

THE POWER OF SONG

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

The Power of Song - From Yom Kippur To Succos

The power of song and poetry reaches deep within the recesses of our beings to awaken an inner awareness and conscience. It resonates with the power of creation itself when G-d's voice called forth the heavens and the earth into being.

Depending on the setting and the musical composition, music can project the primal, physical man, or the "Laiv Tahor" - the pure and innocent heart of the newly formed and born. As Moshe our Teacher said his final farewell, we must imagine that we too can hear the rising crescendo of his final composition sung with the strength and vigor of youth, yet softened and strengthened by 120 years of divine wisdom and inspiration.

His farewell is a song describing the essence of our relationship with the universe wherein which G-d has placed us to work and safe keep. His harmony and melody weave the primal physical and pure, innocent intellect of man into a single entity capable and willing of assuming full responsibility for his actions and their consequences.

The theme of Ha'Azinu is the symbiotic relationship between humankind's deeds and nature's responsiveness. All of the universe depends upon the free willed decisions of the human creature. We wield the power over rain and prosperity, drought and hunger. We have been empowered to utilize the magnificence of nature's stage to act out the depth and breadth of our understanding of G-d. We are the recipients of nature's bounty or desolation. All of history conspired to bring this moment when Torah, Israel, and Jew would unite in a symphony of destiny and purpose.

The Haftorah for this Sabbos continues the theme of Moshe's song. This Haftorah is always read between Yom Kippur and Succos. It is also read on the 7th day of Pesach and is found in a modified form in Psalm 18.

Dovid Hamelech, like Moshe, is singing the praises of Hashem. Dovid has lived a turbulent yet gifted life, and he is giving thanksgiving to Hashem for his numerous victories and successes. In many respects it reflects the same sense of Hashem's complete control as in Parshas Ha'Azinu.

Dovid Hamelech gazes back upon the events of his life with a clarity of vision and understanding. He describes Hashem as his "Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer". (22:2) Dovid recognizes that he too has merited to fulfill one of G-d's promises, no less important than bringing the Children of Israel to the

borders of Eretz Yisroel. He has given birth to the Davidic line that assures the building of the Bais Hamikdash and the coming of Mashiach.

In more ways than can possibly be counted, all of history, from the beginning of time till that moment, conspired to effect redemption for the world. Through the divine power of Dovid's song, Hashem is given total credit for every turn and twist of destiny. His every trial and tribulation equals the sum total of Hashem's constant love and protection. "As for G-d, His way is perfect... He is a shield for all who trust in Him." (22:31)

The magnificence of Dovid's song reaches across the millennium to inspire and encourage all of us to recognize Hashem's love and protection. The final words are familiar because they were incorporated into the conclusion of the Birkas Hamazon.

This Parsha and Haftorah perfectly reflect the transition from Yom Kippur to Succos. The climax of Yom Kippur is the end of Neilah when we publicly proclaim the absolute mastery of G-d over all human and natural affairs. The term "Hashem" reflects upon the G-d of mercy who is intimately involved in the lives of humanity. The term "Elokim" reflects upon the G-d of justice who maintains the inviolable laws of nature. At the conclusion of Yom Kippur we have reached, if only for a moment, the understanding that the G-d of mercy and justice, the G-d of nature and mankind are one and the same. We are able to accept that the entire universe works in concert with Hashem in responding to man's actions. Whatever the outcome, Hashem's purpose is positive and beneficial for both the present and all future generations.

Although this is difficult to accept given the imposed limitations of mortality, we exit from that singular moment of awareness at the end of Yom Kippur and launch ourselves into a two week period of joyous and symbolic service. "And you should rejoice in your holiday," is a commandment unique to this holiday period. We are to revel in the awareness of our dependency upon Hashem. We are to rejoice in the acceptance of G-d's goodness.

Both Moshe in Ha'Azinu, and Dovid in the Haftorah, declare their acceptance of G-d's justice as the ultimate expression of mercy and compassion. We now act out our acceptance by eating and sleeping in a temporary dwelling reminiscent of the 40 years of total dependency in the Sinai Desert. With the shaking of the Lulav, we bind together the symbolic elements of every individual Jew, as well as the totality of the Jewish people, in a communal acknowledgment of Hashem's mastery over all things.

This concept of acceptance is the single greatest challenge we have in our relationship with the Creator. It is expected that we will struggle with the consequences of divine justice from year to year. Yet, as believers in the reality of "Elokim", we posture and behave as if we are understanding as well as accepting of G-d's justice. We too wish to joyously proclaim every day, not just at the end of Yom Kippur, "Shema Yisroel..." "Hear Israel..." the two manifestations of G-d's reality, Elokim - the G-d of Justice and Hashem - the G-d of Mercy, are really One.

Good Shabbos.

Copyright © 1998 by Rabbi Aron Tendler and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author is Rabbi of Shaarey Zedek Congregation, Valley Village, CA.
