, so to speak. This season of the year is a time for forgiveness and remembrance. Remember our own failings and try to rectify them, forgive others for theirs and pray to be remembered for good before the Heavenly throne of judgment and forgiveness on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha 8 Tishri 5767 / 30 September 2006 HAAZINU
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Moshe's great song which is the parsha of this week demands that there be listening and not just hearing. The word haazinu means more than hearing; it means to pay attention and listen intently. And though Moshe is speaking to "heaven and earth" it is clear from the contents of his song that he is speaking to us. And therefore his words deserve more than a perfunctory hearing from us.

In Jewish tradition, children committed this parsha to memory at a very early age, for the song contains the entire Jewish story. It has many nuances. Just like a great symphonic composition requires intensive listening in order to appreciate, so too does this song of Moshe. We live in a world that is bombarded with incessant sound. Perhaps that is why there is very little true listening that goes on. We are too busy hearing so there is no capacity for true listening. It may very well be that this is why Jewish children committed this song to memory so that when their attention span increased with years and experience, they would be truly able to listen to the song that they once only heard and memorized.

Listening to one another is the key to a successful marriage, to raising children, to teaching and interacting with other people. It is also the key to understanding Torah and appreciating the glorious subtleties and nuances of Judaism. In short, the key to being a sophisticated Jew is the ability to listen. Judaism is not meant to be merely background noise or even soothing atmosphere inducing music.

The song of Haazinu itself details the travails that will engulf Israel in its long journey through history. It unerringly predicts the weaknesses and follies that Israel exhibits and the ensuing problems and calamities that follow such behavior. But the song ends on a note of soaring hope. G-d will not forsake the Jewish people or the Land of Israel. The enemies of Israel will all eventually be thwarted in their ambitions to destroy the eternal people. And the Jewish people itself will, as a national entity, recognize its uniqueness and uphold its end of the covenant entered into with G-d at Sinai, which was then renewed in the desert by Moshe before his death.

The prediction of troubles, no matter how accurate it may be, make this a difficult song to truly listen to. Yet it has been these very troubles and adversity that the Jewish people have faced that have strengthened us, renewed our faith, spurred our creative genius and enabled us to have such an enormous and disproportionate influence in world affairs and civilization.

Our success in survival and creativity is directly traceable to our ability to listen to the song of Moshe. It has thus become part of us and as such we are confident that the salvation that the end of the song depicts is certain and not far off. When we hear the song read this week on Shabat in the synagogue we will certainly listen to it with our innermost soul and being. It is Moshe's great gift to us.

Shabat shalom.

Gmar chatima tova.

Berel Wein

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From: owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org on behalf of TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Monday, September 25, 2006 12:37 PM
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The HTML version of this dvar Torah can be found at: http://www.torahweb.org/torah/special/2006/dtwe_materialism.html

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski Materialism

It is often said that today's generation is the most materialistic and hedonistic in the history of humankind.

It is not necessary to go back to ancient history to validate this assertion. I can recall what life was like when I was a child. Before the advent of antibiotics in the 1940's, the average life expectancy in the United States was forty. Although there were people who lived to a ripe, old age, the average was brought down by a high rate of infant mortality and by childhood diseases. On my way to school, I would pass houses that bore a Health Department sign: "Quarantined, Mumps, (or Chicken Pox, or Scarlet Fever, or Whooping Cough or Measles)." By the way, I had

them all. Growing up in the 1930's was not that much fun. There was little immunization in those days.

When the weather was sweltering, we sweat. Fans did not do much good, and air-conditioning did not exist. Air-conditioning first appeared in the 1940's, and it was available only in theaters. On a very hot day, you went to a movie (if you could afford it) and sat through two shows. No one had an air-conditioned car, and there were no power brakes, power steering or automatic transmission, either. Our neighbor started his car by cranking it! Every major city in the United States had a tuberculosis sanitarium, and these were full. People died of tuberculosis in their prime. Many families were left fatherless and motherless by pneumonia, and many parents buried their children. There were no fax machines, jet planes, microwaves, portable phones, cell phones, videos, internet, or fast-foods. There were no tranquilizers.

Much work involved physical exertion. Electronic controls were unheard of. People worked hard, dawn to dusk, six days a week (or even seven). Laborers of the 1930's would consider today's workplaces as spas.

