

Parshas Ha'azinu

This week's Parsha Ha'azinu is the parting song that Moshe tells the Jews, in which he calls the heavens and the earth as witnesses (as Rashi explains) that the Torah, which was given to the Jews, is the life force of the world, just as rain is part of the world's sustenance.

In Posuk 9, Rashi explains that Yakov was woven with the blessings of himself, his father and his grandfather (Avraham and Yitzchak), and not Esav or Yishmael. Rashi explains that Hashem made Yakov the inheritor, not anyone else.

This thematically connects the end of the Chumash to the beginning, where in Bereishis, we learn about the creation of the world, where, as Rashi explains there, by learning about Hashem creating the world, it bears 'witness' to the claimants who will deny our lineage. We can show them that the world was created as Hashem chose to, and who He chose to inherit it. Moshe's use of heaven and earth as witnesses is a recollection of that moment of creation, where we are reminded that the world was created for the purposes of making a dwelling place here, for Hashem. Which we accomplish through the Torah, which Moshe says is as critical to the world as the rain is to survival. Which makes sense that Torah is compared to water.

Now that we are standing between Yom Kippur and Sukkos, we can let the words

of Moshe penetrate our lives. His speech is not just from that time; it is to us. The time between Yom Kippur and Sukkos is incredibly holy. We made an effort to reconnect with Hashem over Rosh Hashana, then we asked for forgiveness on Yom Kippur, and then we moved to Sukkos, where we enact how we ought to live. Surrounded by Hashem's presence, as the Sukkah surrounds us, and cloaks us in the Mitzvah. Sukkah, like Mikvah, is one of the few Mitzvos where our entire body is cloaked in the object of the Mitzvah. Unlike all other Mitzvos, where we use a particular limb, or do a task, that is outside of us. Halachically, to fulfill the mitzvah of Sukkah, you need to be in the Sukkah, i.e. surrounded by it.

This is a model for how we ought to live our lives, surrounded by Hashem, and everything in our lives pointing toward some greater effort to cleave to and draw down Hashem's holiness in this world. How appropriate it is then that Moshe's speech and poem begin with the fundamentals, that as critical as water is to sustaining life on earth, is as critical the Torah is to maintaining the world. The heavens and the earth are the witnesses, as the creation way back when was purposeful and for Hashem to choose us as his nation. Now, the Torah alone on a shelf is not the point; it is to be acted on and through. Meaning we must practically imbue it in our lives to achieve the goal. Ultimately, through this effort, we will usher in the era of Mashiach. Even now,

we are witnessing the possibility of the freedom of the hostages, and a negotiation that may bring some level of peace to Israel, which is a fantastic thought. May we merit the complete redemption, and beginning with the hostages from their physical confines to the redemption of the nation from Golus, may it happen speedily.

Good Shabbos