



Parashat Ha'azinu

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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הגיליון מופיע באתר 'לדעת' וכן ניתן לקבלו לאימייל מדי שבוע על ידי שליחת בקשה. eisikovits1@gmail.com,

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When the Maps of Countries Are Being Redrawn — Hold Your Breath!

Parshas [Haazinu](#)

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The Torah states, “Remember the days of old, understand the years of generation and generation. Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you.” [Devorim 32:7]. Rashi does not explain this *pasuk* (verse) according to the simple reading. Rather, Rashi explains the *pasuk* as a warning: “Look at what happened to other people who came before you, when they angered Me.” “Understand the years of generation **after** generation” refers to the era of Enosh, upon whom HaShem (G-d) poured forth the waters of the Ocean, and to the era of the (people of the) Flood, whom HaShem washed away. The next *pasuk* continues, “When the Supreme One distributed to nations their portions, when He separated the children of man, He

set the borders of nations according to the number of the Children of Israel.” [32:8]. Rashi similarly interprets this *pasuk*: “When He separated the children of man” refers to the Dor Haflaga (Generation of the Dispersion). This is what happens to those who anger HaShem.

However, we have a long-standing tradition that “Scriptural verses (*pesukim*) do not leave their simple interpretation” [Shabbos 63a; Yevamos 11b; 24a]. Rashi himself says in a number of places that even though at times he is providing a Midrashic interpretation, the simple interpretation of the *pasuk* remains. The simple interpretation of these *pesukim* is an admonition to us to understand history and learn its lessons.

The traditional Jewish belief is that HaShem is not only the Creator of Heaven and Earth, but that He is the G-d of history. The historical events that we witness are the means by which HaShem is continuously directing His world. Simply stated, these *pesukim* are teaching us that when HaShem establishes the boundaries of the world, it is ultimately because of the Children of Israel. The different wars and conflicts that take place in the world and the different border changes that occur—according to the simple reading of our *pesukim*—all occur because of their ultimate impact on the Jewish nation.

There is a quote from the writings of Rav Elchanon Wasserman (who himself was killed by the Nazis at the beginning of World War II): The Torah gave us a great key to understand the hinge upon which all historical events revolve—Devorim 32:8 (the previously quoted *pasuk*). *HaShem sets* the borders of nations and causes nations to inherit for the sake of the Jews. History revolves around the Jews. “For Hashem’s share is His people; Yaakov is the portion of His possession” [32:9].

Rav Elchanon continued (regarding the Peace Treaty ending World War I), “when the map of Europe was drawn up in Versailles, the borders were already set in Heaven”. Sometimes it takes us years, decades, or centuries to put the pieces together. Sometimes, in the interval, the activities seem to have nothing to do with the Jewish people. But the great lesson of history that we are taught in the opening *pesukim* of this week’s parsha is that when HaShem sets up the borders of nations, it is for the sake of the Children of Israel.

I recently read, that the people in MacMillan and Company—the mapmakers—are having a very hard time these days. We think that we have hard jobs! Imagine the job of mapmakers! It has been a very difficult couple of years for them. They had just finished their latest edition of the Atlas, in which they printed East Germany and West Germany. Bonn and Berlin were the respective capitals. All of a sudden, they had to reprint the map. OK, done. Now they think that they are set. Then, all of a sudden, Yugoslavia divides—Serbia, Croatia, we cannot even pronounce all these names! When we are talking maps or when we discuss borders—ultimately, we are talking Klal Yisroel.

One does not need to be a politically astute individual to realize the momentousness of the breakup of the Soviet Union. The mapmakers do not know from day to day whether they should draw 15 republics or 12 republics. We ask ourselves what difference does it make if Azerbaijan decides to become independent or not. What is the meaning of all these changes? This is the lesson of history that we should never forget. These events—the placement of national boundaries—have an impact on Klal Yisroel.

At the beginning of World War I, the Ottoman Empire chose the wrong side and allied itself with the Germans. At that time, a

person would have had to be exceedingly insightful to have realized that this decision would have a major impact on Jewish history in the twentieth century. Our tendency would have been to think, “Who cares? What’s the difference?” But that single event—coupled with the fact that there was this little country called “Palestine” under the rule of the Ottoman Turks—had major ramifications.

When Germany (and the Ottoman Empire) eventually lost World War I, their empires were disassembled. Part of the price that the Ottoman Empire paid for “picking the wrong horse” was that they lost their empire. Their little protectorate called “Palestine” became the British Mandate of Palestine. Not long after that, there was a proclamation called the Balfour Declaration. Who would have thought that the Ottoman Turk’s poor decision would lead to the Jews attaining an independent homeland in the Land of Israel? When we see maps changing, we need to hold our breaths. This has to do with us. Somehow or another, we will be in the center of this. Sometimes it is for our benefit. Sometimes, G-d forbid, it may be to our detriment. But we are always on center stage, because “Yaakov chevel nachaloso” (Jacob is the portion of His possession). We are the protectorate of the Master of the Universe.