Looking back at these conditions that prevailed just a few decades ago, we can appreciate being the beneficiaries of the medical, scientific and technological miracles that have occurred in our lifetime. By the same token, life back then could not be very materialistic. The amount of distress and suffering experienced by people did not allow for a materialistic outlook on life. Given today's comforts and conveniences, many people have come to see the goal of life as being attainment of maximum pleasure.

The frum community, of course, has shared the modern pleasantness of life. In addition, it has had its own conveniences.

In my childhood days, being a shomer Shabbos called for great mesiras nefesh. There were very few jobs that could accommodate a shomer Shabbos. I knew many families that lived in deprivation because the husband/father could not find a Shabbos-free job.

Preparation of meals was a chore. You took the chicken to the shochet, then eviscerated it, soaked and salted it. This was a 90 minute ordeal. There was nothing that was ready-for-the-pot. There were no frozen foods. There was no kosher Chinese food, nor Italian, Korean, or Mid-Eastern. There was no kosher sushi. There were only two varieties of kosher wine: sweet concord and sugar-free. There were few kosher dairy products. On Pesach we had meat, borscht, potatoes and more potatoes. The only Pesachdig candy was marmalade. No seltzer, no soda.

Today's Pesach products include everything except bread. Kosher pizza, non-gebrokt ice-cream cones, a variety of canned vegetables and fruits, abundant ice-cream, chocolate, candies, and yes, Pesachdig marshmallows! 124 varieties and brands of wine were on the shelves this past Pesach.

Do not get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the goods of the world. However, what has happened in the modern world is that pleasure has been equated with happiness and has become the goal in life. Anyone who feels that he/she has not gotten their fair share of pleasure feels cheated, and some people, especially youngsters, turn to drugs to find "happiness." We should not lose sight of the fact that the goal of life is spiritual rather than physical.

The Baal Shem Tov was asked, inasmuch as Shabbos and Yom Tov should be days of spiritual rather than physical delight, why do we have so many delicious foods? Would it not be more appropriate to eat simple foods and dedicate the entire day to spiritual pursuits? The Baal Shem Tov answered with a parable.

A prince once committed an offense for which he was banished from the royal palace and exiled to a distant village in the kingdom, where he lived a very austere life. After a lengthy period of time, he received a message from his father that he was pardoned and could return home. This news made him so happy that he could not contain himself from singing and dancing. However, if he were suddenly to sing and dance, the townsfolk would think he had gone mad. He, therefore, gathered some of

the townsfolk together for a party, and gave them lavish food and drink. Well satiated with food and drink, they arose to sing and dance, and the prince joined them. The townsfolk were dancing because they were merry with food and drink, whereas the prince danced because he was returning to the royal palace.

"A person," the Baal Shem Tov said, "is a composite being, comprised of a physical body and a spiritual neshama. On Shabbos and Yom Tov, the neshama wishes to engage in prayer and Torah study to bring it in closer contact with G-d. However, the body does not appreciate this, and is a barrier to spirituality. We, therefore, provide the body with things it can enjoy, so that it, too, will be happy, and will not stand in the way of the neshama's quest for and celebration of spiritual delight."

Earthly goods enjoyed in this way give primacy to the spirit. Indulging in pleasure, even permissible and "kosher" pleasure as an end in itself, is a corruption of Yiddishkeit.

We need not deny ourselves permissible pleasures, but we must take great care that they do not become our primary motivation. It is important to study those Torah works that address spirituality, primarily the writings of mussar and chassidus, and take their teachings to heart. If we fail to do this, we may get caught up in the "hedonic treadmill" that is characteristic of the society in which we live, running from pleasure to pleasure, but never arriving at a goal.

The frum world is suffering its share of casualties from the influence of the prevailing hedonism in our environment. This is partially responsible for the unprecedented numbers of failed marriages, with either spouse (or both) feeling that the relationship is not providing the gratification they desire. While marriage should indeed be a source of mutual gratification, the basis and goal of marriage should be spiritual, as is indicated by the very first berachah after the couple is joined in wedlock, shehakol bara lichvodo, that all creation is to bring greater glory to Hashem, and that should be the primary goal of the marriage.

Young people mimic the adult population. The number of young people who seek the high of alcohol or drugs are seeking the pleasure in life to which they feel entitled. Both young and old are increasingly falling victim to compulsive gambling, seeking the thrill, but ending up with catastrophic debts and frank criminal acts to support their gambling. And both young and old fall into the trap of internet addiction, whether to constantly surfing the web, playing video games, or indulging in pornography.

