

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Ha'azinu	12 Oct. 2019	13 Tishrei 5780	Deut. 32:1-52	2Sam. 22:1-51	John 6:26-35

This week's Torah portion *ha'azinu* which is the third in the continuum of the final four portions that conclude the book of Devarim. These four portions were given to the Yisraelites by Moshe on the day of his death. The majority of the portion is known as the song of *ha'azinu*. In parashah *vayelech*, the very last verse (Devarim 31:30) the Torah itself is called 'song.'

Moshe's entire life's work was the song of the Torah as he calls upon the very heaven and earth to give witness to this song. Thus, *Ha'azinu* is a song of all creation. It also is a prophecy of the future as Moshe stated in last week's parashat. It will serve as a testimony to Yisrael regarding that which will befall them in the future.

The song contains rebuke, chastising, visions of the future, and promises of future consolation. Moshe warns Yisrael that he calls heaven and earth to witness that they have entered into this covenant and that there is no turning back. The song essentially portrays the cycle of the nation of Yisrael's history and it concludes everything that will transpire in the future.

After the song, Moshe exhorts Yisraelites again to be careful to observe the Torah, saying to them, "Set your hearts to all the words with which I warn you today, so that you command your children to guard to do all the Words of this Torah. For it is not a worthless Word for you, because it is your life, and by this Word you prolong your days on the soil which you pass over the Yarden to possess." (ibid, 46, 47). Then, 'on that same day,' (v. 48) Hashem commands Moshe to ascend to mount Abarim, that is Mount Nebo, to look down on the land of Yisrael and to die there.

The song of *ha'azinu* was constructed of 70 stanzas. According to the tradition, this portion was sung by the Levites in the Holy Temple during the *musaf* (additional) service every Shabbat. The Levites would divide the song into six parts and read one part of the song every Shabbat, finishing it once every six weeks.

The parashah begins with "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak. And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." Another aspect of understanding the Torah: Are we listening and do we hear the Words of the Torah? The word of Hashem is literally constantly speaking to all of us, resonating, in every situation, and to everyone, and through everyone, at all times. And it is up to us to listen, to hear what Hashem is telling us. We need to know that we are always connected to Him and that He is always speaking to us, for He never removes Himself from us.

As we discussed, the parashat *Vayelech* is that the worst thing that can happen to us is when we feel that He has taken Himself away from us, or and we feel distanced from Him. The sages teach that every single day a *bat kol* (a Heavenly voice), an announcement, goes forth from Mt. Sinai that exhorts us to repent. Meaning, Hashem announces every day from Mt. Sinai, and He calls us back to Him.

But we don't really hear it. The Baal Shem Tov' comments on this teaching. He asks rhetorically, "If we cannot hear that *bat kol*, then why does it go forth...what good does it do?" He answered that even though on a conscious level we do not hear it, we can hear it on a subconscious level. And it is from this deep subliminal voice that we hear within our beings, that thoughts of repentance are born. This is an example of the voice of Hashem that speaks to us all the time, in every situation. Our goal is to hear this voice, to accept it, and not to banish it.

The sages teach us that man is a composite. A portion of him is hewn from heavenly material and the other portion from earthly material, his animal nature. And this verse alludes to the necessity of man to see to it that all of his components heed the word of Hashem. 'O heavens, and I will speak' refers to his upper – so to speak heavenly organs – his heart and his brain while 'let the earth hear the words of my mouths' refers to those components of his being that are constantly pulling him down towards physicality and desire. Hashem is constantly speaking to both. This is the true significance of these words, "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth"

And these words also refer to every moment of our lives. There are times when we are in a higher, expanded state of consciousness, that is when we are on the level of heaven. During those times a man feels that Hashem is illuminating the darkness for him, and he finds himself in a world of light. He feels he can find Hashem in everything. And there are other times when he feels himself such a prisoner of his own earthliness, he feels everything has closed all around him. Then 'let the earth hear...' for Hashem is always speaking with us, urging us, beckoning to us to return, to come closer, and not to be afraid.

The Yom Kippur is a time of renewal. We were sealed into the Book of Life. And now, Sukkot is a time of joy. On Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles), we dwell in the Sukkah (Lev. 23:42) which represents the protective shadow of the Divine Presence. Sitting within our "temporary booths," we recommit our relationships with Him. Sukkot is the time of true joy, as the Torah states, "And you shall rejoice on your festival...and you shall be only joyous" (Deut. 17:13,15). And it is this true joy, the closeness to Hashem as King David testifies in his psalm, "But as for me, nearness to Hashem is good." (Psa. 73:28).

After the incredible experience of cleansing and the recalibration of life, the opportunity that was given to us by the High Holy days, how do we make newly found and its commitment real and lasting, to carry our renewed commitment to living life to the fullest, attached to Hashem into the year? We want to rededicate ourselves, rededicate our home, as King David prayed in Psalm 27:4, "To dwell in the house of YHWH." So, we leave our homes, and go into a temporary dwelling, the sukkah which is permeated with presence of Hashem like the Temple.

The biblical calendar which is Hashem's calendar of sacred seasons, is a Divine plan. It is a schedule where we were given the capability of connecting to a network of unimaginable Heavenly resources. Each festival arrives in its respective season. As the season change, it is when man needs to find a way of renewing himself, his belief, and his spiritual strengths, the festival knocks upon his door (Song 5:4).

The unique observances and commandments associated with each festival are the vessels which hold the radiance of Divine light. They are the tools, custom-made to fit the needs of each season by the Creator who created man and knows exactly what he lacks.

Therefore, Sukkot is the source of true joy. Hashem willing, we have been judged favorably and sealed for life. Now it is the time for a whole new beginning. This is the uniqueness of the festival of Sukkot. The booths symbolize our rock-steady, unshakable faith in the One Elohim of Yisrael. As the days are getting shorter and colder during the autumn, most people spend their times indoors. It is at this time that we move away from the comforts and security of home, and takes up residence in temporary dwellings, thanking Hashem for the Harvest in this season and recalling His constant, enveloping presence. This is the knowledge of true joy!