Listen to the Music!

Parshas [Haazinu](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rav Herzog on the Comparison of Torah to a Song

The verse from which we derive the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah [Devarim 31:19] says “And now write for yourselves this song...”. We see the Torah refers to itself as a “Song” (Shirah). Why is Torah called Shirah?

Rav Herzog once gave the following explanation: With virtually all fields of study in the world, one uninitiated in that discipline gets no pleasure from hearing a theory or an insight concerning that field of study. For example — physics. If one tells over to a physicist a “chiddush” in his field of expertise, he will get great pleasure from it. If, however, one shares this same insight with someone who has never studied and never been interested in physics, he will be totally unmoved by it. The same applies to many, many other disciplines.

However, this is not the case with music. When Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is played — regardless of whether one is a concert master or a plain simple person — there is something one will get out of it. Music is something that everyone on their own level can enjoy and have a relationship to.

Rav Herzog says, That’s why Torah is called “Shirah”. One can be a great Talmid Chochom and learn “Bereishis Barah Elokim...” and see great wisdom there in. On the other hand, one can be a five year old child, just beginning to read, and learn “Bereishis Barah Elokim...” and also gain something from it. Every person, on his own level can have an appreciation for Torah. Therefore, Torah is aptly referred to in the verse when it says “And now, write for yourselves this ‘song’...”

Menachem Tzion on “Binu Shnos Dor V’Dor”

The verse says in Parshas Ha’azinu [32:7] “Remember bygone days; understand the years of each generation; ask your father and he will tell you, your grandfather and he will say it over to you”. This pasuk, even on a very simple and basic level is telling us that a person has to have an appreciation for history.

A Jew, especially, has to have an appreciation of what was before him. If a person has an appreciation of what was, of tradition, of

what has transpired over the years, then he is a person that can deal with the present even better. A person has an obligation to remember and understand and to try to see the Hand of G-d (Hashgocha) in history.

Willaim Shirer used as an epigraph to his *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1959) the quote from U.S. philosopher George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This is a truth. One needs to remember past history (Zechor Yemos Olam).

On a simple level, *Binu Shnos Dor V'Dor* (Understand each and every generation) is redundant. It would appear to be a poetic restatement of the beginning of the verse. On a homiletic level however, the Menachem Zion offers a very nice interpretation of this expression.

Yes, one must understand history and take the lessons of history and apply it to our generation, but also *Binu 'Shnos' dor v'dor*. He homiletically says the word 'Shnos' is derived not from the word 'Shana' (year) but from the word 'Shoneh' (different). The meaning is that you must understand the changes from one generation to the next.

A person can not blindly apply the same rules that worked in the past to the present situation. If he tries, he will fall short. Each generation is different. A person can not glibly say "That's the way it was; therefore, that's the way it has to be". *Binu Shnos Dor V'dor* — take the lesson of history, but bear in mind the changes from generation to generation. Times change, people change, and circumstances change. Sometimes a person has to alter and redirect and not merely go with what was.

If someone today were to send a half million troops to the beaches of Normandy, he would rightly be called a "meshuganer". While 50 years ago there was indeed a need to fight a battle on the beaches

of Normandy, that battle is now over; that battle has already been fought; and that battle has already been won. We cannot always continually fight the same battles over again.

Understand the changes ('shnos') in each generation. Understand that each generation has its own set of problems and own set of rules and own set of circumstances. We must remember the days gone by, but couple that remembrance with an understanding of the changes that take place in each generation.

In this connection, I have quoted in the past the 'Chassideshe vort' of Reb Levi Yitzchak that Eliyahu (rather than Moshe Rabbenu or anyone else) was the one designated to resolve all of the Gemarah's "Teykus". The reason, the Berditchever says, is because Chaz"al say Eliyahu never died– he has been around in all generations. To pasken shaylos we need someone who has an understanding of each generation to pasken the Shaylah for that generation. Therefore, only Eliyahu who was present during all generations will be qualified to resolve the "Teykus".

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Written by Anonymous

This parsha starts with Moses invoking the heavens and the earth. Why does Moses seem to be comparing the heavens and the earth? What, if anything, is their connection?

Rav Hirsh writes on this opening that when a Jew does something that goes against Torah, the Jew negatively affects the spiritual worlds, and this negative spiritual energy "trickles down" into the physical world and negatively affects the earth (see also the Nefesh HaChaim).