I have defined spirituality in secular terms, seeing the human spirit as comprised of those traits that are unique to human beings and hence distinguish them from animals. In addition to greater intelligence, some of the more obvious uniquely human features, are (1) the ability to learn from the history of past generations, (2) the ability to search for truth, (3) the ability to reflect on the purpose and goals of life, (4) the ability to have a self-awareness; (5) the ability to volitionally improve oneself, (6) the ability to have perspective, to contemplate the future and to think about future consequences of one's actions, and (7) the ability to be considerate of others and to be sensitive to their needs, (8) the ability to sacrifice one's comfort and possessions for the welfare of others, (9) the ability to empathize; (10) the ability to make moral and ethical choices in defiance of strong bodily drives and urges, (11) the ability to forgive, (12) the ability to aspire, and (13) the ability to delay gratification.

Yiddishkeit gives a special flavor and perspective to spirituality. In addition to observance of the mitzvos, we must emphasize the middos of Torah living. If we wish to save ourselves and our children, we must get off the "hedonic treadmill" and make Torah spirituality the single most important component of our lives.

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Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British
Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - currently 5764]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Ha'azinu - A Warped and Twisted Generation

IN HIS GREAT CONCLUDING SONG, Moses delivers a visionary overview of Jewish history. G-d as we encounter Him in the Hebrew Bible is not a theoretical construct, a First Cause who sets the universe in motion and then retires from the affairs of mankind. To the contrary, He is involved in history. He is a G-d of engagement in the arena of mankind.

History to the eye of faith is not what Joseph Heller once called it: "a trash bag of random coincidences blown open in a wind." It is instead a drama, a narrative, the story of the covenant, the mutual commitment on the part of Israel to be loyal to G-d, and of G-d to be a guardian of Israel, leading it, in the words of the Psalm, "in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Hence reflection on history is fundamental to the Judaic vision. As Moses himself puts it in the song:

Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will declare to you, Your elders and they will tell you. There will, says Moses to future generations, be times when you feel deserted by G-d. It is then that you must reflect, not on G-d but on humanity. G-d is just, but human beings are not:

The Rock, His work is perfect, And all His ways are just. He is a G-d of faithfulness without iniquity, Just and right is He. Is destruction His? No: the blemish belongs to His children, A warped and twisted generation. One commentary to these words deserves close attention. It comes from one of the great yeshivah heads of the nineteenth century, R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (1817-1893), known by his initials as Netziv. In 1854 he became head of the Volozhyn yeshivah which, under his leadership, became a centre of Jewish learning in Russia, attracting many outstanding students, among them Rav Avraham Kook, first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of pre-state Israel, and the Hebrew poet Chaim Nachman Bialik.

Netziv was a man of immense scholarship and broad horizons. He wrote a commentary to the Sifre (Emek ha-Netziv), another to the geonic work Sheiltot (Ha'amek She'elah) and an important collection of responsa, Meshiv Davar. As a teacher, he was devoted to his students, who equally revered him. An early supporter of the proto-Zionist movement Chibbat Zion, he encouraged Orthodox Jews to settle in Israel. His son, R. Meir Bar-Ilan, became a leading religious Zionist, after whom Bar-Ilan University is named. Netziv was greatly opposed to the establishment of separatist Orthodox communities, and believed that the task of Orthodox Jews was to be an influence in the Jewish world as a whole through teaching Torah. His commentary to the Torah, Ha'amek Davar, is a magnificent work, reflecting both his erudition and originality.

Central to his understanding of the two verses above is that they relate to the two great tragedies of ancient Israel, the destruction of the First and Second Temples. In each case, the first half of the verse refers to former, the second to the latter. There was, however, a massive difference between the two events. Following rabbinic tradition and the plain sense of the prophetic books, Netziv holds that the Israelites of the First Temple period were guilty of cardinal sins: idolatry, murder and forbidden sexual relations. They had drifted tragically far from the life of Torah. By the time of the Second Temple, however, many of these faults had been overcome.

The Babylonian Talmud attributes the destruction at the hands of the Romans to *sinat chinam*, internal animosities between Jews, "baseless hatred." Netziv says candidly that at that time Jews were "occupied with Torah and the service of G-d." However that led, he says, to "bloodshed for

the sake of heaven." How so? "Because they judged anyone who transgressed in any respect to be a Sadducee or traitor or heretic, and as a result their conduct became corrupt, despite the fact that it was for the sake of heaven." That is why they are called a "warped and twisted generation" because good and evil were so interwoven in their conduct, and "it is difficult to separate good and evil when evil is done in a holy cause."

