Points to Ponder

Haazinu 5781

**הַֽאֲזִ֥ינוּ הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וַֽאֲדַבֵּ֑רָה  Listen Heavens and I will speak (32:1)**- **The Midrash** (Devorim Rabbah 10:1) asks whether it is permissible to treat somebody who is suffering from an earache on Shabbos. The answer provided is that the Sages have taught that saving a person's life takes precedence over the desecration of Shabbos. Why is this the opening Midrash to Haazinu? **Chasam Sofer** explains that there is a Machlokes as to whether a person is permitted to confess his sins on Shabbos. Some maintain that it is permissible since it gives him pleasure to repent and atone for his transgressions, while others forbid it because the focus and emphasis on his misdeeds causes him anguish. However, on the Shabbos preceding Yom Kippur, which has the power to rectify all of the Shabbosim of the previous year (Mishnah Berurah 603:2), the confession is classified as Pikuach Nefesh (life-saving) and permissible according to all opinions. Moshe died on Shabbos. He spoke out Haazinu the same day. Ergo, Haazinu was said on Shabbos. The Midrash is noting that in the same way one might hear painful rebuke causing him ear pain of a spiritual type on Shabbos, one may also confess on Shabbos.

**יַֽעֲרֹ֤ף כַּמָּטָר֙ לִקְחִ֔י My lesson will drip like rain (32:2)** - The Midrash (Pesikta) notes that those who study Torah are like the fish who rush to catch the new drops of rain all while being surrounded by water. Talmidei Chachamim rush to learn a new insight despite their immense knowledge too. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** added that the comparison is even deeper. Like the fish who keep seeking newness even in the water that is already in the sea, Talmidei Chachamim use the new ideas to add a freshness into the Torah that they have already acquired and mastered.

**שְׁאַ֤ל אָבִ֨יךָ֙ וְיַגֵּ֔דְךָ  Ask your father and he will tell you (32:7) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would regularly remind us that the Midrash notes that Yitzchak began his Beracha with the same word that Avraham ended his. Yaakov did the same with the words Yitzchak ended. Moshe began with the words that Yaakov ended and Dovid began with the words that Moshe ended. Rav Schachter explained that the Midrash is teaching us that each generation learns from and emulates the practices of the previous generations. It does not mean that we use the exact expressions but that modern practices of each generation should be connected with those of the earlier generation.

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֤ן יְשֻׁרוּן֙ וַיִּבְעָ֔ט Yeshurun got fat and he rebelled (32:15) - Sforno** comments that even the Torah dedicated, who delve into the depths of Torah, can unfortunately become swayed by the riches of this world and rebel against our real purpose in this world. After this happens, Hashem hides his face in order to get us to see what the real point of everything is **. Rav Elya Svei ztl.** noted that when Hashem gives us economic prosperity after Tzaros -- we might think that we are entitled to it. However, economic downturns get us to see that either we turn to Him and move to act in the way He would want us to, or we will have no one to blame for the destruction except ourselves. Either way, the goal is to get us to turn back to Hashem.

**צ֥וּר יְלָֽדְךָ֖ תֶּ֑שִׁי You were unmindful of the Rock Who bore you, and forgot God Who created you (32:18)** - What type of forgetting is the big Avaira here? **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** explained that the forgetfulness described here comes from the awareness of God's existence, but without influence on his lifestyle or his day-to-day activities. In a certain sense, modern man is faced with the problem of the forgetfulness of *Ha’azinu* . A modern person may be aware of God's existence in the general sense, and if prodded indications of His existence he might be able to shake layers of dust off his faith and answer. However, this shallow knowledge has no impact on his life or his behavior. Although he knows that God exists, he does not act accordingly. He ignores the Torah lifestyle and observance that this knowledge is meant to bring with it.

**בְּעֶ֛צֶם הַיּ֥וֹם הַזֶּ֖ה And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the middle of his day saying (32:48) - Rashi** comments that this is one of the three verses in the Torah employing the term in the middle of the day, in this case to highlight that Bnei Yisrael would not be able to stop it. **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** Points out that this is how we are to respond to the death of a Gadol. The intensity of the pain needs to make us lose our senses and cry out that if we could have done something about it we would have.

**כַּֽאֲשֶׁר־מֵ֞ת אַֽהֲרֹ֤ן אָחִ֨יךָ֙ You will die on the mountain as Aharon your brother did (32:50)** - Why the reference to Aharon? **Rav Gifter ztl.** explains that Aharon’s death was done with his awareness that he was fulfilling the will of Hashem until the last moment. Moshe wanted the same type of death -- with the awareness that he too, was fulfilling the will of Hashem in his death. Rav Gifter adds that most people are not granted that opportunity.

**שובה ישראל  Return Yisrael to Hashem your God (Hosea 14:2 ) – The Noda B’Yehuda**  notes that technically we are obligated to do a complete and total Teshuva without any argument that we cannot. The reason is that we were tripped up by our sins. Still, Hashem offers us the opportunity to offer an imperfect Teshuva – to take the Devarim – Vidui, Charata and Kabbalah L’Atid -- and use it to return to Hashem.