

Weekly Parsha Ha'azinu
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Moshe appeals to Heaven and earth to somehow hear his words and bear testimony to the accuracy of his prophecies. Nature does not have a will of its own, but, rather, is bound by the original directions and system created by God when the universe came into being. Unlike human beings who possess free will and can make choices even when those choices are against their own self-interest, nature is unchanging in its acceptance of the will and pattern of its creator.

As a matter of eternal persistence and unending discipline, Moshe calls Heaven and earth – nature itself – to be the witnesses to the covenant between God and Israel, a covenant that will span and survive all centuries of human existence. As nature is unchanging, albeit unpredictable, so too is this covenant between God and Israel: a covenant that is unchanging and unending, even though it has always been unpredictable in its execution and historical perspective.

Though the Jewish people live and survive as an eternal people, in every generation, indeed even every decade, the Jewish nation must chart its own course and make its own decisions regarding its contribution to the perpetuation of the eternal covenant with God.

There is no set formula or procedure guaranteed to achieve this end, except for loyalty to the covenant and that implies the rule of Torah and the implementation of traditional Jewish values in the life and society of every generation.

Moshe, who is the master prophet of all time, sees and realizes the tortuous road that lies ahead for the Jewish people through the millennia. He is sensitive to the fact that there will be times and generations when the people will make a wrong choice and take a painful detour away from the main highway that the Lord has ordained for them. He cautions that we should not be disheartened nor discouraged by mistakes, negligence or even malfeasance.

Such is the nature of human beings, and we are not in any way exempt from general human nature and behavioral patterns. But Moshe points out that there will always be the realization amongst the people of Israel that despite taking a wrong direction, we are completely capable of returning to the path that will lead us to the goal of being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Additionally, in all the events that have occurred, past and present, we can recognize where we have gone wrong and where we can restore ourselves to a correct path and a brighter future. Thus, when Moshe asks Heaven and earth to listen, so to speak, to his words, he is really asking us to pay attention to what he said thousands of years ago. For these are words that are wise and relevant, important and necessary for our times as well. It is no accident that this Torah portion is read and heard on the Sabbath of repentance preceding the holy day of Yom Kippur.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

The Arc of the Moral Universe (Ha'azinu 5781)
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In majestic language, Moses breaks into song, investing his final testament to the Israelites with all the power and passion at his command. He begins dramatically but gently, calling heaven and earth to witness what he is about to say, words which are almost echoed in Portia's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, "The quality of mercy is not strained".

Listen, you heavens, and I will speak;
Hear, you earth, the words of my mouth.
Let my teaching fall like rain
And my words descend like dew,
Like showers on new grass,

Like abundant rain on tender plants. ((Deut. 32:1-2)

But this is a mere prelude to the core message Moses wants to convey. It is the idea known as *tzidduk ha-din*, vindicating God's justice. The way Moses puts it is this:

He is the Rock, His works are perfect,
And all His ways are just.

A faithful God who does no wrong,
Upright and just is He. ((Deut. 32:4)

This is a doctrine fundamental to Judaism and its understanding of evil and suffering in the world – a difficult but necessary doctrine. God is just. Why, then, do bad things happen?

Is He corrupt? No – the defect is in His children,

A crooked and perverse generation. (Deut. 32:5)

God requites good with good, evil with evil. When bad things happen to us, it is because we have been guilty of doing bad things ourselves. The fault lies not in our stars but within ourselves.

Moving into the prophetic mode, Moses foresees what he has already predicted, even before they have crossed the Jordan and entered the land.

Throughout the book of *Devarim* he has been warning of the danger that in their land, once the hardships of the desert and the struggles of battle have been forgotten, the people will become comfortable and complacent. They will attribute their achievements to themselves and they will drift from their faith. When this happens, they will bring disaster on themselves:

Yeshurun grew fat and kicked –

You became fat, thick, gross –

They abandoned the God who made them

And scorned the Rock their Saviour ...

You deserted the Rock, who fathered you;

And you forgot the God who gave you life. (Deut. 32:15-18)

This, the first use of the word *Yeshurun* in the Torah – from the root *Yashar*, upright – is deliberately ironic. Israel once knew what it was to be upright, but it will be led astray by a combination of affluence, security and assimilation to the ways of its neighbours. It will betray the terms of the covenant, and when that happens it will find that God is no longer with it. It will discover that history is a ravening wolf. Separated from the source of its strength, it will be overpowered by its enemies. All that the nation once enjoyed will be lost. This is a stark and terrifying message.

Yet Moses is bringing the Torah to a close with a theme that has been present from the beginning. God, Creator of the universe, made a world that is fundamentally good: the word that echoes seven times in the first chapter of *Bereishit*. It is humans, granted freewill as God's image and likeness, who introduce evil into the world, and then suffer its consequences. Hence Moses' insistence that when trouble and tragedy appear, we should search for the cause within ourselves, and not blame God. God is upright and just. The shortcomings are ours, His children's, shortcomings.

This is perhaps the most difficult idea in the whole of Judaism. It is open to the simplest of objections, one that has sounded in almost every generation. If God is just, why do bad things happen to good people?

This is the question asked not by sceptics, doubters, but by the very heroes of faith. We hear it in Abraham's plea, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" We hear it in Moses' challenge, "Why have You done evil to this people?" It sounds again in Jeremiah: "Lord, You are always right when I dispute with You. Yet I must plead my case before You: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy?" (Jer. 12:1).

It is an argument that never ceased. It continued through the rabbinic literature. It was heard again in the *kinot*, the laments, prompted by the persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages. It sounds in the literature produced in the wake of the Spanish expulsion, and its echoes continue to reverberate in memories of the Holocaust.

The Talmud says that of all the questions Moses asked God, this was the only one to which God did not give an answer.[1] The simplest, deepest interpretation is given in Psalm 92, "The song of the Sabbath day." Though "the wicked spring up like grass", they will eventually be destroyed. The righteous, by contrast, "flourish like a palm tree and grow tall like a cedar in Lebanon." Evil wins in the short term but never in the long. The wicked are like grass, whereas the righteous are more like trees. Grass grows overnight but it takes years for a tree to reach its full height. In the long run, tyrannies are defeated. Empires decline and fall. Goodness and rightness win the final battle. As Martin Luther King said in the spirit of the Psalm: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

It is a difficult belief, this commitment to seeing justice in history under the sovereignty of God. Yet consider the alternatives. There are three: The first is to say that there is no meaning in history whatsoever. *Homo hominis lupus est*, "Man is wolf to man". As Thucydides said in the name of the Athenians: "The strong do as they want, the weak suffer what they must." History is a Darwinian struggle to survive, and justice is no more than the name given to the will of the stronger party.

