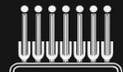




Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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22 Sep 2018 Parshas Ha'azinu 13 Tishrei 5779

Hanging on by a Rope by: Rochel Holzkenner

The prime minister of Israel and the president of the United States are in a meeting in Washington, D.C. The prime minister notices an unusually fancy phone on a side table in the president's private chambers.

"What is that phone for?" he asks.
"It's my direct line to G-d."

The president insists that the prime minister try it out, and indeed he is connected to G-d. The prime minister holds a lengthy discussion with Him.

After hanging up, the prime minister says, "Thank you very much. I want to pay for my phone charges." The president, of course, refuses. The prime minister is steadfast, and finally the president gives in. He checks the counter on the phone and says: "All right, the charges are \$100,000." The prime minister gladly signs a check.

A few months later, the president is in Jerusalem on an official visit. In the prime minister's chambers he sees a phone identical to his, and learns it also is a direct line to G-d. The president remembers he has an urgent matter, and asks if he can use the phone. The prime minister gladly agrees, hands him the phone, and the president chats away.

After hanging up, the president offers to pay for the phone charges. The prime minister looks at the phone counter and says: "One shekel." The president looks surprised: "Why so cheap?"

The prime minister smiles: "Local call."

On Rosh Hashanah, I think of G-d as within earshot's distance of my whispering lips. These thoughts help elicit a more authentic prayer from me.

It is not by coincidence that the reading of Haazinu, the portion that is always read in proximity to the High Holy Days, explains our connection to G-d as that of being bound by rope! Deuteronomy 32:9 reads: "Because G-d's portion is His people; Jacob is the rope of His inheritance."

The analogy of a rope, whose upper end is bound above and the lower below, is compared to the soul, where the upper end is bound above and the lower end is enclothed in the body, explains Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi in the Tanya.

There are many profound implications, and lessons, of the rope imagery described in Haazinu:

- a) Just as a rope is comprised of many strands, our relationship with G-d is multifaceted, multisensory, and its complexity is what gives it strength.
- b) Each of the 613 mitzvot is a thread of a greater rope that keeps us intensely connected to G-d. Unfortunately, neglecting a mitzvah causes some strands to disconnect and the entire rope to weaken.
- c) A tug on the bottom of a rope will bring down the top of the rope, too. The implication is that everything I do affects G-d Himself. He is the other end of my rope. When I fall, I drag Him down.

Now, that last note is a frightening thought. It

Calendar

Welcome to our Guest Chazan **Velvy Bokov.**

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:45 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ **Halacha of the Week Shiur:**
Rabbi Goldman: Laws of Sukkos
- ◆ Mincha: 5:25 pm
- ◆ Shabbos Ends: 6:35 pm
- Sunday 23 Sep - Erev Sukkos**
- ◆ Candles: 5:46 pm (Blessings for Yom Tov & Shehecheyanu)
- ◆ Evening Services: 6:00 pm
- ◆ Eat in Sukkah tonight

One moment. Isn't our task as human beings and as Jews to reveal G-dliness in the world? Surely we *have* to be immersed in the material concerns of daily life? The Chassidic answer is: "yes, but they do not have to get you down!" Indeed we are active in the world. But *at the same time* we have a close affinity with Heaven. Hence Moses' words are directly relevant for us too. We are active in the world but, in a deep sense, we are not limited by it.

This very idea is expressed in the approaching Sukkot festival. The *sukkah* represents our everyday home and everyday life. At the same time, it is a spiritual realm. One of the teachings of Sukkot is that yes, we are in a material world. But at every step we have the power to make it holy.

Live & Laugh

Lady: Hi, I'd like to get the detailed condition on Mary Smith. I'd like to know exactly what tests have been done, and how they came out. I'd like to know her current condition and the prognosis the Doctor gave.

Nurse: Well, that's a very detailed question, ma'am. Let me bring up her file on the computer here.. Ah, well, she's had three heart tests done in the past few days and they've all had very positive results. The doctor expects to take the heart monitor off of her tomorrow morning and she's expected to eat full meals starting this evening. If all goes well, the doctor expects to discharge her tomorrow afternoon around 2pm.

Lady: Oh, that's all very, very good news, I'm glad to hear it!

Nurse: My, you must be a very close friend or relative of Mary Smith; I can tell from your reaction!

Lady: Close relative, my foot! I *am* Mary Smith and my doctor doesn't tell me anything!

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Men, Women & the Messianic Era

Rebbetzin Estee Stern
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makes G-d seem vulnerable. But according to Kabbalah, G-d apportioned some of His creative life force to holy creations, called *kedushah*; and some of those powers he “threw down over His back” to vitalize the currents that run antithetical to Him, the *sitra achara*. When I use my G-d-given energy to behave inappropriately, I am actually re-appropriating G-d’s life force by transferring the holy energy invested in me to the realm of *sitra achara*.

And finally:

d) G-d is with us even when we have fallen. The rope ensures that we are never in crisis alone. Just like a parent who sits compassionately with a filthy child, G-d is pained by our struggles and eagerly awaits our return to Him.

Parsha Pointers

*Ha’azinu: Artscroll Chumash pg 1100;
Living Torah pg 1025*

The greater part of the Torah reading of *Haazinu* ("Listen In") consists of a 70-line "song" delivered by Moses to the people of Israel on the last day of his earthly life.