In the following verse, Moses uses the phrase: "you foolish people [am naval] and unwise." This too, says Netziv, refers to the men of the Second Temple. He cites the Targum, which translates the phrase *am naval* not as "a foolish people" but as "the people who received the Torah." This is a strange translation. Netziv explains that the word *naval* comes from the same root as *novelet*, which means "unripe fruit" or "the incomplete or lesser substitute for something else." There is a midrashic tradition that the Torah is *novelet chokhmah shel ma'alah*, "a substitute for, an incomplete version of the Divine wisdom." In other words, G-d's wisdom as it is in itself is infinitely greater than that part of it - the Torah - which He has communicated to human beings. According to the Targum, therefore, the phrase in Ha'azinu should be read as "the people which, though it received the Torah, remained unwise."

This, says Netziv, was the situation during the last days of the Second Temple. We have no problem in understanding why the people of the First Temple suffered defeat. They were far removed from the Torah, guilty of cardinal sins. However, the men of the late Second Temple period "studied and laboured in the Torah, which prepares us to be righteous and upright." That is why Moses is so caustic about them, for they "remained unwise, and were not careful to avoid bad conduct." The tragedy of the Second Temple period is that "some of the worst behaviour came from those who were outstanding Torah scholars [*ba ha-kilkul al yedei gedolei Torah*]".

This is no stray comment on the part of Netziv. He makes it in several other places in his Torah commentary (to Devarim 4: 14 and Bamidbar 35: 34). However, his clearest exposition comes in his preface to the Book of Bereishith. Bereishith, he notes, is called by the sages *Sefer ha-Yashar*, "the book of the upright." Why so? asks Netziv. Once again he turns to the phrase in this week's sedra, "a warped and twisted generation," which again he applies to the people of the Second Temple:

Our explanation [of this phrase] is that they were righteous and pious [*tzaddikim ve-chassidim*] and laboured in the Torah. But they were not upright in their dealings with the world. Thus, as a result of the baseless hatred in their hearts, they suspected anyone who did not act in accordance with their opinions of being a Sadducee and a heretic. As a result they descended to murder and other evils, until eventually the Temple was destroyed. It is about this that Moses vindicates divine justice, for the Holy One, blessed be He, is upright [*yashar*] and does not tolerate righteous people such as these unless they act uprightly in their dealings with the world rather than in a twisted manner even though their intention is for the sake of heaven, for this causes the ruin of the world and the destruction of society [*churban ha-briyah ve-harisut yishuv ha-aretz*].

This therefore was the merit of the patriarchs, that beside the fact that they were righteous and pious and loved G-d to the utmost extent, they were also upright. In their relations with gentiles - even the worst idolaters - they acted out of love, and sought their good, for this is what allows the world to endure. Thus we find that Abraham, though he hated their wickedness, prostrated himself in prayer for the people of Sodom, for he wanted them to survive. On this the Midrash Rabbah says, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness (Ps. 45: 8) - this is what G-d said to Abraham, namely: You love to justify your fellow human beings and hate to condemn them as wicked" . . . Similarly we see how readily Isaac let himself be placated by his enemies, and on the basis of a few apologetic words from Avimelech and his companions, he made his peace with them. So too we find with Jacob who, though he knew that Laban sought to destroy him, spoke to him gently, on which the Midrash says, "Better the anger of the patriarchs than the meekness of their children." Thus we learn much from the way the patriarchs conducted themselves with civility

[derekh erez]. Netziv's comments are not in themselves exceptional. We find many such remarks by the sages in their reflections on the tragedies that befell them at the hands of the Romans. One such passage - used by Netziv as a prooftext - is to be found in the Tosefta (Menachot 13:4):

Why was Jerusalem at the time of the First Temple destroyed? Because of the idolatry, forbidden sex and bloodshed that were to be found therein. But as for the Second Temple, we recognise that its inhabitants laboured in the Torah and were scrupulous in giving tithes. Why then were they exiled? Because they loved money and hated one another - which teaches us that G-d hates hatred between people, and Scripture reckons it as equal to idolatry, forbidden sex and bloodshed combined.