The second, about which I write in *Not In God's Name*, is dualism, the idea that evil comes not from God but from an independent force: Satan, the Devil, the Antichrist, Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness, and the many other names given to the force that is not God but is opposed to Him and those who worship Him. This idea, which has surfaced in sectarian forms in each of the Abrahamic monotheisms, as well as in modern, secular totalitarianisms, is one of the most dangerous in all of history. It divides humanity into the unshakably good and the irredeemably evil, giving rise to a long history of bloodshed and barbarism of the kind we see being enacted today in many parts of the world in the name of holy war against the greater and lesser Satan. This is dualism, not monotheism, and the Sages, who called it *shtei reshuyot*, "two powers or domains"[2], were right to reject it utterly.

The third alternative, debated extensively in the rabbinic literature, is to say that justice ultimately exists in the World to Come, in life after death. Although this is an essential element of Judaism, it is striking how relatively little Judaism had recourse to it, recognizing that the central thrust of Tanach is on this world, and life before death. For it is here that we must work for justice, fairness, compassion, decency, the alleviation of poverty, and the perfection, as far as lies within our power, of society and our individual lives. Tanach almost never takes this option. God does not say to Jeremiah or Job that the answer to their question exists in heaven and they will see it as soon as they end their stay on earth. The passion for justice, so characteristic of Judaism, would dissipate entirely were this the only answer.

Difficult though Jewish faith is, it has had the effect through history of leading us to say: if bad things have happened, let us blame no one but ourselves, and let us labour to make them better. I believe it was this that led Jews, time and again, to emerge from tragedy, shaken, scarred, limping like Jacob after his encounter with the angel, yet resolved to begin again, to rededicate ourselves to our mission and faith, to ascribe our achievements to God and our defeats to ourselves.

I believe that out of such humility, a momentous strength is born.
Shabbat Shalom

Insights Parshas Ha'azinu - Tishrei 5781

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim / Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Shoshana bas Yechezkel Feivel. "May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

From Finite to Infinite

The deeds of the Mighty One are perfect, for all His ways are just. He is a faithful God, never unfair; righteous and moral is He (32:4).

This week's parsha discusses Hashem's attribute of justice and His ultimate system of reward and punishment. Rashi (ad loc) quoting the Sifri (307) explains; "Hashem is faithful to pay the righteous for their righteousness in the World to Come. Even though He postpones their

reward, in the end He makes His words trustworthy." Rashi continues, "And for the wicked as well, He pays the reward for their righteousness in this world." Meaning, Hashem is trustworthy to pay everyone what they are owed for their good deeds; the righteous receive it in the World to Come and the wicked receive their full payment in this world.

This is difficult to understand. The Gemara (Kiddushin 39b) quotes Rava as saying, "The reward (for fulfilling mitzvos) is not given in this world." The reason for this is based on the understanding that man's ultimate purpose in this world is to earn a relationship with Hashem, which is the ultimate good that Hashem intended to bestow on mankind. Man can create a relationship with Hashem by doing mitzvos, thereby enabling himself to connect to the infinite.

But we live in a finite world with a finite existence. Any reward earned for an infinite act by definition cannot be paid in this finite world because it would be woefully inadequate. This is similar to trying to pay your mortgage with Monopoly money. For this reason, the true reward for mitzvos is only available in the World to Come.

Imagine for a moment that a person who knows nothing about precious stones goes to a jeweler to buy a diamond. The jeweler sizes him up immediately and realizes that if he gives this customer a big sparkly cubic zirconia "diamond" he will be just as happy, never knowing the difference. Does this mean that the jeweler can deceive this customer? Of course not. Just because the customer would be satisfied doesn't entitle the jeweler to cheat him by taking full price for a diamond but only delivering a cubic zirconia.

Similarly, how can Hashem, who is the ultimate judge and creator of the ultimate system of justice, cheat wicked people by giving them a finite reward for an infinite act? It seems grossly unjust. To answer that Hashem rewards individuals based on what they perceive as valuable seems as wrong as the jeweler delivering a cubic zirconia instead of a real diamond.

What's the difference between a person who is a millionaire and one who isn't? Ultimately, it may be only one penny; if a person has \$999,999.99 he simply isn't a millionaire. Likewise, Rambam teaches us that the difference between a wicked person and a righteous one may be that one single mitzvah or aveirah that puts one over the edge.

We see from here that more often than not a label isn't the complete picture of what something is. Most designations are generally an amalgamation of different forces. One of the great kindnesses of Hashem is that a person who has slightly more mitzvos than aveiros is considered a "tzaddik." Whereas a 51% score on a test in school is a failing grade, Hashem nevertheless still credits this effort as having "passed." This "tzaddik" designation means that Hashem, in His boundless mercy, considers good deeds eternal acts if they simply outnumber a person's aveiros.

People have conflicting forces within their psyche. Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 9:1) explains that wicked people are motivated by lust for physical pleasures, while righteous ones are motivated to act for the sake of heaven. While the vast majority of mitzvos can be physically and/or emotionally satisfying, we must never lose sight of the fact that the reason we do them is because Hashem requires it and doing those mitzvos draws us nearer to Him.

The reason that wicked people are paid for their righteous acts in this finite world is because their motivation for doing mitzvos isn't to be drawn nearer to Hashem; this is evidenced by the fact that the majority of their acts are aveiros. Thus, even when they do mitzvos they are not infinite acts, as their motivation isn't a relationship with Hashem but rather they are driven by personal desires. They may deserve reward because they acted properly, but when the majority of their actions are aveiros they do not deserve an infinite reward. Hashem therefore pays them in this world - a finite reward for a finite action.

For Me or For You?

Like an eagle arousing his nest hovering over his young, he spreads his wings and takes it and carries it on his pinions (32:11).

In this week's parsha the Torah describes the kindness and mercy of Hashem by likening it to an eagle. Rashi (ad loc) explains: An eagle is merciful toward his children in that he doesn't enter the nest suddenly

and startle his sleeping young; rather he flaps his wings and goes around them from branch to branch to gently rouse his young and not overwhelm them. In addition, he gently touches them and then withdraws and touches them again, without ever putting the full force of his weight on them.

Rashi goes on to explain a second attribute: An eagle carries its young on its wings because it is unafraid of winged predators for it flies higher than any other birds. The only danger that it fears is man's arrows, and the eagle's rationale is, "Better that the arrow should enter me and not strike my children."

