

Parshas Ha'azinu

Ha'azinu is the second last parsha of the Chamisha Chumshei Torah. Ha'azinu is a poem/song, comprised of 70 lines. (70 is a significant number as it is numerically a multiple of 7 and 10 both significant numbers in the sefiros.) Rashi explains on the first posuk, that Moshe calls the heavens and the earth to stand witness to the gift of the Torah and the covenant that Hashem gave to the Jews.

Because Moshe will be physically gone, he wanted the heavens and the earth to attest to the fact that the Torah was given to the Jews, so they cannot come later and deny their covenant with Hashem.

The final posuk of the poem concludes with as Rashi explains that the people in fact are steadfast in the ways of Hashem. There is a reference by Rashi on the word "v'chiper" that discusses the way Yakov appeases Esav, and there are references to the conquering of Edom, which is an eternal message. Meaning the lessons of Moshe to the Jews in the prose of Ha'azinu is to continue the message, and the course of history that needs to unfold. The reading of this parsha is extremely appropriate as the bridge Shabbos between Yom Kippur and Sukkos. On Yom Kippur we are reminded that part of our service to become close to Hashem, it is the culmination of our entire preparation of Elul, more than this, it is the culmination of our entire work from the whole year. We ought to leave Yom Kippur with a change and go back out into the year ready to reimagine the covenant between us and Hashem again, steadfast, and ready to be of service to Him. Sukkos, we are surrounded by spirituality and encompass our entire body in the spirituality of the mitzva of the day, in a way that is not apparent with other holidays. The sukka specifically surrounds us, our entire body, whereas other mitzvas of the day for significant holidays, are an appendage, or with a specific area of our body. Sukka we are immersed in the spiritual cloud.

There are cross references (as everything in Judaism is interconnected) between some of the phrases, interpretations, and midrash on the Parsha and Yom Kippur and the arrival of sukkos. In posuk 46, Moshe says:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים שְׁמִימוּ לְבַבְכֶּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מַעֲיִד בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּצְוֶם אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לִשְׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־
:וְהָאֵת הַזֹּאת: he said to them: Take to heart all the words with which I have warned you this day. Enjoin them upon your children, that they may observe faithfully all the terms of this Teaching.

Rashi explains, that a person must steer his heart, eyes, and ears toward Hashem (part of the senses that are surrounded in the Sukka, and connected to the parsha of "Shema").

כִּי לֹא־דָבָר רַק הוּא מִכֶּם כִּי־הוּא חַיִּיכֶם וּבְדָבָר הַזֶּה תֵּאָרִיכוּ יָמִים עַל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם עֹבְרִים אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן שְׁמָה
{פ} לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:

For this is not a trifling thing for you: it is your very life; through it you shall long endure on the land that you are to possess upon crossing the Jordan.

Moshe uses the word “Reyk” like what was used to describe Yosef in the pit- that the pit was empty devoid of water. There are midrashim that explain the connection between mayim (Ein Mayim ela Torah) and that the pit was devoid of Torah.

Moshe calling witness of the heavens and the earth relates to Bereishis, as I’ve written extensively, since the entire purpose of the creation is “La’sos Lo Dirah Bitachtonim”, the last message of Moshe, and the beginning creation are interconnected, obviously. The whole purpose and message cannot be forgotten.

There are many adages about how we ought to act during Elul, culminating in Rosh Hashana, moving through the 10 days of repentance, finally reaching Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. What If we don’t cry, what if we are distant, does our Neshama still cleave to Hashem? I am not enough of an authority to say yes or no, but in classic Chassidic style, I would venture to say, as I wrote elsewhere, that since we are the final generation before the coming of Mashiach, perhaps we seem to have fallen so far that our Neshama doesn’t cause us to cry during this period. But all is not lost, because if we aren’t crying, perhaps we are happy, and for good reason, knowing that we are for sure doing everything in our power to usher in the era of Mashiach, culminating the entire purpose of creation.

I would like to conclude, that we ought to live like Hillel Hazaken, who was quoted in Beitzah 16a, as surrounding himself in spirituality, and utilized the phrase “Baruch Hashem Yom Yom”, as he relied on Hashem, and surrounded himself with spirituality, this was his response. It is incumbent on us, post Yom Kippur, pre Sukkos, to take all the promises, lessons, and things we prayed for on Yom Kippur forward in our year. Furthermore, we must remember the adage of Moshe, where heaven and earth bore witness to the covenant between us and Hashem, lest we forget.

Good Shabbos!