Netziv is unusual only in the degree to which he saw the problem as fundamental. He returned to it time and again. It is possible, in his words, to be "righteous and pious and to labour in the Torah" and yet none the less to be guilty of "twistedness" [akmumiyyut] in one's dealings with others - indeed to be part of what the Torah itself calls "a warped and twisted generation." This is no minor matter. Because of it, the Second Temple was destroyed, Jerusalem reduced to rubble, and the Jewish people condemned to the longest exile in history.

We recognise in the Netziv's words a theme set out with great passion and depth by the prophets. There are failings to which intensely religious people are sometimes prone, namely indifference to the injustices of society, a willingness to overlook corruption within their own ranks, and a tendency to believe that attachment to G-d relieves one of the duty to be upright, civil and gracious in one's dealings with human beings.

Two phenomena are often confused: righteousness and self-righteousness. Outwardly they appear similar but between them is all the difference in the world. The righteous see the good in people, the self-righteous see the bad. The righteous have a high opinion of others, the self-righteous a high opinion of themselves. The righteous leave us feeling enlarged, the self-righteous leave us feeling diminished. The righteous lift us up, the self-righteous put us down.

The Netziv could not have set out the alternatives more starkly. The patriarchs of Bereishith were generous in their behaviour even to idolaters. The Torah scholars of the Second Temple - at least some of them - were vicious in their conduct even toward other religious Jews if they acted in any way differently from them, treating them as if they were heretics or sectarians.

That, suggests Netziv, is why we must return time and again to Tenakh, especially to Bereishith, for though it contains narrative rather than law, it teaches something that cannot be taught by law alone, namely, how to behave uprightly in one's dealings with others.

Law alone is no defence against self-righteousness. Indeed law alone can lead to self-righteousness, for it can convince those who study it that the law is on their side. It may be on their side, but what the law, in and of itself, cannot teach us is that the other person is also a human being, with feelings that can be injured, and with merits that may not be apparent to those who view humanity in black-and-white terms, dividing it, as did the Second Temple sectarians, into the "children of light" and the "children of darkness."

Narrative teaches us the complexity of the moral life and the light-and-shade to be found in any human personality. Without this, self-righteousness can destroy the very perceptions and nuances, tolerance and generosity of spirit on which society depends.

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Peninim on the Parsha
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
PARSHAS HAAZINU

The Rock! Perfect is His work... a G-d of faith without iniquity, righteous and fair is He. (32:4) Many of us go through life wondering... why a tzaddik, a thoroughly righteous individual, has to beg for a piece of bread to soothe his hunger pains, a glass of water to alleviate his thirst, a garment to clothe his body. This is, regrettably, his lot in life. Why? Certainly, Hashem has no problem addressing this person's material needs. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, analogizes this to a wealthy man whose only son was taken seriously ill. No one was able to help him, until a world-famous physician successfully diagnosed his illness and gave him medicine to save his life. In order to prevent the illness from recurring, the doctor strongly admonished the father to see to it that his son never eat any red meat.

One day, the father had to leave for an extended business trip. He reminded his wife that their son was not to have any meat. A few days later, the mother was having dinner, and the odor of the steaks overwhelmed her son to the point that he ran in and grabbed a piece of steak and gulped it down. By the time his father returned from his trip, the son was hovering between life and death. Once again, the father summoned the physician and pleaded with him to save his son's life. "I will never leave him again," the father cried. It took some time, but the doctor succeeded once again in saving the son's life.

After awhile, the father made a large banquet for family and friends, but did not invite his only son. In fact, his son was barred from entering the room where so many succulent meats were on display. People wondered how a father could be so "cruel" to invite everyone but his own son. Little did they realize that the father was performing the greatest service for his son.

The same thing occurs in this world. Hashem celebrates with many people, and it appears that everyone is at the party except his closest devotees. They seem to be barred from attendance. In reality, Hashem is true and just, and there is certainly a very good reason for their lack of inclusion at the party. They do not complain because they have unequivocal faith in Hashem's system of justice.

One last caveat that allows us a penetrating perspective into the manner in which Hashem balances the reward He bestows. Horav Arye Leib Hakohen, zl, the Chafetz Chaim's son, related that as a youth, his family lived in abject poverty. His father studied Torah day and night, while his mother eked out a pittance from their little grocery store. Once the situation became so impossible that his mother turned to her husband and asked, "Look at 'that' man who is illiterate, who never opens a sefer, whose children are boorish and uncouth. Yet, they are wealthy. They never want for anything. While you devote your life to the pursuit of Torah and mitzvos, with your children following in your footsteps, still poverty and starvation is all you have to look forward to. Why?"