So too, Rashi explains, when Bnei Yisroel left Egypt they were being pursued by the Egyptians who caught up to them and proceeded to shoot arrows and catapult stones at them. However, an angel of Hashem came and acted as a shield between the Egyptians and Bnei Yisroel, absorbing the full force of the assault. Then, when giving Bnei Yisroel the Torah, Hashem was careful not to overwhelm them.

While we can clearly see the analogy, this verse still requires further explanation. The end of the verse demonstrates that an eagle is willing to suffer pain and even sacrifice itself for the sake of its young, as it is willing to take the blow of an arrow to protect them. This is understandably an incredible commitment on the part of the eagle. But how are we to understand the greatness of the virtue that it gently wakes up its young? If an eagle is willing to sacrifice itself for its children, what does the fact that it gently wakes its young add?

The Torah is teaching us an incredible life lesson here, one that will surely be appreciated by anyone who ever had to rouse children in the morning. Usually, when parents come into their children's room to wake them up in the morning, they speak loudly to get them up. In addition, when the children are slow to get out of bed, parents tend to raise the volume of their voices. Pretty soon they start yelling at them to hurry up, get dressed, etc.

Why do we yell at our children in the morning? Is it because the parent really cares if their children get to school on time or is it that if the children are late and miss their bus or car pool then the parent has to drive them? Alternatively, the parent takes their children to school on the way to work, and when the children are late the parent is also now late, which creates other pressure. Almost always, the stressful morning experience isn't for the children's sake, it's about the parent's frustration at being inconvenienced by their children's dawdling.

What many parents don't realize is that a child always knows when a parent is acting in the interest of the child or in the self-interest of the parent. The Rosh HaYeshiva illustrates this with the following story.

About midnight on a Motzei Shabbos the Rosh HaYeshiva gets a call from a member of the community who is very distressed. The man explains that for the last four hours he has been in a yelling match with his teenage son and he is beside himself.

"What happened?" asked the Rosh HaYeshiva. The man explains that he and his son were in shul davening Ma'ariv and his son left early to go home. One of the other congregants in shul turned to him and asked him where his son was. The man then noticed that his son was no longer in shul and when he got home he confronted his son about leaving shul early. That led to huge argument and much yelling and screaming that lasted for hours. So the father was now calling the Rosh HaYeshiva for advice about what to do.

The Rosh HaYeshiva said, "Let me ask you a question. On Sunday night do you take your son to shul?" The man replied that he does not. "Do you know if he even davens Ma'ariv?" The man once again replied that he does not.

The Rosh HaYeshiva explained to him that the reason he was upset wasn't because his son left shul early and missed part of davening, inasmuch for the rest of the week he doesn't even know if his son davens. He was upset because his friend embarrassed him by asking him where his son was. The reason he was yelling at his son wasn't about educating him on davening, it was because he himself was embarrassed and he was venting frustration for being embarrassed. The reason this led to a huge fight is because children are very perceptive, they know when a parent is criticizing them for their own good and when they are

not. This is perhaps the major point of conflict between parents and children.

That is what the Torah is teaching us. Of course the eagle does everything it can to protect its young. But is it protecting its young because that is the eagle's own continuity and it is preserving its species? Or is its devotion and commitment because it cares for the young itself and what's in its best interest? The verse therefore tells us that an eagle gently wakes up its young; that concern for the "psyche" of its young teaches us that an eagle's protection of its young is motivated by what's good for the offspring, not in the self-interest of the eagle itself.

Talmudic College of Florida,
Rohr Talmudic University Campus,
4000 Alton Road, Miami Beach, FL 33140

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For the week ending 26 September 2020 / 8 Tishri 5781

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Parshat Haazinu

Granny's Tales

"Yeshurun became fat and kicked." (32:15)

Last week I mentioned that one of the great things about having been part of Ohr Somayach for around three decades is that I have met some people who are clearly living on a different level than the rest of us. One of these holy souls distilled the essence of one's relationship with one's fellow into three principles. His first principle: "I was created to serve others, and no one was created to serve me." The second principle: "I wouldn't do it to you. But if you do it to me — it's okay." I said that this doesn't mean that a person should be a doormat and invite the world to trample on him, but, post facto, if you did something to me that I could really take you to court for and get back at you for, and I give up on that — I get forgiven for all of my sins. And his third principle: "Whatever I do for you is never enough; whatever you do for me is more than I deserve."

In Yiddish there's an expression called "bubbe maisos" — literally "Granny's tales." Sometimes, bubbe maisos are just that — stories and ideas without foundation. But sometimes they reflect a wisdom that comes from our Sages. In this particular case, the Rabbi of whom I speak heard the statement "Whatever I do for you is never enough; whatever you do for me is more than I deserve" from his grandmother (Gittel bas Yitzchok Dov HaLevi, a"h). It just so happens that virtually the same idea is found in Mesechet Derech Eretz Zuta, perek beit, for there it says, "If you did much good, let it be in your eyes as a little. And if they did you a little good, let it be in your eyes as a lot."

"Yeshurun became fat and kicked."

This verse is preceded by the most beautiful and poetic description of how Hashem cared for and guarded the Jewish People in the desert. When a person feels he deserves something, whatever he gets will seem but little in his eyes and he will end up denying his benefactor. Even Yeshurun, which means "the straight one," will be turned aside and start to "kick" if his appreciation is not greater than his appetite.

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Parshas Ha'azinu: Two Songs, Two Singers

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

How does the poet get started on the process of writing a poem, or the songwriter as he sets about composing a song? Does he or she look at the environment, at what is going on in the world and seek inspiration from things external? Or does the creative artist look within, using introspection as a tool to uncover emotions out of which the poem or song can be fashioned? These questions can be asked about all creative processes, not just writing. They can be asked of the graphic artist, of the composer of music, of the sculptor.

My wife's grandfather was the renowned Hasidic Rebbe, Rabbi Shaul Taub, who composed hundreds of liturgical melodies. When he was asked about his creative process, he would say that he fashioned his

music out of the feelings which “overflowed from his heart.” As a Holocaust survivor, his heart overflowed with the full range of human emotions, from hope to dread and despair and back to hope again. And one can detect the full range of these feelings in his music.

This week's Torah portion, Ha'azinu, is read on the Shabbat immediately following the two days of Rosh Hashanah. It consists almost entirely of a shira, a song, of words spoken by Moses “into the ears of the entire congregation of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 31:30) What are the emotions which inspires those words?

