

Parshat Haazinu 5779

Haazinu is part of the final legacy of Moshe Rabbeinu and the lynchpin of the entire Torah where the destiny of Am Yisroel until the end of days is poetically and prophetically depicted.

צדיק וישר הוא (Devarim 32:4). The Netziv comments on this posuk in the introduction to sefer Bereishis in HaEmek Dovor that these words are an acceptance of the judgement of the destruction of bayis sheini and imply that we deserved it because Hashem is צדיק וישר righteous and straight. The avos were called yesharim, sefer bereishis is called sefer haYashar. The Netziv says that a person could be a tzadik a chosid and immersed in Torah and yet still not be yashar. Yashrus means dealing with all others in a straight honest way with mercy and compassion eg Avraham Aveinu loved even the lowest people of Sodom and prayed for their survival. It would have been very easy to accept the decision of Hashem and to contemplate that one's mission is closer to being accomplished now that Hashem is kindly removing lots of Reshaim from the world! But Avraham Aveinu was not thinking of himself, being yashar he had true concern for others even the wicked. We should try to bring others close or at least daven for them rather than view them as enemies. At the time of Bayis Sheini, there was hatred between people because Hashem was being served in different ways and people could not understand or accept that there are many different valid paths to Truth.

The Chofetz Chaim says this diversity is echoed in the Gemara (Taanis 31) that says that in future all the Tzaddikim will form a circle equidistant from Hashem at its centre. Each tzaddik will also dance around and occupy the positions of every other Tzaddik, for in the future world every Jew will be able to identify and incorporate all paths. In this world however, perfection is reached when each group follows its own unique path whilst acknowledging and respecting differences. But what about those outside the circle? Sometimes it is necessary to give reproof to achieve perfection. Chazal say (Bereishis Rabba 54:3) that any peace that does not include tochacha is not peace. But the tochacha must be out of love and concern and directed to behaviour and not to individuals or groups.

In Hakesav Vehakabbalah, Rav Mecklenberg explains on Devarim 16:21) that the source for the word ashirah is yashar straight. Rav S. R. Hirsch explains the word ashirah with its apparent root א ש ר to imply growth and striving. (Shemos 34:13)

Shira, song, requires diverse elements balanced in harmony. The entire Torah is called a Shira. It is our song and magnificent music is created by being yashar and not pulled off track or over emphasizing one derech at the expense of others e.g. my mitzvos and personal 'spiritual score' versus concern for others etc. Being in tune with life means not compromising your yashrus וישמן ישרון ויבעט (Devarim 32:15)

The Netziv writes that Torah possesses the nature and essential character of poetry and is accompanied by a trope. We all know the difference between poetry and prose. The essential subject matter is not set forth plainly in poetry as it is in prose. Additional explanations are vital to elucidate the hidden allusions condensed into each expressionsuch is the nature of Torahalthough readable on a literal or 'simple' level; it is like poetry because it is so compact yet so powerfully profound. Thus Torah, a Shira, a poem, a song, is essentially symbolic and requires constant review and elaboration to taste its full significance and plumb its deepest depths. The implicit is the heart of poetry. And just like poetry, the so called hidden, secret implications of Torah are its real meaning! And just as secrets of song move us to different emotions, Torah can take us exponentially beyond the letters, words and notes of which it composed.

Rav Yechiel Michal Epstein stated that in all the disputes between the Tannaim, Amoraim, Geonim and Poskim are the words of Hashem and that all of them reflect some aspect of Halacha: 'this is the splendour of our holy and pure Torah; the entire Torah is called shira, and the splendour of a song occurs when it contains different voices

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says 'Music speaks to something deeper than the mind', we don't pray - we daven, we sing; we learn Torah and haftarah, megillos and even in learning there is a song melody. In this way Torah is not merely an intellectual exercise, it speaks directly to our emotions.

As Rav Kook famously said 'Just as there are laws to song, so too there is song in law'.

The Gemara in Taanis concludes with the description of the circle of the Tzadikkim. The conclusion of the discussion of the days of mourning for Yerushalayim and the Temple, illustrates how to unite the Nation and merit the final redemption bemiheira beyomaynu. Additional sources: Rabbi U Cohen, Rabbi Y Kaganoff, Rabbi Z Leff, Rabbi Y Milevsky