The Chafetz Chaim turned to his wife and - in his quiet and gentle manner - replied, "Do you think that it would be right that a man who is not gifted with an astute mind, who has not tasted the sweetness of Torah, who has not sensed the beauty of mitzvos, and whose children are equally deficient, should also be deprived of material success? We should be happy that Hashem has granted us so much!"

What a beautiful thought! All too often we find reason to complain about our material circumstances, while we seem to ignore the spiritual gifts that Hashem has granted us. I dare say that anyone would not even dream of exchanging one for the other.

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

Horav Meir Arik, zl, suggests an insightful rendering of this pasuk. A manhig Yisrael, Torah leader, is likened to a father. We find in Sefer Melachim 2:12 that Elishah refers to his rebbe, Eliyahu HaNavi as Avi, "My father, my father." Veritably, what else is he? A leader's function is to guide with a love parallel to that of a father. Thus, the pasuk is teaching us: If you have a question concerning which path to choose, ask your Torah leader for advice. What are the criteria for a Torah leader? He must be an

individual whose reply will be, zekeinecha yomru lach, "Your elders have in the past responded to your question in such a manner." His reply is based on the age-old responses of the daas Torah, wisdom of the Torah, as expounded by the leaders of the past generations. If he says, however, "My grandfather, or those of previous generations have said so, but I think differently. I think that contemporary times demand a different approach," do not accept such a leader as your guide. If he responds in this way, he will surely turn you away from the derech ha'emes, true and correct path to spiritual achievement.

Looking to the past for guidance, reflecting upon the hashkafos, perspectives, and minhagim, customs, of Torah leaders of previous generations, is an essential component of a ben Torah's way of life. We do not deviate from the teachings of our Torah leadership of the past. On the contrary, we learn to implement their teachings into the contemporary settings and issues that confront us. I recently saw an interesting vignette in the published history of a distinguished family of German descent. It was a year after the Rosh Hayeshivah of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, had arrived at the Mesivta. At that time, he was teaching a daily blatt shiur. Talmud class. Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, the Menahel of Torah Vodaath, would teach Pirkei Avos from time to time to the older students. When he came to 1:17, in which the Tanna says, "All my life I have been raised among the sages, and I have not found anything better than silence," he explained that the Tanna had studied all the hanhagos, practices, of the chachamim, sages. This refers to not only their Torah teachings, but even their everyday, mundane practices, because the hanagah of a Torah scholar is in itself a manner of teaching dinnim, Jewish laws, and mussar, ethical behavior. Suddenly, one of the students in the class raised his hand and asked, "Can we today, at the Mesivta, also emulate and derive lessons from all the hanhagos of all the rebbeim?"

A total silence permeated the room at the audacity of the question. Rav Mendlowitz remained silent, as he sternly stared at the questioner. Finally he responded, "To publicly ask such a question is chutzpah, insolence. However, since you asked the question, I must answer it. For me to state unequivocally that a rebbe who teaches in the Mesivta is on the madreigah, spiritual plateau, that every practice of his is similar to a din in the Shulchan Aruch, code of Jewish law, it would be essential that I be acquainted with every aspect of his private and family life, in addition to his hanhagah in the Mesivta. Since I am not aware of every rebbe's private life, I am not able to give an educated reply. There is, however, one rebbe whose behavior both in the Mesivta and in his private life I have studied very carefully, and I have reached the conclusion that each hanhagah of his is like a din in the Shulchan Aruch. That rebbe is Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky. He is a very good example of what the Tanna in the Mishnah had in mind."

Rav Shraga Feivel was an individual who exemplified this virtue. He was a man whose every nuance was a lesson to be studied and emulated. Indeed, the following episode bears witness to this gadol's integrity and its influence on others. Towards the end of 1956, Shimon Linchner, a grandson of Rav Shraga Feivel, who had recently become engaged, fell seriously ill and tragically passed away shortly before he was to have been married. It was a terrible blow to the family and to the entire yeshiva. The Rosh Hayeshivah, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, was maspid, eulogized, the niftar, deceased. He mentioned that it was well-known that Rav Shraga Feivel refused to ask for deference on behalf of any of his family members. Everyone was to be considered equal. Undoubtedly, Rav Yaakov said he carried this hanhagah with him into the Olam Ha'Emes, World of Truth, even for his beloved grandson. Thus, the Middas Ha'Din, Attribute of Strict Justice, was empowered to have its full jurisdiction.