To answer this question, it helps to remember that just two days before we will read Ha'azinu, we will have read another shira, and a very different one at that. I refer to the “Song of Hannah” (Samuel I, 2:1-10), which is the haftarah for the first day of Rosh Hashanah.

Hannah's emotions are apparent. She is joyous, exhilarated, exultant. Her desperate prayers have been answered and she has experienced God's wondrous powers. Her song is a triumphant one.

Let us contrast this with the song of Moses. Like Hannah, he is confident of God's omnipotence. She sings, “The Lord deals death and gives life.” (Samuel I, 2:6) He sings, “There is no God beside me, I deal death and give life.” Deuteronomy 32:39)

But the song that Moses sings is of a very different nature. Moses has a clear if pessimistic vision of what lies ahead for the Jewish people. He foresees the consequences of their disobedience and rebelliousness. He anticipates the wrath of God.

He places the blame for that wrath on the people themselves, not upon God. God is justified in all that He does. “The Rock, His work is perfect... just and right is He. Is corruption His? No! His children's is the blemish...” (Deuteronomy 32:4-5)

Moses' emotions as he utters the song of Ha'azinu are complex indeed. For one thing, he feels a sense of dread of what lies ahead for these people whom he knows to be weak and sinful. He is certain that great suffering is in store for his people. That suffering pains him.

But he also finds it necessary to express a deeper emotion, one of confidence and trust in God in the face of suffering. He thus expresses, arguably for the first time in the Bible, the Jewish reaction of Tzidduk HaDin, of proclaiming God's justice even in the depths of tragedy.

The poem of Ha'azinu calls to mind a mélange of graphic images: excessive sensuality, sin, faithlessness, and, in reaction to all this, “a fire kindled in God's nostrils which burns into the depths of the netherworld.” These are powerful images which ring true to the experience of every Jew who is even minimally aware of our history. But Moses sets the tone for all of us with his opening declaration: God is righteous, God is just, God is fair. Tzidduk HaDin. This is the Jewish reaction to every manner of suffering.

How apt are the words of Rabbi Soloveitchik, who would stress the centrality to our faith of the concept of Tzidduk HaDin, justifying God. He saw in this concept our assertion of “dignity in defeat”: “If man knows how to take defeat... as the halacha tries to teach us, then he may preserve his dignity even when he faces adversity and disaster.”

At this time of year, during these days of judgment and introspection, we prepare ourselves for a future year of difficulties and challenges and worse. We ready ourselves for the dreaded possibility of the need to express Tzidduk HaDin. But does this cause us to despair? No. For this solemnity is our best way to prepare for a different set of alternatives entirely.

Anxiety over Divine judgment, Aimat HaDin, propels us to repent, to commit to be better persons, better Jews.

This “fear of judgment” becomes the ground out of which sprouts optimism and hope; optimism that God will shine His countenance upon us, and hope that we will merit His favor and be blessed with a sweet and happy New Year.

We learn the lessons of the song of Ha'azinu so that we can merit the triumphs of the “Song of Hannah.”

Shana Tova U'Metuka!

When the Maps of Countries Are Being Redrawn — Hold Your Breath!

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

The Torah states, “Remember the days of old, understand the years of generation and generation. Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you.” [Devorim 32:7]. Rashi does not explain this pasuk (verse) according to the simple reading. Rather, Rashi explains the pasuk as a warning: “Look at what happened to other people who came before you, when they angered Me.” “Understand the years of generation after generation” refers to the era of Enosh, upon whom HaShem (G-d) poured forth the waters of the Ocean, and to the era of the (people of the) Flood, whom HaShem washed away.

The next pasuk continues, “When the Supreme One distributed to nations their portions, when He separated the children of man, He set the borders of nations according to the number of the Children of Israel.” [32:8]. Rashi similarly interprets this pasuk: “When He separated the children of man” refers to the Dor Haflaga (Generation of the Dispersion). This is what happens to those who anger HaShem.

However, we have a long-standing tradition that “Scriptural verses (pesukim) do not leave their simple interpretation” [Shabbos 63a; Yevamos 11b; 24a]. Rashi himself says in a number of places that even though at times he is providing a Midrashic interpretation, the simple interpretation of the pasuk remains. The simple interpretation of these pesukim is an admonition to us to understand history and learn its lessons.

The traditional Jewish belief is that HaShem is not only the Creator of Heaven and Earth, but that He is the G-d of history. The historical events that we witness are the means by which HaShem is continuously directing His world. Simply stated, these pesukim are teaching us that when HaShem establishes the boundaries of the world, it is ultimately because of the Children of Israel. The different wars and conflicts that take place in the world and the different border changes that occur—according to the simple reading of our pesukim—all occur because of their ultimate impact on the Jewish nation.

There is a quote from the writings of Rav Elchanan Wasserman (who himself was killed by the Nazis at the beginning of World War II): The Torah gave us a great key to understand the hinge upon which all historical events revolve—Devorim 32:8 (the previously quoted pasuk). HaShem sets the borders of nations and causes nations to inherit for the sake of the Jews. History revolves around the Jews. “For Hashem's share is His people; Yaakov is the portion of His possession” [32:9].

Rav Elchanan continued (regarding the Peace Treaty ending World War I), “when the map of Europe was drawn up in Versailles, the borders were already set in Heaven”. Sometimes it takes us years, decades, or centuries to put the pieces together. Sometimes, in the interval, the activities seem to have nothing to do with the Jewish people. But the great lesson of history that we are taught in the opening pesukim of this week's parsha is that when HaShem sets up the borders of nations, it is for the sake of the Children of Israel.

I recently read (1993) that the people in MacMillan and Company—the mapmakers—are having a very hard time these days. We think that we have hard jobs! Imagine the job of mapmakers! It has been a very difficult couple of years for them. They had just finished their latest edition of the Atlas, in which they printed East Germany and West Germany. Bonn and Berlin were the respective capitals. All of a sudden, they had to reprint the map. OK, done. Now they think that they are set. Then, all of a sudden, Yugoslavia divides—Serbia, Croatia, we cannot even pronounce all these names! When we are talking maps or when we discuss borders—ultimately, we are talking Klal Yisroel.

One does not need to be a politically astute individual to realize the momentousness of the breakup of the Soviet Union. The mapmakers do not know from day to day whether they should draw 15 republics or 12 republics. We ask ourselves what difference does it make if Azerbaijan decides to become independent or not. What is the meaning of all these changes?