Everyone understands that the physical world has set scientific rules. When someone in a chemistry lab wants to make a specific chemical compound the person needs to carefully follow a set procedure, mixing no more and no less of the designated ingredients. However, there are lots of good people today

who, when it comes to spirituality, are of the mindset of “I’ll do my own thing”. Perhaps this attitude is precisely what Moses is coming to subtly counter. Just as the earth has set physical rules, the heavens, the metaphysical realms, also have set formulas and rules that are necessary to follow in order to make spiritual “reactions” possible. If only people would study metaphysics as deeply as they study physics they would come to understand how complicated it is to conjure up metaphysical reactions, but the format exists!

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Written by d fine

In the second pasuk of our sedra (32:2) we are told that ‘My lessons (I.e. the Torah) should drop like rain, and My words should flow like dew.’ Why the two expressions dew and rain? The idea has been said that rain and dew represent the two types of ‘religious initiation/inspiration’ one can have. Rain falls from the sky, and thus represents the times when religious inspiration comes from Above – for example, the day of Shabbos (which is fixed by HaShem), or general times when HaShem lights a Divine spark within you. Dew, on the other hand, comes from the ground, and thus represents times of religious inspiration which come from us – for example, Yom Tov (which we fix) or general times in the year when we produce our own inspiration by working on ourselves. Therefore, our pasuk is telling us that Torah should encompass both types of inspiration – it is Divine Wisdom and thus comes from Above, but it also must be developed and internalized by ourselves, from below.

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Written by Anonymous

I heard a tremendous vort once from Rabbi Tugenthaft and am delighted to be able to share it. The relevance to this week’s sedra is Moshe being ordered up to Har Nevo to die.

The Torah says that the mountain which Aharaon dies upon was called ‘hor hahar,’ which Chazal tell us means that there was one mountain on top of another mountain. What does this really mean?

Chazal tell us that HaShem flattened all the mountains in the dessert as Bnei Yisrael passed so we would have an easy walk. There are 3 mountains that were left alone though: Har Sinai, Har Hahar, and Har Nevo (where Moshe dies). The idea is that these correspond to 3 crowns. The mishnah in Avos 4;17 cites that R Shimon says that there are 3 crowns – the crown of torah, the crown of kehunah, and the crown of malchus (kingship), and the crown of a good name rests upon all of them (‘olah al kabeihen’).

Har Sinai matches the crown of torah for obvious reasons, Har Nevo is the crown of malchus – for this is where Moshe dies, and he had the halachic status of a melech (R Shteinberger). Now ‘hor hahar’ corresponds to the crown of kehunah (Aharon was kohen gadol), and has a double-mountain, for Aharon also had the ‘shem tov’ which rises above all the other crowns, for he went out of his way to make peace between members of Bnei Yisrael.

Humor

A Bird Named Moses

A burglar breaks into a house. He starts shining his light around looking for valuables. Some nice things catch his eye, and as he reaches for them, he hears, “God is watching you.”

Startled, the burglar looks for the speaker. Seeing no one, he keeps putting things in his bag, again, he hears, “God is watching you.”

This time, he sees a parrot. “Who are you?” the burglar asks.

“Moses,” the bird replied.

“Who the heck would name a bird Moses?” the man laughed.

"I dunno," Moses answered, "I guess the same kind of people that would name a Rottweiler King David."

A Bird on a Wire

Shmuel Gross's son Chaim Yankel lived overseas and as a gift Shmuel sent Chaim Yankel a gift of a rare bird. Not being a great expert in ornithology, Chaim Yankel thought the bird was a delicacy. When Shmuel called to see how Chaim Yankel enjoyed the gift he sent, Chaim Yankel replied, "Oh, the bird? I sheched it. It was delicious!"

Incredulous, Shmuel cried out, "You mean you ate the bird? Do you know how valuable it was? It could even speak two languages."

"So why didn't he say something?" asked Chaim Yankel.

A Couple of Tests

Little Moishie Grossman was saddened by the fact that his Zadie was in the hospital. So he decided to write Zadie a "get well soon" card. Inside the card he wrote:

Dear Zadie,

Mommy tells me that you went to the hospital for some tests. I hope you get straight "A's"!

Love, Moishie

A Friendly Sale

Shmuli Horowitz was having a garage sale and invited some of his neighbors to sell their wares at his place as well. One of Shmuli's

neighbors, Brent Mathews, took four tires over and was asking \$30 apiece. Brent needed to leave for a few minutes, so he asked Shmuli to watch the tires for me.

"Sure," Shmuli said, "but if someone offers less, how low are you willing to go?"

"Try your best for more, but I guess I'd be willing to accept \$15," Brent said, and left.

When Brent returned, his tires were gone. "How much did you get for them?" Brent asked excitedly.

"Fifteen dollars each."

"Who bought them?"

"I did!"