He discovered him in a desert land, in desolation, a howling wilderness. (32:10)

Hashem found us to be loyal to Him when we accepted His Torah in the wilderness. This acceptance was especially significant and acknowledged by Hashem, since we were the only ones willing to accept the Torah.

Fidelity to the Almighty is a virtue that is rewarded. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates an inspiring story which we should apply to our own lives. An American Jew worked hard at his job, but could barely make ends meet. He always had too much month left at the end of his paycheck. Nonetheless, he remained committed and observant in every aspect of his relationship with the Almighty. One day, he noticed an advertisement seeking a manager for an apartment complex. The owner was a wealthy non-Jew who was willing to pay a premium for the right person. Indeed, including a free apartment and benefits, the package totaled about \$10,000 a month, a salary that was many-fold more than this Jew was presently earning. He made the call and scheduled an appointment for an interview for the next day.

There was one slight problem: It was during the Nine Days from Rosh Chodesh Av until our national day of mourning on Tisha B'Av. This created a problem for the fellow seeking the position. He was in great need of a haircut and a shave. What should he do? He had never before shaved during this period of mourning. On the other hand, if he presented himself to the gentile in his current appearance, he would have very little chance of landing the position that he so badly needed. He decided that for once he would give himself a dispensation and shave. After all, his family had to eat. Such an opportunity does not appear every day.

The yetzer hora, evil inclination, has incredible powers. It can convince a person that the mistake he is about to make is, in reality, a positive step, a necessary move. As was the case, the yetzer hora did a job on this person. The next day, he presented himself bright and early at the gentile's office. The interview seemed to be going well, and the man was starting to get his hopes up. This was especially true when the owner told him that the previous eight applicants had failed to impress him. He said, "I would like to ask you one question that is gnawing at me."

"By all means, ask whatever you wish," the hopeful applicant replied. "Living with observant Jews for many years," the gentile began, "I have had occasion to have business dealings with them. I know that this time of year is a period of mourning for members of your religion, during which haircuts and shaving are not acceptable, except under extenuating circumstances. Thus, it surprises me that you have come to my office with a fresh haircut and shave. If it is a period of mourning, it should, likewise, affect you."

The Jewish applicant was embarrassed beyond words. He explained, "Under normal circumstances, I do not shave or take a haircut during this period. However, I feared that by presenting myself to you in my current appearance, I was precluding any chance of securing the position. So, I allowed myself to shave."

When the gentile heard this, he responded in disgust, "As far as I am concerned our meeting is concluded. I am seeking a manager who is trustworthy, who will oversee my property with utmost reliability and truthfulness. How do you expect me to trust you if you have no loyalty to your G-d? If you are willing to renege something in which you have always believed, just to make an impression to secure a job, then you are not the man for this position."

This is a powerful reply that should give us all something to think about.

Hashem will see and be provoked by the anger of His sons and daughters, and He will say, "I shall hide My face from them and see what their end will be - for they are a generation of reversals." (32:19,20)

The Chasam Sofer, zl, made use of an incident that occurred concerning his rebbe, Horav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz, zl, the Baal Haflaah, who at the time was the Rav of Frankfurt. One day, a woman entered the Rav's home with a complaint against her husband. Apparently, he would take everything that they owned and give it away to charity. While he earned a fine living, his family was relegated to living in near poverty because of his philanthropic tendencies. As soon as this woman finished speaking, a poor man in tattered clothes visited the Rav and asked to lodge a complaint against his wealthy brother. It seems that his brother was bent on redefining

the concept of stinginess. He hoarded every penny that he obtained, allowing his brother and family to live in abject poverty. When the Haflaah heard these contrasting complaints, he asked that the two subjects of the complaints, the woman's husband and the wealthy brother, be brought before him.

The two men came and presented themselves to the Rav. Turning to the woman's husband, the Rav asked, "My sources inform me that you have a difficult time holding on to your money. You seem to have this compelling need to rid yourself of your possessions. While your charitable proclivity is to be commended, there is a limit even to charity."

"Rebbe, let me explain," the man replied. "Man does not know how long he will live. Tomorrow, I could be gone from the world. It is well known that the only possessions that accompany a person to the next world are mitzvos and good deeds. Tzedakah, charity, is my entrance ticket to Gan Eden."

After the Rav heard the first one's excuse, he turned to the wealthy man who had ignored the pleas of his poverty-stricken brother and asked, "What is your excuse for hoarding all of your money?"

