Points to Ponder

Haazinu 5783

**כי כל דרכיו משפט All of his ways are just (32:4) -** How is it possible that we can praise HaShem as not perverting justice? We *expect*human beings to not pervert justice and we wouldn’t necessarily praise a judge for not perverting justice. **Rav Chaim Shmulevitz** quotes from **Rav Yitzchak Blazer** that the pasuk is highlighting the difference between human judgment and divine judgment. When humans try to exact justice, it is impossible to achieve perfection. They have general rules to follow, but the punishment never exactly matches the violation. HaShem’s judgment is completely perfect. All reward and punishment follows exactly what we deserve.

**שחת לו לא בניו מומם  Destruction is not His; it is His children's  (32:5) – Rav Menachem Mendel Zacks** (Menachem Tzion) suggests that לו לא represents someone who wavers in his Emunah and commitment to HaShem. He is somewhat committed, but not fully. Such behavior will result in children with a spiritual blemish (בניו מומם) and their beliefs will be tangled in knots (פתלתל).

**זְכֹר֙ יְמ֣וֹת עוֹלָ֔ם בִּ֖ינוּ שְׁנ֣וֹת דֹּֽר וָדֹ֑ר Remember the days of old, reflect on the years of each generation (32:7)** – The first Possuk teaches us the importance of remembering history.  But, the next phrase seems redundant: Binu shnot dor vador (understand each and every generation)? Is it just a poetic repetition of the previous phrase or is it teaching a new idea?  **Rav Menachem Zacks** (Menachem Zion Yalkut Menachem) suggests that “shnot” doesn’t come from the word shana (repeat) but rather shoneh (different). Therefore, Shnot doesn’t mean years but means difference. Our obligation is to understand the difference between one generation and the next generation.

**כְּנֶ֨שֶׁר֙ יָעִ֣יר קִנּ֔וֹ עַל־גּֽוֹזָלָ֖יו יְרַחֵ֑ף Like an eagle (32:11) –** What does it mean that Hashem is like an eagle? After all, eagles take the hit as they protect their young. Hashem doesn’t take hits? **Rav Zundel Kirzner** (Or HaChama) notes that while Hashem does not get attacked by humans, He is prepared to take the hits on the arguments as to why he does not show the same face to one group that serves Avoda Zara as opposed to another (as he did on the shores of Yam Suf) in order to protect his Bnei Yisrael.

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֤ן יְשֻׁרוּן֙ וַיִּבְעָ֔ט  Yeshurun became fat and kicked (32:15) – Rav Schachter** would often quote in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik** that the challenge of wealth has often been a bigger threat to Judaism and religious practice and commitment than poverty. For some reason, Jews often have a hard time combining Tal HaShomayim with Mishmanei Ha’Aretz. Even in Eretz Yisrael which boasts some of the greatest progress known to man, the ability to keep to basic marital laws has proved to be overwhelming.

**כִּי לֹֽא־דָבָ֨ר רֵ֥ק הוּא֙ מִכֶּ֔ם כִּי־ה֖וּא חַיֵּיכֶ֑ם It is not an empty thing for you for it is your life (32:47) -Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl** notes that while things in this world need estimates and the evaluations are not always 100% equal between 2 estimators, it is rare to have someone evaluate the worth of something at hundreds of thousands and another declare it worthless. Torah is the exception. To those who get its worth, it is more precious than life. But to those who do not value it, it is worthless. Hence the extremes in the Possuk.

**עַל֩ אֲשֶׁ֨ר מְעַלְתֶּ֜ם בִּ֗י  Because you betrayed me (32:51)** – Betrayed? Maybe didn’t sanctify totally but why such a strong rebuke that seemed a bit of a stretch? **Rav Moshe Feinstein** explained that when one does not strive to grow in Torah and Mitzva of observance, s/he is not merely stagnating, s/he is really trespassing and sinning. Hence Hashem’s strong wording to Moshe noting that he was rebelling against Hashem.

**Haftara**

On the surface, the song of the Haftorah which is a song of praise is wildly different from the song of prophesy that is Haazinu. Why then is it chosen as the appropriate one for the Haftorah this week? **Rav Gideon Weitzman Shlita** suggested that the song of praise and the song of prophesy need each other. Mundane praise is raised as a result of the prophesy. Yet prophesy is connected to the people who use it to direct their awareness and sing praise. The prophesy takes the word of Hashem to us, the praise song, allows us to reconnect to Him.