

Ha'azinu -Rabbi Lerner - September 25, 2011

At the end of Vayelech in 31:14-20, Hashem appears to Moshe in a cloud in the Ohel Moed and says to Moshe that the day of his death is near, and that after his death the people will stray from the derech, worship other gods, and will make Hashem angry. Hashem will respond by hiding his face, and horrible tragedies will occur; the Jews will say that Hashem has abandoned them. Hashem then commands Moshe to write this song for the people to remember as a testimony that what happens to them is their own fault for abandoning the bris. Later, Moshe will say this to the people, that since now while he is alive they have rebelled many times, so they will certainly rebel in the future when he is gone. **Netziv**: now when the shechinah is so evident during their travels through the desert, with all of the open miracles that sustained them they still sinned, in the future when most of these miracles will cease and God will not be as openly evident on a daily basis, they will certainly stray - it is a guarantee that they will go off the derech; it is a Kal Vachomer. So both Hashem and Moshe warn the people that it will be their fault when they no longer follow the commandments. This is what Ha'azinu is all about.

Kli Yakar: Why call upon the heavens and the earth to bear witness? There is a famous interpretation of why during creation the sixth day is called Yom Hashisi - it refers to the sixth day of Sivan - the day the Torah will be given. It indicates that the entire creation will depend on the giving and acceptance of the Torah - if the Jews will not accept the Torah, the world will be returned to a condition of Tohu Vavohu. Hashem created the whole world only for the sake of Torah, for the Jews to accept it and teach it. Without the Torah, there is no meaning to the world. So, the fact that the world still exists gives proof that the Jews had accepted the Torah. This shira begins this way because the heavens and earth are direct opposites: the heavens represent the spiritual world, the earth the opposite; what synthesizes them and creates a harmony between them is the Jew who follows the Torah - we are physical but we have souls that are spiritual - we integrate the two by following the Torah; we unite the two. So here, we are saying that the heavens and the earth really should not exist because they are competing opposites - it is only the Torah that holds them together. It is Torah that nourishes the world.

Ramban: Is this whole parsha sad and gloomy, just saying that there is no hope for us? Absolutely not! In pasukim 32:26-27 it says that Hashem said He will scatter them and cause their memory to cease from man, if not for the fact that there would be a great Chilul Hashem. What guarantees our eternal existence is not our withholding from sin - that we have failed. What prevents Hashem from destroying us is that the goyim would take credit for our end. We deserve to be in exile forever, if it were up to Midas Hadin; but because of the arrogance of the enemy, we continue to exist. We have depleted all of the zechus avos - our bank account is overdrawn - the only thing that saves us is the awesome name of God. This is confirmed by Yechezkel: *I will gather you from amongst all of the nations of the world and will sanctify My name in the eyes of the goyim. I am doing this for the sake of My name, despite your horrible ways. I must do this for the sake of My name so it should not be desecrated in the eyes of the goyim.* We see this later in the shira in 32:40-42 - while seemingly all bleak in this song, there is no call for teshuva in this song as there was in the last parsha - the song says nothing about our accepting the Torah or the greatness of our origins and holy forefathers - it is just the bad that will happen to us, but at the end there is no necessary condition for teshuva - we will sin and yet still survive; God will come to us with anger, but He will never destroy us because of His great name.

Rabbeinu Bachya: why would this destroy His great name? For the world to reach the height that God envisioned, it had to be through the actions of the Jewish people who were selected to be the salvation of the world after the failure of mankind during the first 20 generations. God's project cannot fail in the end, His plan must be fulfilled, and He placed all of "His eggs in one basket" when he selected the descendants of Avraham to be the ones to carry out and complete His plan.

32:3: **Rav Alpert**: quotes **Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel** in this famous pasuk of *Ki Shem Hashem Ekrah Havu Godel Leilokaynu* - he says "Woe to the wicked ones of the world who mention the holy name of God in a heretical way, as opposed to Moshe, the great teacher of Bnai Yisrael, who could not bring himself to mention the holy name of God until he prepared himself at the beginning of this parsha - if you count the number of letters from the beginning of Haazinu until the beginning of this pasuk, it is 85 letters - then he would first mention the name of Hashem. Why 85? Because that is the gematria for *Pe*, mouth. If one is going to invoke God's name, you must first prepare yourself. We must do the same, we must prepare ourselves before mentioning Hashem's name; this is why we say this pasuk before Shemona Esrai.

Rav Alpert: the name Hashem is midas harachamim. In this pasuk it is strange because we call out the name of Hashem in midas harachamim to then ascribe greatness to the name of God in midas hadin. Why? We beg Hashem for mercy in His name of Rachamim - that is what we would want. But God is also Din; His stronger, right arm is Rachamim, left arm Din. We appeal to Hashem that His right side should predominate, but it doesn't always work that way. We call out for Hashem to use His Rachamim, but we have to also thank God for his Din as well; this is the pasuk of Baruch Dayan Emes, of thanking Hashem for His judgment as well as His mercy.

Meshech Chachmah: the essence of this pasuk tells us that the ideal way that Hashem wants the world to operate is in a natural way - that is the best way for the world to function. Rabbi Yishmael says we learn from Shema that we must plant, harvest, and work - we must work when we have to, but also learn when we can; we have to earn a living and learn as well. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai says that we should not work and waste time; we should only learn, and God will provide for us. The Gemorrah says that many did like Rabbi Yishmael and succeeded; many did like Rabbi Shimon and did not succeed. Only those who are superb at the highest level can succeed by exclusive learning. This pasuk can be saying the same: the name of God who does miracles is the one who you will call out to, but Moshe would prefer to live in the world of nature and succeed there. When we live the life God wants, and we work and keep the mitzvos, three times a year when we go to Yerushalayim, God will protect the land from outsiders. When we do it right, Hashem will have the world function properly to help us; this kind of a life where the two are balanced is the spiritual life; it is more precious in God's eyes than Olam Habah. This world, a combination of spiritual and physical, is the ultimate, what God prefers. Hashem will appear with miracles but we must function within nature.

32:44: Why at the end of chumash is Yehoshuah called Hoshea? His name was changed by Moshe at the time of the meraglim - why use this old name again now? **Kli Yakar**: Yehoshuah's name was changed because Moshe wanted Hashem to save him from the evil influence of the spies; this was necessary only while that generation lived; now that there is no more danger and the meraglim are gone, he was able to use his real name again.

Rav Yaacov Kaminetsky: the **Rashbam** says that his original name was Hosheah, but when appointed to a position of greatness, his name was changed; here, now that he is about to take over as leader, his true core is still the old humble Hosheah - there is not ounce of

arrogance; he is just like his rebbi, Moshe. He learned from Moshe what real leadership is all about - in his own eyes he remained the old Hosheah; he had no pretenses.