"Rebbe," he began. "Man does not know the length of his days. I might live to a very ripe old age, and I will need all the funds in my possession to secure that my retirement is well funded. After all, no one else will take care of me when I am old and frail."

The Baal Haflaah turned to the two men and said, "Hashem should protect each of you from the source of his fears. The one who is afraid that he might leave this world in the very near future should be blessed with longevity, and the one who refuses to help his brother because he fears that he will live a long time should not have reason to worry about that." Shortly thereafter, the Rav's words became a reality.

The Chasam Sofer concluded the story, saying that this was the message of the pasuk. Hashem saw that His sons and daughters were provoking His anger. He said, "Let Me see how they will respond to their 'end,' how they will react when they confront their thoughts concerning their own mortality." Alas, what did Hashem see? He saw that Dor tahapuchos heimah, "They are a generation of reversals." They turn everything around. Instead of reacting positively to the day of death, by giving charity and performing mitzvos, they respond with gluttony and self-indulgence, seeking to gorge themselves with whatever they can. It seems that the lessons imparted by this message have not yet reached our generation.

Sponsored in loving memory of our father and grandfather Milton Weiser By his children and grandchildren Richard & Barbara Schlesinger
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KBY Parsha Subject: Parshat Ha'azinu
Parshat Ha'azinu "Sing the Praises of His People"
Rosh Hayeshiva **Rav Mordechai Greenberg** shlita
(Translated by Rav Meir Orlian)

"O nations – sing the praises of His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants." (Devarim 32:43) What significance is there to the song of the other nations, that the Song of Ha'azinu concludes with it?

We see from Moshe's prayer, as well, that there is great significance to what the nations might say: "Then the nations that heard of Your fame will say, 'Because Hashem lacked the ability to bring this people to the Land that He had sworn to give them'..." (Bamidbar 14:15-16) Yehoshua also said, "The Canaanite and all the inhabitants of the of the land will hear ... What will You do for Your Great Name?" (7:9)

G-d Himself agreed with this argument, and says in Parshat Ha'azinu: "I had said, I will scatter them, I will cause their memory to cease from man.' Were it not for the fact that the anger of the enemy was pent up ... lest they

say, 'Our hand was raised in triumph, and it was not Hashem who accomplished all this!'" (Devarim 26-27)

What is the great concern about what the nations say?

The Ramban explains in our Parsha that we are the only nation in the world that recognizes the Creator and know that there is a purpose to the Creation. If we are lost from the world, there will be no one left who will know Him, and the whole purpose of the Creation will be lost. The troubles with which the nations afflict Israel are all out of their hatred of G-d. Therefore, what stands in the balance is not Am Yisrael, but rather the Master of the World and His revelation in the world.

This is what Yeshaya said: "You are My witnesses and I am G-d." (Yeshaya 43:10) Chazal comment on this: "If you are My witnesses – I am G-d; if not, as it were – I am not G-d." This is what Moshe and Yehoshua prayed about, that without Israel, "What will You do for Your great Name?" R. Yehuda Halevi writes on the pasuk, "I will go down with you to Egypt and I will also bring you back up" (Bereishit 46:4), that here is the greatest of all promises, that G-d's name will be called over Israel. This means that his honor be spread throughout the world only through Israel, and so long that Israel are downtrodden, His glory will be hidden.

Therefore, when the nations are able to point a finger at Israel, to ridicule and ask, "Where is their G-d?" this is a great desecration of G-d's Name, so this is what they all prayed: "Why should the nations say..." This is the purpose of Israel, that the name of G-d should be commonplace in the mouths of all the nations, until the goal is achieved in the future: "Many peoples will go and say, 'Come let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem' ... For from Zion will the Torah come forth and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim." (Yeshaya 2:3) Everyone will acknowledge the supremacy of Israel and they will recognize their longstanding mistake.

This is the main point of the prayers of the High Holy days: "Give your fear, Hashem, our G-d, over all the nations ... and all the creatures will bow done before You ... Thus, give honor to Your nation." Through, "your fear over the nations," there will be honor for Israel, as all will recognize Him, "and all that have breath in their nose will say – Hashem, the G-d of Israel, is King." Similarly, in the prayers of the festivals we say: "Reveal the honor of your kingdom over us, and appear and be raised above us before all lives."

The conclusion of this process will be when, with G-d's help, the nations will recognize this, not out of fear, but out of rational understanding and fear of Heaven, and then all the nations will sing.