This is the lesson of history that we should never forget. These events—the placement of national boundaries—have an impact on Klal Yisroel.

At the beginning of World War I, the Ottoman Empire chose the wrong side and allied themselves with the Germans. At that time, a person would have had to be exceedingly insightful to have realized that this decision would have a major impact on Jewish history in the twentieth century. Our tendency would have been to think, “Who cares? What’s the difference?” But that single event—coupled with the fact that there was this little country called “Palestine” under the rule of the Ottoman Turks—had major ramifications.

When Germany (and the Ottoman Empire) eventually lost World War I, their empires were disassembled. Part of the price that the Ottoman Empire paid for “picking the wrong horse” was that they lost their empire. Their little protectorate called “Palestine” became the British Mandate of Palestine. Not long after that, there was a proclamation called the Balfour Declaration. Who would have thought that the Ottoman Turk’s poor decision would lead toward the Jews attaining an independent homeland in the Land of Israel?

When we see maps changing, we need to hold our breaths. This has to do with us. Somehow or another, we will be in the center of this. Sometimes it is for our benefit. Sometimes, G-d forbid, it may be to our detriment. But we are always on center stage, because “Yaakov chevel nachaloso” (Jacob is the portion of His possession). We are the protectorate of the Master of the Universe.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

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Haazinu: Killer Sheep and Protective Wolves

Ben-Tzion Spitz

My mother’s obsession with the good scissors always scared me a bit. It implied that somewhere in the house there lurked: the evil scissors. - Tony Martin

In the penultimate reading of the Torah, Moses breaks into song, the Song of Haazinu. The Song of Haazinu is visually and linguistically distinct from the rest of the Torah. Its two symmetrical columns of text highlight the poetic difference from the rest of the Torah prose. Its ancient language hints at future prophecies. Its compactness makes it even more memorable, as it was meant to be.

In one of the darker passages Moses quotes God:

“I will hide My countenance from them,

And see how they fare in the end.

For they are a treacherous breed,

Children with no loyalty in them.” -Deuteronomy 32:20

The Meshech Chochma tries to understand what treachery the Children of Israel will be guilty of. The word in Hebrew that he focuses on is “Tahpuchot” which though translated here as “treacherous” more accurately means “reversals.”

So what “reversals” is the verse talking about? The Meshech Chochma states that there will be reversals of nature. The first is a reversal of human nature. Man has a range of attributes, but by being stuck in the negative traits such as jealousy and covetousness, and minimizing one’s natural generosity, they will cause their own nature to become predominantly evil. That in turn will cause God to reverse nature in the animal kingdom, where previously docile animals will become dangerous. He references such a case, quoting a Midrash that describes sheep that unexpectedly turn violent and actually attack and kill people. However, man also has the opportunity to reverse his evil nature. Among the primary tools to do so are the host of charitable commandments. After a person has worked hard (especially in an agricultural setting), to plow, sow, tend and harvest his crop, through great effort, to then consistently and generously give of that hard-earned produce in a variety of ways to the poor, will invariably convert man’s nature to a predominantly good one.

When man becomes good, generous, God will also change the nature of the animal kingdom, where all the previously dangerous animals of the world, will become not only safe, but protectors. As proof, he cites the

case of the wolves that protected the vacant, unattended homes of those people who travelled for the festival pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

May we always work on improving our natures.

Shabbat Shalom and Gmar Chatima Tova

Dedication - To the memory of Prof. Yaakov Katz z”l.

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

Rav Kook Torah

Ha'azinu: The Source of Rabbinic Authority

The Sages instituted numerous rabbinic decrees to prevent violations of Torah law. For example, they extended the Torah’s prohibition of eating milk and meat together to include fowl, since people failed to distinguish between fowl and true meat.

There are, however, several cases in which the Sages went even further and authored new mitzvot. The mitzvah to light Chanukah lights, to read Megillat Esther on Purim, and to wash hands before eating bread - these are rabbinic enactments with no direct basis in Torah law. They are not extensions of Torah legislation or protective measures, but brand-new mitzvot. By what right could the Sages innovate these mitzvot?

Even more audacious, the rabbis decreed that we recite a blessing when performing these rabbinic innovations: “Blessed are You, the Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has commanded us to...”

When did God command us to light Chanukah candles or read Megillat Esther on Purim?

The Talmud responds to this question, noting that there are not one but two sources in the Torah that empower the rabbis to enact legislation:

“לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל”

“Do not stray to the right or left from the word that [the high court] declares to you” (Deut. 17:11).

“שאל אביו ונגדו זקניו ויאמרו לך”

“Ask your father and he will tell you; question your elders, and they will respond” (Deut. 32:7).

Two Considerations

Rav Kook explained that God-given commandments will naturally promote the goal of absolute good. This is understandable, as God knows the future and is aware of all implications of any decree. Man-made laws, on the other hand, even those designed by the most prescient legal scholars, will never be able to achieve the same results as a Divinely-decreed mitzvah.

Of course, the Talmudic Sages were blessed with Divine inspiration, in addition to the logic and reasoning that are an integral aspect of the Oral Law. They used these gifts to attain results similar to God-given mitzvot, to further the Jewish people’s perfection in both spiritual and material realms.

The Sages examined two aspects when formulating a new law:

The people’s current religious and physical needs;

The desire to maintain continuity with the Jewish people’s lofty spiritual heritage.

It is insufficient to take into account only the generation’s immediate needs. If the nation becomes estranged from its spiritual foundation, it has in fact become a different nation. Its unity and continuity are no longer assured.

Two Sources for Rabbinic Authority

Now we may understand why there are two sources authorizing the Sages to legislate new laws.

Regarding the need to address the current needs of society, the Torah commands: “Do not stray to the right or left from the word that [the high court] declares to you.” This refers to decrees of the high court, which institutes legislation dictated by the state of the people. These laws are designed to uphold observance of Shabbat, kashrut, and so on.

But other rabbinic enactments are new mitzvot, designed to maintain our ties with our spiritual heritage. These include kindling lights on Chanukah, reading the Megillah on Purim, and washing hands before a meal (which recalls the purity of the kohanim before they ate terumah).

Regarding the authority to enact these new mitzvot, the Torah says, “Remember the days of old, reflect upon the years of each generation. Ask your father and he will tell you; question your elders, and they will respond.” Israel’s past was elevated and holy, and is the source of our future success.