Calling heaven and earth as witnesses, Moses exhorts the people to "*Remember the days of old / Consider the years of many generations / Ask your father, and he will recount it to you / Your elders, and they will tell you*" how G-d "found them in a desert land," made them a people, chose them as His own, and bequeathed them a bountiful land. The Song also warns against the pitfalls of plenty -- "*Yeshurun grew fat and kicked / You have grown fat, thick and rotund / He forsook G-d who made him / And spurned the Rock of his salvation*" -- and the terrible calamities that would result, which Moses describes as G-d "hiding His face." Yet in the end, he promises, G-d will avenge the blood of His servants and be reconciled with His people and land.

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The Parshah concludes with G-d's instruction to Moses to ascend the summit of Mount Nebo, from which he will behold the Promised Land before dying on the mountain. "For you shall see the land opposite you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the children of Israel."

Enduring Testament

By Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg

In this week's Torah reading, Moses calls the heavens and the earth as testimony to the eternal bond between G-d and the Jewish people.

Why not gather ordinary people as witnesses—a somewhat more normal method than using such seemingly abstract witnesses?

As the commenter Rashi explains, the heavens and earth endure generation after generation. Rather than using human witnesses who will eventually pass on and the testimony will be lost, the idea is to have an eternal testament.

We see this in reality. Even many tens of generations from Sinai, not that much has changed. We still follow the same Torah, the same laws, traditions and customs, preserving this eternal bond and passing it on intact to the next generation. It is all the more impressive since, as someone remarked recently, G-d spoke to the Jewish people thousands of years ago at Mount Sinai, and He hasn't spoken to them collectively since, yet we still do what He told them to then!

The Ability to Find Yourself

By Chana Weisberg

The other day, I misplaced my ring. I searched and searched where I thought it might have been lost, but couldn't find it. Somehow, it just disappeared. Later on in the week, I found it. Inexplicably, without looking, as I went about my regular errands, it just reappeared. I have no idea how it got to that destination, but I was happy I had it back.

Think about the things that you have lost and found in your life. Most often, when we refer to a “find,” we refer to a lost object that we are now reunited with. But sometimes, we can also “find” ourselves.

It might be on a secluded mountain top, or we might just wake up one day to the realization that

a part of us—a new talent, awareness or perspective—has surfaced. What was previously completely obscured now becomes clear. What changed? It's hard to put our finger on it because it's not something that we worked on in any orderly kind of manner. It's not something that we scheduled; rather, it's a realization and an understanding that has been bestowed on us. We found a missing part of ourselves.

In the terminology of the Talmud (Sanhedrin 97a), a “find” happens without planning: *b'hesach hadaas*, “in absence of awareness.” When we “find” something, we usually mean that an object of value comes to us unexpectedly.

That's why it is interesting that this word is used in this week's Torah portion to describe the Jewish people's faith in G-d.

“G-d found them in a desert land and in a desolate, howling wasteland. He encompassed them and bestowed understanding upon them; He protected them as the pupil of His eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:10)

Rashi explains this verse as praise for the Jewish people: *“G-d found them faithful to Him in a desert land, for they accepted His Torah, His sovereignty and His yoke upon themselves.”*

Rashi continues: *An arid, desolate land, a place of howling jackals and ostriches. Yet even there, Israel followed their faith. They did not say to Moses, “How can we go out into the deserts, a place of drought and desolation?”*

The Jewish people's faith in G-d transcended structure, order or limitations. They were committed to loyally follow G-d to an unknown destination. Similarly, G-d's devotion to us mirrors ours, and His love extends beyond any system or rational.

Similar to a “find,” our faith is not something planned for, and is far deeper than any rational thinking. This week, the Jewish people will stand united in whatever location they may be to celebrate Rosh Hashanah. As we “crown” G-d as our King, we pledge to continue to be committed to follow G-d's ways, and we ask G-d to reciprocate His devotion to us.

Wishing you and all the Jewish people a year of peace, health, prosperity and loyalty to our

mission of making our world a more G-dly place.

Spirit and Matter

By Dr Tali Loewenthal

Our lives tend to be divided between spirit and matter, the sacred and the everyday.

The dichotomy between spirit and matter, or Heaven and Earth, is also expressed at the beginning of this week's Torah reading, *Haazinu*, which takes the form of a long poem. Moses is the leader of the Jewish people, filled with love for them, yet also seeing with pain the long and tortuous history they would experience. He warns them about the mistakes they might make in their relationship with G-d. Speaking dramatically to the Jewish people, Moses begins by addressing Heaven and Earth. Rashi tells us that he was calling them as witnesses to his words of warning which follow.

Moses says, "Give ear, Heavens, and I will speak; listen, Earth, to the words of my mouth." Hebrew is a deeply poetic language which makes it difficult to translate into English. It has nuances which the English sometimes cannot convey at all. The Sages comment that the word *haazinu*, translated as “give ear” (*ozen* means ear) suggests a close proximity. If someone is standing next to you, you can speak right into their ear. By contrast, the word translated as "listen" suggests a greater distance, as if calling to someone who is far away.

Moses uses the closer term when he addresses the Heavens, and the more distant term when speaking to the earth. The Sages point out that Moses was a very spiritual person, and, therefore, in his case the Heavens were very close. By contrast, as far as he was concerned, the earth and all material concerns were further away.

Now, what about us? Does the Torah reveal this aspect of Moses just to impress us with how holy he was, or is there a teaching which is also relevant for our lives?

There is a Chassidic idea that within each individual in the Jewish people there is a spark of Moses. This is our deepest aspect. In relation to this inner Moses, in our case too, the Heaven is closer than the Earth.