

NO THREATS, JUST DECISIONS

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This Shabbos, which falls a few days before Yom Kippur, we read the parsha of Ha'azinu. Moshe, before his death, summons heavens and earth to serve as witnesses to the reproof that he will give Bnei Yisroel. "Listen, heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. [32:1]" Heavens and earth--you witnessed Bnei Yisroel's accepting the covenant and you will be there until the end of time to testify as to their fulfillment of that covenant.

"Listen, heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth [32:1]:"

The Torah that I've given to you, Yisroel, is the very life-source of the world. It strengthens and gives stature to those who learn it. Hashem's acts are perfectly just. The righteous will receive every iota of their deserved reward, although they might have to wait to receive it until the next world. Even the wicked will receive full payment for any meriting act they performed. Your sins only harm yourselves, not Hashem--you generation that is perverse and crooked. Is this how you pay back Hashem!? A foolish and unwise nation forgets all that was done for them while ignoring the eventual repercussions of their actions. [~32:2-6 according to Rashi]

Look back, remember what happened to those who angered Hashem. Look to the future, realize that Hashem can bring you to the time of the Moshiach [Messiah] and the World to Come. When Hashem punished the nations, He didn't obliterate them because you, Yisroel, were destined to come from them. Because of you, Yaakov, His portion. You were faithful to Hashem in the desert, accepting His Kingdom and His Torah and you continued to demonstrate that trust, following Him faithfully in the wilderness. Hashem led you securely, and no person or force was able to battle you. [~32:7-12 according to Rashi]

The commentators explain that this reproof is very different from the ones we find elsewhere in the Torah. Elsewhere we are told that if we'll keep the Torah, we'll receive specific blessings and if we won't, then we'll receive specific curses.

Here we are being told something very different. Think. Contemplate. Weigh. Decide. No ultimatums. No threats. You think it through and decide what makes the most sense. What's the best thing for you to do. How will you gain the most...

Our parsha discusses our national past. Look at the heights that we had reached! Perhaps you'll think that once we fell from that level, we can never again attain it. Our parsha also discusses our future. The time of Moshiach awaits us with all of its grandeur! That is who we are. That is what truly defines

us. Decide to take the steps to return there.

That's where we've been and where we are ultimately heading. Decide if we are going to speed up that process or slow it down. For or against. No threats--just decisions.

Yom Kippur too affords us a glimpse of this sojourn--a glimpse of where the world has been and where it's heading.

After the first day of creation, the Torah writes: "And it was evening, and it was morning, day one." Not the first day, but, rather, Day One. The Medrash teaches that this refers to Yom Kippur.

The Ohr Gedalyahu explains that at that point of creation, no 'beings' had yet been created. There was absolute Oneness. The Day of One. Once the angels, with the forces of ra [evil] were created on the second day, this Oneness no longer existed. There was now the illusion of events occurring without Hashem's direct intervention. The illusion that there might be more than One...

The world will return to this state at the time of the Moshiach. There will be absolute clarity and the whole world will recognize Hashem's sovereignty. "On that day His name will be One."

Those are the two bookends of man's journey. Absolute clarity on either end with a lot of confused meandering in the middle.

But Hashem granted us a day each year when we can get a glimpse of that Oneness. A glimpse of where we're heading. The numerical value of the Satan is 364. The year is comprised of 365 days. There is one day where he can't even present the illusion that he has power. That is what the Medrash was teaching when it said that Day One refers to Yom Kippur.

That day is designated for the annulment of ra [evil]. Hashem removes the external ra and we must remove our internal ra. It is the day of forgiveness and atonement.

Yom Kippur--where the world had been and where it's heading. Ha'azinu--where we've been and where we're heading.

Decisions...

Good Shabbos and a g'mar chasima tova,

Yisroel Ciner

Copyright © 1998 by [Rabbi Yisroel Ciner](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author teaches at [Neveh Tzion](#) in Telzstone (near Yerushalayim).