(Adapted from *Ein Eyah on Shabbat 23a*, vol. III, p. 73)

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Ha’azinu

פרשת האזינו תשפ"א

קל אמונה ואין עול

G-d of faith without iniquity. (32:4)

Rashi explains that Hashem’s judgment is exact and fair. Everyone receives his due reward – the righteous might wait a bit, but it will arrive in due time; the wicked who have acted meritoriously will also be rewarded in kind. Life is a harmonious whole, which we, as mere mortals with limited perception, are unable to perceive. Nonetheless, we believe that it all comes together: good fortune with failure; joy, in contrast to sadness, celebrating milestones, both joyous and tragic. A human being cannot fathom how the pieces of the human puzzle of life fit together, but they do. Shortly before his taking leave of this world, the saintly *Horav Tzvi Hirsch, zl, m’Rimanov*, lay on his deathbed and remarked that the *ikar*, primary principle, of the Torah is the acute awareness and penetrating knowledge that *Keil emunah v’ein avel*, Hashem is the G-d of faith without iniquity. He makes no mistakes. He controls everything – even that which we do not understand, and question. This is what Torah is all about. If this is so, why then do we need the Torah? It would have sufficed to have Hashem declare on *Har Sinai, Keil emunah v’ein avel*. Why do we need the *mitzvos* and the learning? Let us focus on this one maxim, and we will have fulfilled our purpose.

The *Rebbe* explains that unless one studies Torah and observes its *mitzvos*, the concept of faith that everything Hashem does is perfect, true and without iniquity, eludes him. He is unable to fathom its meaning, its depth, because he lacks the inner dimensions of Torah and of himself. Without the Torah consciousness that he acquires through total immersion in Torah, he will not have a cogent appreciation of Hashem’s actions. In order to better appreciate this idea, I cite various remarks from *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, quoted in his *Alei Shur*.

In the *mavo*, preface, the *Mashgiach* asserts that it is insufficient to simply learn Torah, becoming erudite, purely on a book-knowledge level, without penetrating its inner dimensions and thus allowing it to penetrate his inner self to the point that he develops a sense of Torah consciousness. In other words, one may be a brilliant scholar, a Torah-observant Jew, an activist of the highest order, a zealous Jew who is meticulous in his *mitzvah* performance; but if he does not seek perfection (which is the result of an association with true *gedolim*, refined Torah giants), he will have succeeded only in emulating, parroting, what he has seen and learned, but he will not have ingested Torah into his entire being.

For example, *Rav Wolbe* points out, “One must learn: to approach a statement of *Chazal*; to study its profundities and to experience it until the hidden light of *Chazal*’s statement illuminates you.” He means that, after mulling *Chazal*’s statement over and over, we suddenly realize a deeper and truer meaning to the words that we had until now simply read and translated. At this point, *Chazal*’s statement illuminates us as we begin to absorb it. *Chazal*’s statements and Torah should not be treated as an isolated and abstract body of knowledge.

Indeed, *Rav Wolbe* (thus) defines a *yeshivah*, not simply as a place where one learns (to amass knowledge), but where one learns how to live. One who learns Torah, but does not expunge his negative character traits, is not considered having learned Torah. *Rav Wolbe* observed that while many people observe *mitzvos*, they do so purely out of habit. They grow up as *frum*, observant Jews, having attended the right schools, having received a good education, and they continue to live as they were raised and educated. If they were to be asked, “Why do

you observe *mitzvos*?” the answer will probably be, “Because this is how I was raised.” Sadly, such a response does not do much or speak well of this person’s affinity to Jewish observance. It is like saying, “I eat, because that is how I was educated.” One eats three times a day. What one should say is, “I eat because I am hungry.” Likewise, one should be hungry for Torah and *mitzvos*. He should want to observe – not do so because this is the role he must “play” on the stage of life. It has very little meaning to him, because it has not become part of his consciousness.

Returning to what the *Rebbe* posited: One must learn the Torah in order to understand (and believe) *Keil emunah v’ein avel*; this means that only one whose life is imbued with Torah – his consciousness defined by Torah, his *daas*, comprehension, guided by the Torah – is able to understand that what Hashem does is perfect, true and (certainly) without iniquity.

עם נבל ולא חכם

O’ base and unwise people. (32:6)

The Torah is criticizing *Klal Yisrael* for being an *am naval*, base people, and *v’lo chacham*, unwise. *Ramban* quotes *Rashi* who comments that they forgot the good that Hashem had done for them. They were unwise in realizing the good and bad, the consequences of their ingratitude. He then quotes *Targum Onkeles* who renders the phrase (critique) in a manner which begs elucidation. *Naval – ama d’kablu Oraisa*, “A nation that received the Torah.” *Ramban* explains that *Onkeles* translates *naval* as being related to *navol tibul*, “You will surely become weary” (*Shemos* 18:18). Thus, the Torah is intimating that *Klal Yisrael* is a nation that wearied itself in intense fulfillment of the *mitzvos* of the Torah. (They observed the Torah, but they considered it a burden.) They are unwise in not realizing that Torah observance is good and for their own benefit.

We are to derive from *Onkeles*, as explained by *Ramban*, that *Moshe Rabbeinu*’s stark foreshadowing of what lay in store for the nation, their egregious behavior in angering Hashem, their overt transgressions, are all the result of a weariness with the Torah. How are we to understand this? *Horav Henach Leibowitz, zl*, explains that, indeed, there is no grey area with regard to Torah appreciation. One either values the Torah, acknowledges its worth and, thus, studies it with intensity, fiery passion, love and joy – or he becomes weary of it. One who begins to indicate a weariness in his relationship with Torah is on the path to infamy: idol worship; and a baseness of self that reflects itself in his total demeanor. *Limud haTorah*, Torah study, must be an endeavor that one enjoys, about which he is excited and passionate. One who does not demonstrate such an attitude indicates by his disconnect that Torah has little value to him. Sadly, his weariness from Torah will drive a wedge between him and Hashem. The Torah is what connects us. Without it, we just drift away.

שאל אביך ויגידך זקניך ויאמרו לך

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

Issues arise; questions abound; to whom do we turn for sage advice, intelligent counsel? The Torah enjoins us to turn to “your father,” whom *Rashi* interprets as the *Navi*, prophet, Torah leader of the generation, and “your elders,” who are the *chachamim*, Torah scholars. After a lifetime of Torah study and devotion, these Torah scholars have honed their minds through the *daas*, wisdom, of the Torah which they have cultivated. *Horav Avraham Yaakov Teitelbaum, zl*, quotes a novel homiletic exposition of this *pasuk* rendered by his *Rebbe*, the venerable *Horav Meir Avik, zl*, which is practical and timeless in its applicability to every generation. A *manhig Yisrael*, Torah leader who shepherds Hashem’s people, is compared to a father. He is responsible for their spiritual inculcation and adherence to the Torah and *mitzvos*. Elisha referred to his *Rebbe*, *Eliyahu HaNavi*, as *Avi, avi rechev Yisrael*, “My father! My father! *Yisrael*’s chariot and horsemen!” (*Melachim* II 2:12). Thus, when confronted with a serious question which requires spiritual guidance, we turn to our “fathers,” the Torah giants.

