

# TRUE FOUNDATION

*by Shlomo Katz*

## **Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz**

### **Haazinu**

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Today's Learning  
Niddah 6:5-6  
Kitzur 211:13-212:2  
Pesachim 48  
Yerushalmi Pesachim 15

"Shirat Ha'azinu"/the song or poem which makes up most of this parashah is Moshe's last rebuke to his people. In V'zot Haberachah, the only parashah following Ha'azinu, Moshe will give Bnei Yisrael his final blessings before ascending Har Nevo to die there. This parashah not only warns Bnei Yisrael against sinning, but also speaks of Yisrael's uniqueness and of the punishment that Yisrael's oppressors will eventually receive for their deeds.

It is this last element of the parashah that underlies the halachah that Shirat Ha'azinu should be written in the Torah in two narrow columns reminiscent of two stacks of bricks. (The "Song at the Sea"/"Az Yashir", in contrast, is written in one column designed to look like one stack of interlocking bricks.) These halachot are based on the fact the a pattern of interlocking bricks is much stronger than a stack in which each brick lies directly above the one below it. Rabbenu Nissim (Commentary to Megillah 16a) explains that because Ha'azinu speaks of the downfall of evil, it appears in the Torah

like flimsy stacks of bricks, symbolic of evil's inability to stand for long. [The same is true of the list of the ten sons of Haman in Megillat Esther.] "Az Yashir", on the other hand, represents G-d's kindness and is therefore "constructed" in a strong way so that it can stand and even be added to.

The names of the ten sons of Haman occupy a full column in Megillat Esther. There are no complete lines (in the same column) following the names which would serve as a "foundation" for the pillars of names. Why, asks Rav Moshe Sofer z"l, is Ha'azinu not written this way? After the song of Ha'azinu, the Torah returns to its regular, wide-column format, thus appearing to give Ha'azinu a solid footing to stand on!

The answer, explains Rav Sofer, is that Ha'azinu ends with words of consolation for the Jewish people: "He will appease His Land and His people." The next line is a wide line in order to give this verse a solid foundation. (She'eilot Uteshuvot Chatam Sofer I No. 190)

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*"May My teaching drop like the rain . . ." (32:2)*

R' Eliyahu de Vidas z"l (16th century) writes: We are taught that man was created "be'tzelem Elokim"/"in the image of G-d." As a result, man's actions can affect the spiritual worlds above and the flow of spirituality from them. This is the meaning of the verse [in our parashah - 32:5], "The blemish is His children's," i.e., we, the children, can create blemishes on the spiritual worlds.

We read in the Torah (Devarim 11:17), "He will stop-up the heavens and there will not be rain." Yet, we see that the world is full of evil and there is an abundance of rain! The answer is that Torah and spirituality also are called rain [as in the above verse from our parashah]. Man's sins can cause the flow of spirituality from heaven to stop. (Reishit Chochmah: Sha'ar Hayirah, ch.4)

How are we to understand the idea that our actions can affect what takes place in "other worlds"? Perhaps we can't, but if we fail to believe it, it is at great peril, as the following parable illustrates:

A primitive aborigine was brought into the Pentagon and was shown a console with a red button in the center. "Don't touch that," he was told. "Pushing that button will kill one million people across the ocean."

We would understand that warning, for we know that a missile carrying a nuclear warhead could inflict such damage. Would an aborigine understand? He can't picture a city with one million people, and probably never knew that there were people (or anything at all) across the ocean.

The aborigine might look under the console and see a baffling, but apparently harmless, collection of wires. How could that kill even one person? Left alone for a moment, the aborigine probably would push the button.

We may not like to think of ourselves as cavemen, but we face a similar challenge as the one just described. We can't picture the spiritual worlds that Chazal describe, yet we do have the power to

destroy them! (Heard from R' Shlomo Naiman shlita)

"See, now, that I am He, and there is no god with Me." (32:39)

The Vilna Gaon z"l observes: If this verse is read in context, it does not appear to fit. Also, what is meant by the word "now"?

He answers: Kabbalists teach that there are 955 "heavens." Of these, angels may be found only in the lowest 900. Nine-hundred- fifty-five also is the number of verses in Sefer Devarim. As Moshe recited each verse, he "opened up" another one of the heavens for Bnei Yisrael to see.

Our verse is the 901st verse in the Book of Devarim. When Moshe opened it and the people saw that it was not inhabited by angels, they realized ("now") that Hashem is alone. (Kol Eliyahu)

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### **An Astonishing Midrash**

Iyov/Job was complaining about his suffering, but when he saw that the third wall of a sukkah need be only one tefach/handsbreadth wide, he immediately felt better.

R' Zvi Elimelech of Dinov explains: We read in Tehilim (39:6), "Behold like handsbreadths You made my days." This teaches that the dimensions of the sukkah (which are measured in tefachim/handsbreadths) allude to the types of activities that man engages in during his life. How so?

Man's activities can be divided into three categories: tov/that which is good for him; mo'il/that which is helpful to him; and arev/that which is desirable to him. Man may engage in the first two categories as much as he wants, writes R' Zvi Elimelech, but the third category should be used only as necessary.

This is alluded to by the minimum design criteria for a sukkah. A sukkah must have two complete walls, plus a third wall which is a tefach wide. This alludes to the fact that man may engage in a full measure of those activities which are "tov" and mo'il," but should only engage in a small measure of those activities which are "arev."

In order to successfully limit his participation in the third category of activities, man must realize that his life in this world is fleeting. This is alluded to by the sukkah, which must be at least seven tefachim wide by ten tefachim high (approximately 28 inches by 40 inches). After Yom Kippur, when man has repented, he moves into the flimsy sukkah to demonstrate his awareness that during the seventy (7x10) years of his life, he should not feel at home in this world, but should feel like a traveler passing through.

When Iyov/Job learned this lesson, it made his suffering easier to bear. Once one recognizes that this life is only a way station, he does not expect it to always be comfortable or pleasant. (Bnei

Yissaschar: Ma'amarei Tishrei 10:19)

Why is it sufficient for a sukkah to have only three walls? After all, the sukkah commemorates the Clouds of Glory which surrounded Bnei Yisrael in the desert, and they made four walls!

The answer is that we need an opening to leave the "Clouds of Glory" in order to earn a living. The generation of the Exodus did not have that need.

When Iyov lost all of his wealth, he was upset with himself. Why had he bothered? Why had he not devoted his whole life to learning Torah instead? But when he saw that the sukkah has only three walls, he realized that Hashem intends for some people to leave the bet midrash and work. This made him feel better. (Binat Nevonim)

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The Duke of Manheim asked R' Zvi of Berlin: "Why do children ask the 'Four Questions' on Pesach and not on Sukkot? It would appear that Sukkot brings more changes to their lives than Pesach does!"

"On Pesach," R' Zvi answered, "the child sees everyone sitting around the table, at ease like free men, and not like people in exile. This arouses the child's curiosity and he asks, 'Why is this night different?' On Sukkot, however, the child sees Jews exiled from their homes and without a true roof over their heads. That does not surprise him at all; Jews have always lived that way, ever since they first went into exile." (A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit, p.274) & &

*The next issue of Hamaayan will be V'Zot Haberachah/Shemini Atzeret. Please watch for it on Hoshanah Rabbah 5759, Sunday., October 11, 1998. Thank you for your continued support.*

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