



# Parshas Ha'azinu

For the week ending 8 Tishrei 5757  
20 & 21 September 1996

## Overview

**A**lmost all of *Ha'azinu* is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world, and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation – that Hashem “pulls the strings” of world events so that Bnei Yisrael can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. Hashem’s kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods, and indulge in all kinds of depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental – that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were *His* enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

## Insights

### GARDENING - JEWISH STYLE

**“May My teaching drop like rain, may My utterance flow like the dew” (32:1)**

A violent storm. Winds howling. The rain lashes the ground. It seems as though the earth is being torn apart by the weather. And yet without this heavy downpour, nothing will grow properly. For if only the dew waters the ground, the heat of the sun will burn and shrivel the seeds.

Only if heavy rains water the ground will the dew do its job of bringing forth the flowering blossoms.

This is the way of Torah. If a person labors in the study of *halacha*, filling himself with the methodology and torrent of Talmudic logic, even though it may seem that he is struggling against a deluge, he will eventually bring forth healthy and beautiful flowers.

He may feel storm-driven and pounded by the rains. Nevertheless, the fruits of his labors will also include the esoteric parts of Torah, the ‘dew’ of *Aggadita* - the homiletic teachings. They will flower in his hands.

However, if he concerns himself only with the ‘dew’ of the Torah, the *Aggadita*, then in the withering ‘sun’, the bright lights of secular cynicism, his acquisition of Torah will wither and die, lacking the deep rain to nourish its roots.

*Based on the Netziv, as heard from Rabbi Pinchas Kantrovitz*

### DIVORCE - JEWISH STYLE

In times to come, when Israel is redeemed from among the nations and Hashem gathers us to Him, Israel will say “Master of the Universe, it’s written in Your Torah that when a man divorces his wife and banishes her from his life, should the woman marry again and then divorce this second husband, she may never again return to her first husband.

“You banished us to amongst the nations of the world. How is it possible for You to take us back?”

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

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

*(Continued on reverse)*

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(Continued from first page)

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

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

*Chanukas Hatorah*

MARRIAGE - JEWISH STYLE

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

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

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

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

*Adapted from Rabbi Moshe Shapiro*

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

### A BURNING SENSATION

An unbelievable sight. A young fellow with all the visible signs of an Orthodox Jew walks into MacTreife's Burger Bar and orders a cheese-burger! He then proceeds to eat it in full view of everyone.

Later he suffers tremendous heart-burn from the indigestible fast-food. Much later however, he suffers an even greater 'burn' in the spiritual department...

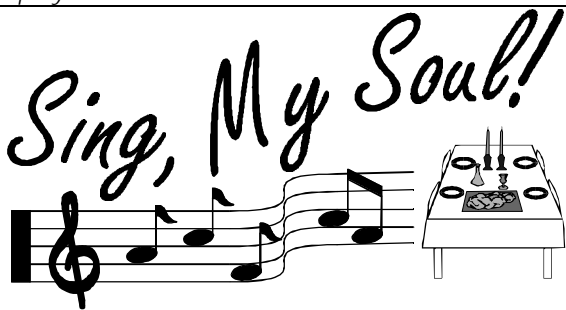
The Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is called *Shabbos Shuva* - *The Shabbos of Return*. The name is taken from the first verse of the Haftorah "Return O Israel to Hashem for you have stumbled in your iniquity..."

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

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

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

*Heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner*



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS  
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE  
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

RIBON KOL HAOLAMIM - ohnkugv kf iucr  
"MASTER OF ALL THE WORLDS..."

I shall implore Your glowing countenance ...  
to find favor and understanding in your eyes  
and in the eyes of all men ...

אחלה פניך המאירים  
למצא חן ושכל טוב בעיניך  
... ובעיני כל בני אדם

achaley fonecha ham'irim...  
limtzo chayn v'saychel tov b'aynecho  
uv'aynay chol b'nay odom

In reference to the Torah's account that "G-d blessed the seventh day" (Bereishis 2:3) the midrash explains that He blessed it with a glowing countenance – a man's countenance glows on Shabbos in a way that it does not during the week.

This has been suggested as the reason why we are able to say "sheva brachos" at the Shabbos meals even if no new guest is present as is required in the weekday meals honoring newlyweds in the week following their wedding. On the Shabbos everyone is considered to be "a new face" justifying the repetition of these blessings.

We therefore implore Hashem to bestow some of His glowing countenance upon us so that our new, shining personalities will find favor in His eyes and everyone who sees us.

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