One criterion that determines their qualification to answer: *Zekeinecha v'yomru lach*. When you seek their counsel, if the response is: "This is how our grandfather acted; this is how we as Jews have acted in the past" – then listen to his advice. He is a *manhig* that is connected to a previous generation. He respects his predecessors and seeks to emulate them. If he says, however, "My grandfather acted in this manner; I, however, have a different opinion. Times have changed, and what was good for my grandfather does not necessarily apply to me," if he distances himself from the past, he is not someone whom we should consult for advice.

We are a nation whose past plays a vital role in shaping our vision for the future. We understand that history as we see it is the interplay of *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence, and *bechirah chafshis*, freedom of choice/will. We choose – Hashem acts. The goal of Creation is the fusion of G-d and man, the idea that man choose correctly, thus eliciting Hashem's positive response. History examines the world and how its events have affected the union between man and G-d. Torah, which is the core of our belief, is also our historical primer, which guides and inspires us concerning how to choose, how to live.

Memories are critical to us. Indeed, they are our only legacy, and, thus, our only bequest. Judaism preserves and incorporates them into our present lives, seeing to it that they are the foundation of what we transmit to – and build upon – for the future. Judaism is a rendezvous between what we have taken from the past and what we bequeath to the future. We believe because we remember. Those who were there, who experienced, transmitted what they saw and experienced to the next generation. This is our sense of history. The secular streams sought to have us break with the past. When we have no memories, we can have no faith.

Zachor, remember, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, our exodus from Egypt. We remember by reliving it the way our parents and their parents did before them, all the way back to the Exodus. We believe, because we remember; we remember, because we live it. Our *Yomim Tovim*, Festivals, are not merely perpetuations of what once was, but rather opportunities for us to foster an identity with what we are remembering. Thus, when we sit in the *sukkah*, we sense that we are in the *Midbar*, Wilderness. This is how a Jew lives.

Z'chor yemos olam, "Remember the days of yore" (*Devarim* 32:7): How does one do this? *U'lemaan tesaper b'aznei bincha u'ben bincha eis ashe Hisalalti b'Mitzrayim*; "And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt" (*Shemos* 10:2). We remember by relating our memories from generation to generation. *Zachor*, remember, is active memory. *Zikaron* is passive remembrance. We believe in active, living memory, because, in this manner, the experience remains alive within us, imbuing us with *emunah*, faith, in the Almighty. By making the events of the past an active part of the present, they no longer remain simply a "memory." They become our experience.

Everything that we do is focused on building for the future. We have no idea how much impact our endeavors in the present can have on the future. *Horav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, zl (Lifrakim)*, applies this concept to a statement of *Chazal (Berachos 4b)*, *Eizehu ben Olam Habba, zeh ha'someich geulah l'tefillah*, "Who is assured of a place in the World to Come? It is one who juxtaposes redemption (recited after *Shema*) into the evening (*Shemoneh Esrai*) prayer." A number of commentaries have been written to this *Chazal. Rabbeinu Yonah* explains that one who engages in prayer immediately after mentioning the redemption indicates his recognition of the fact that the purpose of the redemption – and, by extension, all of the kindnesses that Hashem bestows upon us – is to enable us to serve Him. A person who has internalized this verity is certainly worthy of *Olam Habba*.

Rav Weinberg explains *geulah*, redemption, and *tefillah* in terms of their metaphorical symbolism. *Geulah* alludes to remembering the past, the redemption which Hashem wrought for us. *Tefillah* connotes the future, our aspirations, longings and objectives for the Final Redemption, when we will return to our home in Yerushalayim to serve the Almighty in the newly-rebuilt *Bais Hamikdash*. These hopes and

ambitions, personal and collective, are expressed in the various blessings we recite in the *Shemoneh Esrai*. We acknowledge that our future is a worthwhile reality only if it is concretized and anchored in the bedrock of the past. Otherwise, our prayer is a *tefillah yesomah*, orphaned prayer, without roots or stability. Those who reject the past, who only think about tomorrow – and want nothing at all to do with yesterday – lack this bulwark which offers foundation and provides security. They have no model, no exemplar to emulate, no one from whom to learn. They have no blueprint on which to pattern the future. They lack the basic understanding of the meaning of *geulah*. A redemption is not for the purpose of physical advancement. Redemption precurses the opportunity for the Jew to live as a free Jew in order to better serve Hashem. Unless one acknowledges this, he is not free; his redemption is left lacking.

As mentioned, one never knows what he can learn from the past, from individuals who are gone, whom he never knew. In some instances, a message is conveyed under extraordinary circumstances, unanticipated by the receiver and unintended by the sender. The following vignette provides a timely message (quoted in "Stories that Warm the Heart", Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky). A teenager went to Poland for his high school graduation trip, in which the students visited, among the surviving spiritual and physical edifices that bustled in Pre-World War II Europe, the dreaded Auschwitz concentration camp. While the market places and synagogues which were once filled with Jews produced a feeling of nostalgia concerning a bygone era, Auschwitz evoked feelings of dread, fear and animus. He had heard tales of the Holocaust from his grandparents, but, until he passed beneath the infamous gates with the deliberately cruel sign, "*Arbeit macht frei*, Labor makes you free," he did not feel the perverse irony of this sham entrance into one of the most heinous structures in history, a place synonymous with brutal torture, degradation and death.

Suddenly, all of the stories of the Holocaust took on a new reality, a profound meaning to which – upon seeing the buildings, their function and what they represented to him as a Jew – he could now relate. He thought about his brothers and sisters, torn from their homes, housed like animals for days in cattle cars, and then, those few who managed to survive the ordeal, arrived at this "campground" – *Arbeit macht frei*, to discover that survival for many led up to pain, deprivation and brutal death.

