

**Wembley Synagogue**

האזינו

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Ha'azinu**The Song of Ha'azinu**

The Maharal of Prague and the Mezritcher Maggid stressed the importance of reciting the Song of Ha'azinu and knowing it by heart with the cantillation notes, for, they said, it purifies the mind and heart and leads to longevity and success in business affairs.

The Song of Ha'azinu was chanted by the Levi'im throughout the year in the Temple when the Korban Mussaf of Shabbat was brought (Rosh Hashana 31a)

Ha'azinu is the last Sidra of the Torah that is read on a Shabbat (since the Sidra of Vezot Haberacha is read on Simchat Torah, which never occurs on a Shabbat). Thus Ha'azinu is effectively, the "conclusion" of the Shabbat Torah reading cycle.

הָאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבָּרָה - Listen, O heavens, and I will speak, and may the earth hear the words of my mouth (32:1). In the song that Moshe sang, he turned to the heaven directly and told it to listen, but to the earth he spoke indirectly. Why? The Gemara Sanhedrin 23a relates that the honourable people of Jerusalem would not sign on a document unless they knew who was signing alongside them. Based upon this it can be suggested that Moshe was addressing the heaven the whole time and told the heaven to listen to him and be a witness, and then he added to the heaven that it should know that the earth will be the other witness. (Source: The Parsha Anthology)

Moshe addressed the heavens with *Give Ear* while to the earth he said *hear*. Isaiah transposed the terms saying *Hear O heavens and give ear O earth* (Isaiah 1:2) Sifre explains that לְהִאָזִין - 'to give ear' refers to listening from close up while לְשָׁמֹעַ refers to listening from a distance. Moshe who figuratively lived in heaven, addressed the heavens as "a neighbour" and therefore said "Give ear O heavens." Isaiah, on the other hand, who was comparatively distant from heaven, said, "Hear O heavens." (Rashi) Listening is an art. Two people can hear the same thing yet understand totally different messages. Thus the Kotzker Rebbe rendered the verse "Listen (with) heavenly ears."

יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטָר לְקֹחֵי - May my teaching drop like the rain; may my utterance flow like the dew (32:2) Words of admonition are analogous to rain. When rain falls on trees and plants, growth is not noticeable immediately. It takes time for the rain to have a visible effect. The same is true with admonition. Very often when we try to improve a person, we may not see an improvement immediately, but Rabbi Bunim of Parshischo tells us that if we are sincere, eventually we will notice an improvement. (Source: Love your Neighbour)

כִּי שָׁם ה' אֶקְרָא הָבוּ גִדְל לְאֵלֵינוּ - Give praise to our G-d as I call out the name of Hashem. (32:3) The Gemara learns from this verse that one is obligated to recite a blessing before studying Torah (Berachot 21). We must understand why Moshe is first reciting the blessing now, after teaching the Torah to the Jewish people for close to forty years. The purpose of reciting a blessing is to acknowledge that everything comes from Hashem. Until now, Moshe acted as an intermediary when he taught the Torah. So to speak, Hashem was speaking to the Jewish people through him. Thus, there had been no need to relate Moshe's Torah to Hashem by making a blessing since it was as if Hashem Himself were speaking. However, now in Parshat Ha'azinu Moshe was speaking for himself. He therefore needed to recite the blessing.

כִּי שָׁם ה' אֶקְרָא הָבוּ גִדְל לְאֵלֵינוּ - Give praise to our G-d as I call out the name of Hashem. (32:3) The Chida notes that the verse has seven words, an allusion to the seven days on which the Torah is read: Monday, Thursday, Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, Chol ha Moed, Festivals and Yom Kippur. The words have a total of twenty five letters, alluding to the different numbers of people called to the Torah: three on weekdays and Shabbat Mincha, four on Rosh Chodesh and Chol Ha-Moed, five on Festivals, six on Yom Kippur and seven on Shabbat

הַצּוֹר תְּמִים פֶּעֶלָה - The Rock (G-d), perfect is His work, for all his ways are just. G-d who is faithful, there is no injustice (32:4) Given that G-d is perfect in all His ways, it follows that He does no injustice. The words, "there is no injustice" seem superfluous. This can be understood in the light that G-d's judgment is calculated down to the last detail. When a criminal is sentenced in an earthly court system, his/her close family and friends endure great suffering. The sentencing rarely takes this into consideration. However, when G-d passes judgment, "there is no injustice." G-d formulates the punishment so that no one will endure even incidental pain or anguish unless they deserve to have it for themselves. Thus, only of G-d's judgment can it truly be said "there is no injustice" (Source: R' Yisroel Salanter - P'ninim MiShulchan Govoha)

כִּי חֶלֶק ה' עִמּוֹ - For Hashem's portion is His people; Jacob is the measure of His inheritance (32:9) The Midrash Tanchuma (Tana D'vei Eliyahu Ch.1) lists all the attributes of Hashem, and one of them is that He is content with His lot. This perplexed Rav Chaim of Volozhin. Since the whole world belongs to Hashem, to what does "His lot" refer? His mentor, the Vilna Gaon, explained, "The Torah refers to the Jews as being "the lot" of Hashem. The intent of the Midrash is that Hashem is always satisfied with the Jewish people no matter on what level they are, and He will never forsake them."

אֶסְתִּירָה פְּנֵי מַהֵם - I shall hide My face from them and see what their end will be. (32:20) What would be the end of the Jewish people if, G-d forbid, Hashem would hide His face and not look after their welfare? There is no question in anyone's mind what would happen with the Jewish people, G-d forbid, if Hashem were to stop taking an interest in them, and it is unnecessary for the Torah to raise such a question. However, Hashem is expressing His infinite love for the Jewish people and is saying that even in a time when it appears as if אֶסְתִּירָה פְּנֵי מַהֵם — "I shall hide My face from them" — yet, "erah" — I will look after their welfare and attend to "acharitam" — "their end" — i.e. everything be well for them in the future.

וְהוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן נֹחַן - And Hoshea son of Nun (32:44) Moshe changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Yehoshua before the episode of the spies. If so, why here is he referred to as Hoshea? Hashem changed the name of Avraham's wife from Sarai to Sarah. This occurred one year before Yitzchak was born. Sarah was then 89 years old. Sarah lived for 127 years and thus her name change was for 38 years. The Gemara in Sanhedrin 107a relates that the letter *yud* which was taken from Sarah's name complained to Hashem. Hashem therefore had the *yud* added to Yehoshua's name. This change took place in the second year of the Exodus from Egypt. At this point in time, when Moshe was addressing the Jews, it was 38 years from the Exodus (See Rashi Devarim 2:17). If so, the present manner of writing the name can be understood. Since the adding of the *yud* to Yehoshua's name was meant to rectify its being taken away from Sarah, it only had to remain in place for the length of time it was missing. Thus the name only had to be changed for 38 years. Now that 38 years were up, the name reverted back to the original (Source: Chanukat Hatorah)

כִּי מֵרֶחֶק תִּרְאֶה אֶת הָאָרֶץ - You will view the land from far off, and (to) there you will not come, to the land that I am giving to the Children of Israel (32:52) The Torah has already told us that Hashem is giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. Why is it repeated here? The Zohar says that although Moshe was prevented from entering the land at this time, he will ultimately enter Israel during the time of the Final Redemption, when many of the dead will be revived. This is indicated in the verse by linking the ban to a present-tense reference of the land, "the land that I am giving to the Children of Israel."

Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 7.03pm



Shabbat ends: 8.03pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is produced by Chazan Anthony Wolfson
 Online at: http://www.wembleysynagogue.org/html/sedra_notes.html