He moved on to the gas chambers, the infamous room which was the last place many Jews entered alive. It was the end of their line. He imagined them suffering through the throes of death, begging for another chance, an opportunity to live, raise a family, the promises they must have mouthed, pleading just to live. Sadly, for so many the answer was, "No". They were destined to die *Al Kiddush Hashem*, to glorify the Almighty, to live again in a better world. All of this coursed through his mind when he saw "it," the handprint on the wall.

At first it was not noticeable. Time does that. It was undoubtedly the remnants of the fingerprints of a human hand. It did not take a powerful imagination to conjure up the penetrating meaning of the handprint. This room was the holding room where the prisoners waited before going into the next room, the dreaded gas chamber. This room represented the final moments before the final abyss – death. This was the room where they prayed their last, where they offered their final heartfelt plea, begging, promising – anything – just as long as they could live a little bit longer. This room represented the significance of life, and the handprint pressed into the wall reflected how hard someone had fought to live!

It was at that moment that a happy go lucky, no-care-in-the-world teenager, confronted the reality of life. He had his whole life ahead of him. He was standing in a room in which the fragility of life could not be understated. He was having a grand time on a school trip, when he stopped to think about another Jew who, fifty years earlier, had been dragged to his death, a Jew who wanted so much to live that he pressed his hand firmly against the wall – so hard that, a half century later, one could see the imprint! He was brought to realize the relevance of each moment of life, how precious it was and how dear it should be.

At that moment, he vowed to alter his life's trajectory. From then on, he would utilize every G-d-given moment in the most meaningful manner.

Great story, but it is the addendum, *Horav Shimon Pincus'* comment, that is the game changer: "The man who grasped at that wall did more than gain a few more seconds of life – he changed another person's life completely, fifty years later! He accomplished more than he could have dreamed. It only goes to show that every moment of life is truly priceless."

Connecting with the past can change our future. One never realizes what "seizing the moment" can do for him in the present and for others in the future.

אם שנותי ברק חרבי ותאזן במשפט ידי

That I shall sharpen the shine of My sword and My hand shall grasp judgment. (32:41)

"My hand shall grasp judgment." *Chazal* (quoted by *Rashi*) derive from the language of this *pasuk* (concerning the concept of "grasping" judgment), "Not like the attributes of flesh and blood (mortals) is the attribute of Hashem. Once a human being shoots an arrow, once he releases the bow, he is unable to take it back. Hashem, however, shoots His arrows and has the power to retrieve them (before they hit their intended target). It is as if He holds them in His hand (*ochazom b'yado*)." *Rashi* is teaching us that no restrictions limit Hashem's power. He is not restricted in any way. This homiletic rendering of the *pasuk* imparts an ethical lesson: i.e., Hashem's power supersedes that of a doctor's diagnosis, it is never too late; we can, and should, hope for a reversal of a diagnosis. Prayer has awesome power. When we petition Hashem, we attest to this verity: "Hashem, I know that at any time You can retract the 'arrow.' I plead with You to do so. Allow my prayer, accompanied by remorse and repentance, to be the medium for achieving atonement." With Hashem, we always have hope.

We can also derive a *halachic* ramification from this *pasuk*. The *Talmud* (*Taanis* 29a) teaches that the conflagration of the *Bais Hamikdash* occurred – not on the ninth of *Av* – but rather, on the following day. This prompts Rabbi Yochanan to declare that had he been alive when the fast was established, he would have argued for it to be held on the tenth of *Av*. The *Kotzker Rebbe*, *zl*, makes a cogent observation based upon the passage in the *Talmud Bava Kamma* 22a, which states that *isho mishum chitzo*, "his fire is like his arrow," which means that when one starts a fire, it is like releasing an arrow from the bow: whatever the fire consumes is included in the original lighting of the flame. Similar to releasing an arrow, the deed is considered done, even though a short time has elapsed between the release of the arrow and its striking the target. Therefore, even though the *Bais Hamikdash* burned on the tenth of *Av*, the fire was started on the ninth. Since everything goes according to the beginning of the action that initiated the fire, how could Rabbi Yochanan contend that he would have

established the fast day for the tenth of *Av*? [This *halachic sevara*, logic, is consistent with the opinion of the *Nemukei Yosef*, who explains why one is allowed to light candles *Erev Shabbos*, which continue to burn on *Shabbos*. Since we hold *isho meshum chitzo*, the burning on *Shabbos* is considered to have all been completed with the initial lighting prior to *Shabbos*.]

Horav Baruch Shimon Shneerson, *zl*, quotes *Horav Moshe*, *zl*, *m'Boyan*, who employs the above *Rashi* to answer the *Kotzker's* question. *Isho mishum chitzo* applies to human action, because, once a person releases the arrow, it is unstoppable. He cannot prevent it from hitting its mark. Thus, the entire action is complete in his release of the arrow. Not so, Hashem, Who has control over everything, and, at any time, can stop the arrow's flight. Therefore, when the fire was lit on the ninth of *Av*, Hashem could have prevented it from burning on the next day. The fact that He did not is reason, according to Rabbi Yochanan, to declare the fast on that day.

Va'ani Tefillah

לך מעולם קיינו לך – *Mei'olam kivinu Lach*. (As long as we can remember) we have always hoped for You.

The *Chasam Sofer* (in his commentary to *Bava Basra* 73a) explains that life is like a raging sea, with the storm winds impelling the waves to come crashing down on us. What keeps us going? Hope in Hashem. Our hope that the Almighty will not abandon us and that He will come to our salvation has comforted and encouraged us to confront the worst situations resolutely, strong and committed in our belief and trust in Him. He says the *roshei teivos*, initials, of *mei'olam kivinu Lach*. *Mem – kuf, lamed = makeil*, stick. We just swipe at, wave away, the challenges. Perhaps we might add a homiletic rendering of *Yaakov Avinu's* plea to Hashem (as he was about to confront *Eisav*), *Ki b'makli avarti es ha'Yarden*; "For with my staff, I crossed the Jordan." Simply, this means "I came here with just about nothing – my staff – yet today I have grown to become *shnei machanos*, two camps." With the above understanding that *makeil/makli* represents *mei'olam kivinu Lach*, we suggest that *Yaakov* was saying (and, by inference, teaching us), *Ki b'makli avarti es ha'Yarden*, "I had nothing but *makli*, my hope in Hashem. This is how I confronted challenge. This is how I survived, to the point that today I have become two camps – all because of my hope."

זכר נשמת

רחל לאה בת ר' נח ע"ה

פריידיא בת ר' נח ע"ה

שרה אסתר בת ר' נח ע"ה

נספו במחנות ההסגר בשנות הזעם י"ג תשרי תש"ג

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה