



שמע קולנו

“יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראו”



Parshas Ha'azinu

פרשת האזינו

A Divine Encounter

Meir Finkelstein ('13)

In honor of Shema Koleinu's 25th anniversary, we are proud to present articles throughout the year from past editors of the publication. This week's Dvar Torah comes from Meir Finkelstein, who served as Editor-In-Chief of Shema Koleinu in the 2012-13 school year. Meir is currently studying for Semichah in RIETS.

The question is often asked as to why *limmud Torah* is given a special status among the 613 *mitzvos*. Chazal declare that *talmud Torah kineged kulam*, learning *Torah* is equivalent to all the *mitzvos*, and every member of *Klal Yisroel*, whether young or old, whether hard at work or full of free time, is obligated to set aside time for daily *Torah* learning. Why is it that this *mitzvah* is held in such high esteem above all others?

In order to answer this question, let us first turn our attention to a different topic. Through analysis of a seemingly unrelated *halachah*, we will be able to gain perspective on the issue at hand. The *Minchas Chinuch* (Siman 516) is bothered by the question of how there can be *aveiros* in the *Torah* whose violation does not warrant the death penalty. The *halachah* is that if one disobeys the words of a *navi*, he is put to death. Why then, does a person who disobeys a *mitzvah* conveyed by Moshe, the greatest of all the *nevi'im*, not automatically receive the death penalty? Rav Herschel Schachter *shlit"a* explains that the answer to this question lies in understanding the uniqueness of the *nevuah* of Moshe Rabbeinu. The Rambam (*Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah* 7:6) writes that Moshe's *nevuah* differed from that of all other *nevi'im*. When all other *nevi'im* prophesied, they saw a riddle or a code, which they were then left to decipher. They did not receive a crisp, clear picture of the message which they were to give over. Moshe Rabbeinu was different. Moshe's *nevuah* was given with clarity. He received a clear message to deliver to the people. What accounts for this greater level of

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

A Divine Encounter— Meir Finkelstein ('13).....	1
Gratitude And Greed— Shneur Agronin ('21).....	2
A Short Vort - Akiva Kra ('21)	2
5 Minute Lomdus - Shimi Kaufman ('21)	3
The Music Of Torah - Yaakov Weinstock ('22).....	4
Letters To The Editors.....	4
Chumash B'iyun - Rabbi Mayer Schiller.....	5
The Elephant in the Room- Yisrael Dovid Rosenberg ('23).....	7
From The Editors' Desk	8
Gedolim Glimpse: Maharal of Prague-	
Meir Morrel ('22) & Emanuel Izrailov ('22).....	11
Parsha Puzzlers.....	11

nevuah that Moshe received? Why is it that he merited such direct communication from *Hashem*?

The answer lies in a *possuk* in this week's *parsha*. The *possuk* states, "*ki shem Hashem ekra, havu godel le'Elokeinu*" - when I call out in the name of *Hashem*, ascribe greatness to our God (*Devarim* 32:3). The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 21a) understands this *possuk* as the source for the *mitzvah* to recite a *brachah* before learning *Torah*. When we learn *Torah*, we "call out in the name of *Hashem*", and as such, before doing so, we must "ascribe greatness to Him" by reciting a *brachah*. The Maharasha is bothered by a seemingly obvious question. It is not the case that every time one learns *Torah*, he mentions the name of *Hashem*. Often, when one learns *gemara* or *halachah*, he does not mention the name of *Hashem* at all. Why, then, does all *limmud Torah* warrant a *brachah*? The Maharsha answers that the entire *Torah* is actually a composition of the name of *Hashem*. This idea is developed as well by Ramban in his introduction to his commentary in the *Torah*. Ramban

elaborates upon this concept, and refers to a *halachah* that if a *Sefer Torah* is missing even one letter, it is invalid. Even if that letter is seemingly insignificant, as it is possible to understand the meaning of the *possuk* without it, the *Sefer Torah* is still *pasul*. Ramban explains that the reason for this is because there is more to the words of the *Torah* than meets the eye. All the letters of the *Torah* come together to comprise the name of *Hashem*. If even one letter would be missing, it would spell the wrong name.

Rav Schachter elaborates upon this concept, explaining that the *Torah* is somewhat of a description of the essence of *Hashem*. Man strives to know *Hashem*, yet *Hashem* is beyond us. The human mind can never grasp the essence of *Hashem*. Instead, *Hashem* gave us the *Torah*, which serves as somewhat of a description of His essence. By learning the *Torah*, we in turn learn about *Hashem's* essence.

Rav Schachter explains further that Moshe Rabbeinu's *nevuah* was on a higher level than that of all other *nevi'im*, because Moshe is the only *navi* who received *mitzvos*. The prophecies of all other *nevi'im* were only *hora'os sha'ah* - temporary instructions. They were not meant to last for future generations. Moshe, on the other hand, received *mitzvos* that are binding for all generations. He received a set of *mitzvos* which are immutable and unchangeable, because they comprise the essence of *Hashem*, and *Hashem* does not change. By receiving *mitzvos*, Moshe saw not a riddle or code, as other *nevi'im* did, but rather a description of *Hashem's* essence. With this, we can answer the question of the *Minchas Chinuch*. There is no death penalty for violating the words of Moshe (except on

mitzvos for which the *Torah* prescribes a death penalty) because Moshe did not receive his prophecy as "*nevuah*." *Nevuah* means a *hora'as sha'ah*; something that is not binding for all generations. Moshe, however, received *mitzvos* which are binding for all generations.

The *mitzvah* to learn *Torah* is held in such high regard because it is through this *mitzvah* that we come to as great of an understanding of *Hashem's* essence as is humanly possible. When we learn *Torah*, we encounter the name of *Hashem*, which, on some level, provides a description, or a *mashal*, of *Hashem* Himself. In the coming year, we should be *zocheh* to maximize our potential in *limmud Torah*, and merit that *Hashem* should grant each and every one of us our unique portion in *Torah*.

Gratitude And Greed

Shneur Agonin (21)

Undoubtedly, the most well-known feature of *Parshas Ha'azinu* is the prophetic poem, composed by Moshe just before his death, which makes up most of the *parsha*. Describing the myriad benefices that *Hashem* had and would continue to bestow upon the *Bnei Yisroel*, Moshe warns the Jews against the ungrateful response to such kindnesses which would inevitably arise in generations to come. In the poem, Moshe writes with prophetic intuition that, after enjoying the bounty and splendor of *Eretz Yisroel*, "*Yeshurun* became fat and kicked - you became fat, you became thick, you became corpulent - and it deserted God its

A SHORT VORT

Akiva Kra (21)

ראו עתה כי אני הוא ואין אלהים עמדי אני אמית ואחיה מחצתי ואני ארפא ואין מידי מציל:

"See now that I, even I, am He, And there is no God with Me; I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand" (*Devarim* 32:39)

The *Ba'al Haturim* comments that this *possuk* mentions the word *ani*, "I", three times, corresponding to three (of the four) exiles. He then says that the word *vi'ani*, "and I", refers to the fourth exile. He shows this from a *possuk* in *Yechezkel* "and I was among the exile". This, the *Ba'al Haturim* says, indicates that *Hashem* always has been and always is with us in all the exiles, to rescue us.

There is a story of a man named Levi who, during the Holocaust, passed under the famous arch that read "*Arbeit Macht Frei*" (German for "work makes you free"). When passing under the sign, for no explainable reason, he thought of this phrase from *Yechezkel*, and also remembered the *Ba'al Haturim's* explanation that *Hashem* is with us in exile. This raised his spirits, and that night, for the first time in a year, he said *Shema*. The next day, a man he had never seen before came over to him and helped him escape.

We, like Levi, need to always remember that, regardless of the situation, *Hashem* is with us. If we can do this, our perspective will change for the better

Maker, and was contemptuous of the Rock of its salvation" (*Devarim* 32:15-16). Two major points of interest, among others, can be raised regarding the wording of this *possuk*. First of all, this is the first instance of the name "Yeshurun" referring to the *Bnei Yisroel* - why, specifically, is this name used? Secondly, the *Torah* uses three terms to illustrate the outcome of the Jews' gluttony: *Yeshurun* became **fat**, **thick**, and **corpulent** (in Hebrew, *shamanta*, *avisa*, and *kasisa*). Since the *Torah* does not contain even a single superfluous letter, what does each individual term represent in relation to the Jews' eventual ungratefulness?

Taking a deeper look at the name *Yeshurun*, one finds the root *yashar*, meaning upright or straight. Thus, *Yeshurun* connotes a lofty moral status that the Jews would come to attain. If so, this raises a further question: why would the *Torah*, in referencing unequivocally negative behavior, attribute such actions to a nation having risen to the level of *Yeshurun*? Several commentators pounce upon this apparently unseemly usage. The *Seforno* explains that the *Torah*, specifically by grouping such a name with the ascribed behavior, comes to teach us that, indeed, *anyone* can fall prey to the spiritual maladies contracted by indulging extensively in worldly pleasures. Even those who have ascended heavenward in their *Torah* observance and studies, the *yesharim*, cannot grow arrogant of their position, lest they too come to abandon *Hashem* through excess luxuriation.

After gaining a better insight into the message the *Torah* is telling us with the name *Yeshurun*, one must still wonder why the *Torah* uses three separate phrases to describe the Jews' ingratitude. On this point, the *Malbim* writes that the *Torah* here portrays a vivid image of someone who brazenly forgets the good done for them by another - in this case, by *Hashem*. First, such the Jews would grow spoiled and entitled in the lush and agriculturally rich *Eretz Yisroel*, constantly demanding more and more from their Benefactor - in other words, kicking (*vayivaeit*) Him purposefully for the sake of receiving more. As they continue to mindlessly satisfy themselves, they both physically grow fatter (*shamanta*) and increasingly disconnected from *Hashem* even as He grants their wishes. Then, their desires cloud their rational thinking and spiritual drive through a thick (*avisa*) darkness. Finally, entirely excised from their connection to *Hashem* and focused solely on their enjoyment, the remnant of their previously robust rationality is concealed (referenced by the word *kasisa*, related to the word *kisui*, meaning "cover" or

5 Minute Lomdus

Shimi Kaufman (21)

כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וְבוֹ גָדַל לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ

"When I call out in the name of Hashem, give greatness to our God" (*Devarim* 32:3)

Q. The *Gemara* (*Berachos* 21a) views this *possuk* as the source for the requirement to make a *bracha* before learning *Torah*. When we "call out in the name of Hashem" through learning, we must first "give greatness to our God" by making a *bracha*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 47:14) rules that women are required to recite *birchas haTorah* before learning. The *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 29b) tells us that women are not technically required to learn *Torah*, based on an inference from the *possuk* (*Devarim* 11:19) which says "and you shall teach them to your sons" - specifically your sons, but not your daughters. In light of this *Gemara*, this ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* would seem to run counter to the general rule that one does not make a *bracha* on non-obligatory *mitzvos*. In other words, why are women required to make a *bracha* on *Torah* if they have no requirement to learn it? The *Mechaber*, in the *Beis Yosef* (*ibid.*) gives several reasons for requiring women to recite *birchas haTorah* despite there being no actual *chiyuv* for them to learn. One of the reasons he brings is that of the Smag, who explains that women are actually obligated to learn the *halachos* which are relevant to their daily lives; we therefore see that women have an obligation to learn *Torah*, which would explain the need for a *bracha*. The *Minchas Chinuch* (*Mitzvah* 430) asks a question on this particular explanation, since even though this is true, women still do not have a *mitzvah* to learn *Torah*; practically, they are required to learn relevant *halachos* so that they can live a *Torah* lifestyle, but there is no *mitzvah chiyuvis* (obligatory *mitzvah*) to learn for the sake of learning. Since the *bracha* is recited specifically on the *mitzvah* of *talmud Torah*, why would this require women to make a *bracha* before learning?

A. It is incorrect to say that the requirement for women to learn *halachos* relevant to them is only a "*hechsher mitzvah*" (preparation for other *mitzvos*), which would not require a *bracha*. Rather, this is an actual fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *limmud Torah*, which women are logically obligated in, since it is obvious that a woman would have to learn the *halachos* which apply to her life. Since it is so clear that women must learn pertinent *halachos*, this type of learning was never excluded by the *Gemara* in *Kiddushin*; it would actually be a fulfillment of the requirement of *talmud Torah* for a woman to learn those *dinim*, since the *Gemara* only excluded them from the requirement of other forms of learning. Therefore, a woman would make a *bracha* before such learning.

-Source: *Mishmeres Chaim Chelek II*, "Berachos" 7

“concealment”) such that they no longer remember their Provider at all, nor the kindness which He had done for them.

Drawing insight from this *possuk*, the centrality of *hakaras hatov* (gratitude) in the life of a Jew cannot be denied. We should constantly recognize the truly innumerable acts of graciousness and providence with which *Hashem* has sustained us throughout our nearly 4000 year history, as well as in each and every one of our personal lives. Keeping in mind the difficulty of remaining grateful along with the importance of recognizing our Creator’s blessings of prosperity, may *Hashem* extend us another kindness by assisting us in maintaining such *middos* while continuing to receive blessing in all matters of life.

The Music of Torah

Yaakov Weinstock ('22)

In the beautiful song that makes up the majority of Parshas *Ha'azinu*, Moshe Rabbeinu says “*ki shem Hashem ekra, havu godel le'Elokeinu*” - when I call out in the name of *Hashem*, ascribe greatness to our God (*Devarim* 32:3). The *Gemara* in *Berachos* (21b) explains that the source for reciting *birchas haTorah* (the blessing before learning *Torah*) is learned from this *possuk*. What indication is there in this *possuk* that could have led Chazal to learn a requirement to make a *brachah* on *limmud Torah*?

Rashi on this *Gemara* tries to answer this question by explaining that before Moshe began telling *Bnei*

Yisroel the *shirah* (song) in *Ha'azinu*, he began with this *brachah*. The *possuk* of “*ki shem Hashem ekra*” is the *brachah* which Moshe gave before reciting the *shirah*. Thus, *birchas haTorah* is supposed to emulate that *brachah* which Moshe gave before the *shirah*. It is clear that there is some connection between *Torah* and *shirah*. To take this a step further, the Rambam writes in his *Sefer Hamitzvos* that the source for the *chiyuv* (requirement) of writing a *Sefer Torah* is learned from the *possuk* “*ve'atah kisvu lachem es hashirah hazos*”- and now write this **song**. We see that not only is there a connection between *Torah* and *shirah*, but in one of the fundamental commandments related to *Torah*, it is referred to as a song! However, what is this connection coming to teach us?

I believe the answer to this is based on the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 32b) which says that when a person is learning, he should do so out loud and with a tune. Why should a person have to learn with a tune? A possible reason for this is to remind us how our attitude towards *Torah* should be. It should be like one's favorite song. Just like a person can listen to their favorite song over and over again and enjoy it each time, we should always feel that we want to learn more and more *Torah*. The joy of listening to our favorite song should mirror the *simchah* we have when we learn *Torah*. Thus, the comparison of the *Torah* to a song is meant to inform us of the attitude we should have in approaching our *limmud Torah*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Two errors have appeared of late, one in an article in *Shema Koleinu*, and the other on an MTA Zoom *shiur*. *Mea culpa*, the errors are mine. Herewith the corrections which may prove of interest:

1) In the article, authored by Yeshurin Sorscher, “Finding the Good, Even in the Bad” (*Shema Koleinu*, Volume 25, Special 1, p. 30) there is a reference to the “complexity and diversity of the creation” based on my remarks in a *Torah Umad-da chaburah* that there are “twenty seven species of clownfish” to be found “off the coast of Australia.” This formulation is largely true, albeit with a few caveats. Now that we have entered into print, greater nuance is required. Yes, most of these species live off the shores of Australia, but others range as far west as the east coast of Africa, and continue along the coast of the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea, and as far east as the Marshall Islands, Tahiti and Samoa. Also, popular usage designates the Maroon Clownfish as one of the clown species. Including these rough and tumble fish is actually incorrect, as they belong to the genus *Premnas biaculeatus*. Real Clownfish are all members of the genus *Amphiron*. Counting the Maroons, which some sources will erroneously do, yields the incorrect count of twenty eight species.

(Digressionary advice for the budding Clownfish rearer. The above mentioned Maroon Clown is a bit of a bully and will not be kind to other species. However, in another example of God's wonders, if you insert even one *Amphiron percula* in the tank (be careful, as only tank and hatchery - reared *Perculas* will do this), they will become capable of enthusiastic, positive responses to their owners, and will also serve, in the best spirit of NHL enforcers, as protectors of other fish from the aggressions of the Maroon Clownfish. (The *Perculas* is far smaller than the Maroon, conjuring up images of the diminutive Tie Dye, at his most effective!)

2) In the *Meor Einayim* Zoom *shiur* of the sixteenth of September, I “gave over” a *vort* of Reb Menachem Nachum Twersky of Tolno. I described him as a grandson of the *Meor Einayim* and son of Rav Dovid Twersky of Tolno. Almost

immediately after the *shiur* ended, I received a phone call from Reb Mattis Haller, a talmid of mine since 1984, who noted that Reb Dovid of Tolno had a son who was actually the father of Reb Menachem Nachum. His name was Reb Motel, and he passed away in 1877, during his father's lifetime, at age 30.

A point of interest for MTA *talmidim* is that the just mentioned Reb Menachem Nachum Twersky, who passed away in 1915, was the father of Reb Meshulam Zusia, the Tolna Rebbe of Boston. He, in turn, passed away in 1972. It was his son, Reb Yitzchak Asher Twersky, who married Atarah, the daughter of Rav Yoseph Dov Soloveichik, known colloquially as "The Rav", and the long standing Torah leader of the Modern Orthodox world.

Reb Yitzchak Asher (aka Isadore) served as the *Rebbe* of the Tolno Shul, Beis Dovid, in Brookline, Massachusetts, as well as a Harvard Professor for over thirty years, and as Director of the university's Center for Jewish Studies from 1978 till 1993. A *talmid chocham* and scholar of voluminous and profound erudition, he published widely, particularly on the Rambam and Raavad. *The New York Times* headlines his passing as "Isadore Twersky of Harvard and the Hasidim, Dies at 67."

His oldest son Reb Moshe, a *rosh yeshiva* in *Toras Moshe*, who was murdered by terrorists while **davening** in Beis Haknesses Bnei Torah in Jerusalem. His younger son, Reb Mayer, serves as a **rosh yeshiva** here at YU, and has transplanted the *shteibel* from Boston to Riverdale, where it continues to operate with the *Chasidishe minhagim* of Tolno to this day.

Reb Moshe's life of extraordinary holiness is presented in the book, *A Malach in Our Midst*, written by his *talmid* Yehoshua Berman. It is a most inspiring work, which details the working of the Tolno traditions along with those of Brisk to produce the majestic piety of Reb Moshe.

The Rov was very taken by the Tolno rebbes and their *derech*. In fact, two of his most famous talks, delivered as *hespedim*, first for Reb Meshulam Zusia (1972) and later for the Rebbetzin, are among his most oft cited works. The eulogy for the Rebbetzin, originally delivered at the *Beis Dovid* on January 30, 1977, was later printed in *Tradition* of Spring 1978 (Issue 17, No. 2, pp. 73 - 83). It is certainly worth reading in its entirety, but let us quote from its conclusion: "The Talner Rebbetzin united in her personality the same two mutually exclusive virtues: simplicity, on the one hand, and strength of conviction on the other. She was modest. She was the real *tzenuah* in every respect. She was self effacing and self negating. She sacrificed her life for others and demanded nothing in return. Yet this humble, selfless woman was spiritually a strong woman. She lived a heroic life and was capable of heroic deeds."

His talk on the Rebbe was later printed in *Reflections of the Rav: Adapted from Lectures by Rabbi Abraham Besdin* (Ketav:1979, pp. 160 - 169). Titled "Engaging the Heart and Engaging the Mind", he suggests that a Rav and a Rebbe embody the traits of truth and love respectively. The ideal which he saw in the Tolno Rebbe was when both fused. "Nowadays, the Rav, the contemporary teacher - king, has absorbed many of the qualities of the Rebbe, not only teaching but also coming close to the people. The Rebbe, representing the modern teacher-saint, now also emphasizes scholarship and the teaching role. The classic differences are still there, but the lines of demarcation are at times blurred. Jewish leadership is most effective when it combines the mind and the heart in the worship of God."

Whether the true believers in either approach would grant this lacunae in their camp's leadership figures of the past, there is no doubt that the combination of Tolno and Brisk brings a broad spiritual map to our quests.

(The name of the Ukrainian town Tolno is spelled in Hebrew with an *aleph* at the end, not a *reis h*. I have therefore chosen, against common usage to spell it Tolno, not Talner, as did the editors of the encyclopedia work *Grand Rabbis of the Chernobyl Dynasty* (Twersky - Noverseller: 2002))

-Rabbi Mayer Schiller

CHUMASH B'YUN Moshe's Transition of Leadership

Rabbi Mayer Schiller

"Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea son of Nun; And Moshe concluded saying all these words to all of Israel." (Devarim 32:44-45)

The role of Yehoshua (Hoshea) in the above *pesukim* is puzzling. When the *possuk* says, "he and Hoshea ben Nun", what is being referenced? Is it the speaking of the words? If so, why is Hoshea placed at the *possuk's* conclusion? Further, if Hoshea spoke, why is only Moshe mentioned in the second *possuk*, "Moshe concluded", as opposed to a plural construct, that "they" concluded?

In fact, these *peshat* problems are the source of many rival understandings among the classical commentators. The matter is further confused by the fact that this is the second time in the *Torah* that Yehoshua is mentioned in a manner that would imply power was being transferred. In *Parshas Pinchas* (27:16-23), we find that *Hashem* answered Moshe's request to appoint a successor. In fact, He actually commands Moshe, "take Yehoshua and . . . to lean your hands upon him. . . you shall place your majesty upon him, so that the entire assembly of the Children of Israel will pay heed." This event seemingly takes place before Moshe begins the presentation of *Devarim*, which takes place after the military victories over Sichon, Og and Midyan, on the first of *Shevat* in the final year in the *midbar*. Why and in

what sense would Moshe appoint Yehoshua in the midst of Moshe's as of yet unfinished tasks?

To add to this question, in *Parshas Pinchas*, right after the "giving of leadership" to Yehoshua, Moshe is told to "ascend to *Har Haravim* . . . and be gathered (in) to your people." This would seem to imply Moshe's death, especially in the context of the aforementioned transfer of power. Yet, the *Torah* does not end at this point. What are we to make of these two transition moments?

Leadership transitions are often fraught with complications and controversy. In *Parshas Ha'azinu*, we find many different approaches as to how Moshe transferred leadership to Yehoshua. Let us examine some of them, and see how they can be understood in the light of the earlier "transference."

Rashi tells us that the reference to Hoshea at the end of the *possuk* quoted earlier is teaching us that "it was a *Shabbos* of a set of two (*deyuzgei*). Authority was taken from one and given to the other." This is a quote from a *Gemara* in *Sotah* (13b), which is actually said in reference to an entirely different *possuk* in *Parshas Vayelech* (31:14). The *possuk* there reads, ". . . summon Yehoshua, and both of you shall stand in the Tent of Meeting, and I shall command him." It is regarding this *possuk* that Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani, in the name of Rabbi Yonasan, is telling us of an abrupt transferring of power from Moshe to Yehoshua. The basic idea of this is that Yehoshua had not yet entered the *Ohel Moed* until that point. As Rashi explains in *Sotah*, "The beginning of the day was for Moshe and the end for Yehoshua." In other words, the day was "a *Shabbos* of two" - the day started with Moshe as the leader of *Klal Yisroel*, and ended with Yehoshua.

Surprisingly, Rashi on our *possuk* then adds, apparently seamlessly, another text of the *Sifrei* (305), which he already cited in *Parshas Pinchas*, on the phrase "and lean your hands on him." (*Bamidbar* 27:17) The words are somewhat different in both citations, but here, the quote reads "Moshe established a *meturgeman* (spokesman) for Yehoshua, so that he (Yehoshua) should lecture in [Moshe's] lifetime, so that Israel should not say, 'In the lifetime of your teacher you were unable to raise your head.'" As the *Divrei Dovid* explains it, "Moshe assigned a *meturgamen* to Yehoshua in his lifetime, to show that he was fit for leadership even then."

Following the *Divrei Dovid*, the establishment of a *meturgeman* preceded Moshe's passing, and was not a transition of power. This transition instead took place, according to Rashi, in the middle of *Shabbos*, and might well have been symbolized, as per the *Sotah* quotation, by both men entering the *Ohel Moed*. Upon their emergence, there was a new leader. But before that, Moshe was publicly indicating Yehoshua's fitness for the job he would later assume.

What remains puzzling in this formulation is Rashi's presentation of both *peshatim* as if they were one and the same.

The Ramban offers a fascinating reconciliation of the two transition sets of *pesukim*. He explains that the commandment to appoint Yehoshua was "not meant as a command to be carried out immediately, but rather, it meant 'when your day of death will come, you shall take Yehoshua and lean your hand upon him, appointing him as your successor.' And the *Torah* completes its discussion of this subject by recounting that ultimately 'Moshe did so' with a complete heart (27:22). However, this is the same doing that the *Torah* mentions later, when it will recount the departure of Moshe from this world, when they 'he and Hoshea the son of Nun' recited the song of *Ha'azinu* together." Since the Ramban places the fulfillment of the entire *parsha* in the future at the recital of *Ha'azinu*, it is compelling to believe that the *meturgeman* was also appointed at the conclusion of the *shirah*.

There are other *peshatim* here. The Gra and the *Ponim Yafos* see the mention of Hoshea at the verse's end as implying that he is *tofel* (secondary) to Moshe, and that the position of *meturgeman* was his general appointment. The *Ohr Hachaim* goes a step further, commenting that Hoshea, as a *talmid*, simply stood silently next to Moshe.

According to the Ramban, we would be justified in assuming that all the rituals attending to Yehoshua's appointment in *Parshas Pinchas*, such as *Bamidbar* 27:22 - 23, were not performed until after the reading of the *shirah* and the conclusion of the *Torah*. There was no intermittent transference of power.

Rashi makes no mention of delaying the events of the commandments of *Parshas Pinchas*, and the *Ibn Ezra* refers to a *possuk* in *Vayelech* (*Devarim* 31:23) where we read simply that, "And he commanded Yehoshua the son of Nun and said: be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the Children of Israel into the land that I have sworn to them, and I shall be with you", as the point where leadership was actually transferred.

Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch on *Parshas Pinchas*, although citing the notion of the verses in *Bamidbar* relating to events yet to take place, also offers the following. "It is possible, however, that Moshe was commanded to appoint Yehoshua immediately, and did so. In that case "and Moshe called to Yehoshua (*Devarim* 31:7) is merely an additional admonition to Yehoshua, to fulfill the duties already assigned to him."

To sum up: 1) The Ramban maintains the *Bamidbar* imperatives were completely to be carried out later; 2) According to the *Ibn Ezra*, Rav Hirsch and maybe Rashi, their fulfillment took place (or at least began in some way) before *Sefer Devarim* commences; 3) this would seem to fit well with the Gra and *Ponim Yofos*.

It is worth dwelling upon why power would be transferred, or at least noted in some way, long before the end of *Sefer Devarim*. The Viznitzer Rebbe, Reb Mordechai Hager (1922 – 2018), divided his *Chassidim* among his sons years before his passing. Each one was given a *shteibel* around the world (Montreal, Williamsburgh, Boro Park, Toronto, London, Antwerp, Bnei Brak, Jerusalem, and Monsey.) They didn't act as *rebbe*s until their father's passing, but the clear division of authority prevented the often painful squabbles we have witnessed elsewhere,

On the other hand, there are groups in which, due to premature appointments and seizures of power, much acrimony did ensue.

So, sociologically, practically, and based on how to unravel the *pesukim*, we see a diverse array of approaches to the transition of power.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: ANIMALS IN THE PARSHA

What's All This About Eagles?

Yisroel David Rosenberg (23)

Parshas Ha'azinu is one long poem, filled with many parables. There is one such *possuk* which reads:

”כְּנֹשֶׁר יַעִיר קֶנָּה עַל-גּוֹזְלָיו יִרְחֹף יִפְרֹשׁ כְּנָפָיו יִקְחֵהוּ יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל-אֲבָרָתוֹ:”

“Like an eagle wakes up its young, hovering over its little ones, it spreads its wings, he takes them and carries them on his limbs” (*Devarim*, 32:11)

Rashi discusses this *mashal*, and how it represents *Hashem*'s protective relationship with us, *Bnei Yisroel*. He writes that the “eagle waking its young” describes how an eagle does not make a direct approach to its sleeping hatchlings. Rather “*al gozalav yirachef*”; it flaps its wings, flying about the nest and through the canopy of the nearby branches, to gently rouse the sleeping birds and make them aware of its presence. So too, *Hashem* has never made an immediate full revelation of Himself to us, as we would be overwhelmed by it.

The next words, “*yifrosh kinafav yikacheihu, yisaeihu al evraso*”, are explained as the eagle taking its young to carry them on its wings. Most birds carry their young in their talons, so no other bird will swoop down and take their child off their back. However, the eagle is the predator that flies highest, and fears only a hunter's arrow from below. It carries its young on its back, so that it will take the hit, and the fledgling will not be harmed. Similarly, *Hashem* is the *Melech Malchei Hamelachim*, and there is no one and nothing that compares to His greatness. He protects us from any danger, which could only come from that which is “below” us. And indeed, when *Mitzrayim* came after *Bnei Yisroel* in the *midbar*, *Hashem*, through the *ananei hakavod*, absorbed the arrows aimed at us.

The *Bechor Shor* expands on these ideas, but does not say that the eagle flies about to wake up the chicks; rather, that it hovers near the nest, to allow the baby birds to hop onto its back. *Hashem*, like the eagle, carries us, but does not put us in our seats for the ride. He can prompt us, but it is ultimately on us to take the first step towards Him.

FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

Ghosts Of The Past

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l, in his *hesped* for Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik ("The Rav"), told a story about the Brisker *Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim. As the story goes, an elderly man once walked into the *yeshiva*, took out a *gemara*, sat down in the back, and began to learn. Noticing the unusual visitor, the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Dovid Soloveitchik *shlit"a*, went over to say *shalom aleichem*. Upon seeing the Rav, the man asked "is this the Chevron *yeshiva*?" Rav Dovid replied "no, this is the Brisker **yeshiva**." Upon hearing this, the man's face turned a ghastly white. "The Brisker *yeshiva*? *Reb Chaim lebt noch*?" - is Rav Chaim still alive?!

After a bit of confusion, it became clear what had happened. This man, almost 90 years prior, had studied in the original *yeshiva* in Brisk, under the tutelage of the great Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, the grandfather of both Rav Dovid and Rav Yoshe Ber. After being taken away by the Communists, he continued to learn, and eventually made his way back to *Eretz Yisroel*. When he heard that he was in the Brisker *yeshiva*, his first thought was to ask if his *rebbe*, Rav Chaim, was still alive.

"And indeed," Rabbi Lamm continued, "*Reb Chaim lebt noch*. Rav Chaim lives on in the *Torah* he spread, and in the *Torah* of his progeny."

The *possuk* in this week's *parsha* entreats us "*zechor yemos olam, binu shenosav dor vador; sha'al avi-cha viyagedcha, ziknecha viyomru lach*" - remember the days of the world, understand the years of each generation; ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will say to you. Most of the *meforshim* understand this as an imperative to learn about the history of the world, and specifically Jewish history, to understand how the hand of providence guided those events. This would explain the first phrase, "*zechor yemos olam*" - in other words, we are instructed to recall "the days of the world" and it's past. However, the phrase "*binu shenosav dor vador*" would seem to be extraneous. The *pesukim* do not add words as mere poetic flourishes; what is this addition coming to teach us?

Perhaps an answer can be found in a Rashi earlier in the *Chumash*, in another song sung by Moshe Rabbeinu. After witnessing the sea crash down on the Mitzrim, thereby ending 210 years of oppression and slavery, Moshe and *Bnei Yisroel* burst into joyous bouts of praise for their Savior and God. This song, "*Az Yashir*", is recited daily in our *tefilos*, as part of the *pesukei dizimrah*. One of the first *pesukim* in this passage reads "*zeh keili vi'anveihu, elokei avi va'aromimenu*" - this is my God, and I will praise him, the God of my fathers, and I will raise Him up (*Shemos* 15:2). Rashi appears to seize onto a similar question here, namely, that the *possuk* would seem to be needlessly repetitive, first calling *Hashem* "my God", and then "the God of my fathers". In response to this, Rashi comments "*lo ani techilas hakedushah*" - I am not the beginning of sanctity. In other words, this verse is an acknowledgement by the *Bnei Yisroel* that, while they were experiencing God's presence in an almost unprecedented manner, they were not the first to relate to and experience *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. He was their God, true, but he was also the God of their fathers before them. Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and others had all sought and found *Hashem* long before the splitting of the *Yam Suf*, and it would have been foolishness for the Jews of that time to assume that their experiences encompassed the sum totality of what it meant to live a life close to God.

While this *yesod* is certainly true, it is a bit odd that *Bnei Yisroel* would feel the need to mention this idea right at that moment. The nation was standing in the direct aftermath of their direct Divine salvation, only just beginning to sing praise to thank the Master of the Universe for His kindness. Now does not seem like the time for a history lesson! The answer is, that this was *exactly* the right time to recall past generations. At the brink of any spiritual revelation, it is essential to remember that our relationship with *Hashem* is not simply borne out of our own notions of holiness and spirituality. We have a *mesorah*, a chain which connects us directly back to Revelation by God Himself. We cannot make the mistake of assuming that we are the first ones to experience God's presence. "*Lo ani techilas hakedushah*" - at any given moment,

we must remember those who came before us, those who carved out a path in terms of how to learn and grow in *avodas Hashem*.

We may be able to suggest that the phrase "*binu shenos dor vador*" is assigning a second imperative, to learn not just about world events and history, but about the lives of great individuals who achieved spiritual greatness in the past. We are called upon to study the *gadlus* of those *tzaddikim* of each generation, and to truly understand the awe-inspiring levels which they attained. Such study will inevitably enhance our own religious experience; the *Chazon Ish* writes (*Bava Kamma* 11:20) that the reason Rabbeinu Chananel was accepted as the final word in many areas of *halachah* was due to his vast knowledge about previous generations of *tzaddikim*. This enhanced his own level of *Torah*, making him a superior conduit of the *mesorah*. Rabbeinu Bachya has a similar comment in his commentary on *Chumash* (*Vayishlach* 32:4:3), where he writes that a person is required to speak about the characteristics of great spiritual leaders, in order to be inspired by the levels which they attained. But this obligation extends far beyond mere inspiration; it is incumbent upon us to learn where we came from, so that we can understand where we are going. Our national past determines our future - understanding the personalities which form the chain back to *Har Sinai* is the key to keeping that chain alive. Rav Eliyahu Baruch Shulman *shlit"a* once commented that *Matan Torah* is only about 60 *Pesach sederim* away; a child sits on the lap of his grandfather to hear the *haggadah*, who heard it from his grandfather, who heard it from his grandfather, and so on. When we learn about the links in the *mesorah*, it strengthens our own commitment to maintaining a *Torah* lifestyle and community.

Of course, this applies to the *gedolim* of *klal yisroel* as a whole, but particularly, it is fitting to learn the history of our own community, and the seminal figures who laid its vision into stone. Our *yeshiva*, in the words of Rav Aharon Kahn *shlit"a*, has history "echoing off of every hallway." *Gedolim* such as Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, Rav Aharon Soloveitchik, Rav Dovid Liphshitz, Rav Yaakov Moshe Lessin, and many others, are all fundamental to understanding the uniqueness of the *yeshiva*, and in learning about them, one feels a strong sense of connection to the *kehillah's* past. How many of us are aware that the Rav used to give *shiur* in Room 101, right outside of Fischel *Beis Medrash*, or that the room which is now Dr. Taylor's office was used by Rav Mendel Zaks, the son-in-law of the *Chofetz Chaim*, to edit the *Mishnah Berurah*, the foremost work of contemporary *halachic* literature? How many of us have taken the time to learn the *Torah* of these giants, whether from their *seforim* or from their *talmidim*, many of whom are *gedolim* of immeasurable stature in their own right? Are we aware of the greatness in *Torah* and *yiras shamayim* which is embedded in the very walls of our building?

"*Reb Chaim lebt noch*" - the legacy of Brisk, and of our own *yeshiva*, is available to all those who wish to learn about it. It is essential that we, the *talmidim* of the *yeshiva*, are aware of our past, so that we can maintain a proper direction for our future.

Wishing everyone an amazing *Shabbos*, and a *Gmar Chasimah Tovah*,
Shimi Kaufman

Ha'azinu Vs. Shomeia

This week's *parsha*, *Parshas Ha'azinu*, starts off with the phrase "*ha'azinu hashamayim va'adabeirah, visishmah ha'aretz imrei pi*." At a simple level, this phrase means "listen, Heavens, and I will speak; may the earth listen to the words of my mouth." The words "*ha'azinu*" and "*sishmah*" (from a root of "*shomeah*") both seem to refer to some form of hearing, but the change of language would seem to imply a difference between the two expressions. Before we get into what these words mean, however, we first need to explore a little of what the verse itself is discussing. Rashi comments that here, Moshe is calling to the heavens and earth to act as witnesses to his farewell speech. Moshe realizes that he will soon pass away, but the heavens and earth are permanent fixtures of this world, and could therefore serve as eternal witnesses to the Jew's acceptance of the *Torah* and the systems of reward and punishment. Rashi then goes further and explains that if the Jews act properly, the witnesses can serve to reward them with abundance, but if

the Jewish people do not act as God commanded, then they will be punished by these witnesses withholding their blessings.

The *Ibn Ezra* has a bit of a different explanation of what the words “*shamayim*” and “*aretz*” refer to in the verse. He writes that the word “heavens” refer to the angels who live in *shamayim*, and the word “earth” refers to the people of the earth; alternatively, the “heavens” refers to the rain, and the “earth” refers to crops. Either way, he points out that the purpose here, similar to Rashi, is that these initial witnesses are eternal, and will serve as everlasting testimony to Moshe’s will. He also begins the examination of the language, explaining that the word *ha’azinu* is based on the root “*ozen*” (ear), and defining the word as “lending an ear.”

The *Chizkuni* addresses all of these ideas. He explains that Moshe is asking the heavens and earth to bear witness to the coming song, since, as we mentioned earlier, he is mortal and can no longer bear witness. He points out that a grammatical difference between “*ha’azinu*” and “*shomeia*” is that *shomeia* is in the singular form, because there is only one earth that is being called on to testify, upon which the Jews were standing when they declared “*na’aseh vinishmah*.” Heaven is in the plural form because there are several layers of the heavens. The *Chizkuni* then goes on to explain what the practical difference is between the two words. He quotes a similar phrase from Yeshayahu (1:2), which reads “*shimu hashamayim viha’azinu ha’aretz*” - almost identical to our *possuk*, only the inverse. He resolves this discrepancy based on the fact that when Moshe called his witnesses, he was speaking for himself on the earth, far from the heavens. When one calls out for people to listen, he first tries to get the attention of those further away, and demands more effort on their part to listen attentively to what he has to say. Yeshaya, on the other hand, was speaking under the command of God, and consequently felt closer to the heavens. He therefore used the word *ha’azinu* for the earth, because he felt further from that.

We now have multiple examples of the word “*ha’azinu*” asking someone far away to listen, and the word *shomeia* being used for someone closer. What is interesting, however, is that the *Chizkuni* points out that in reality, we do not know if this distinction is true, since an argument could be made that at this point in his life, having experienced the greatest form of *nevuah* possible, Moshe felt closer to the heavens than he did to the earth. This is especially likely in light of the fact the Moshe was extremely close to death at this point. The *Chizkuni* therefore does not conclusively list this distinction as true.

While there may be no definitive answer as to the contrast between these two words, a few things do become clear. We see that the depth of the language which the *Torah* uses is so complex and beautiful that two words which appear to be synonyms can have varied.. Additionally, we see that if one keeps their eyes open, they can find layers and layers of *Torah* learning in even a few words of *Chumash*. This thought should inspire us this *Shabbos Shuvah*, and for the coming year.

Shabbat Shalom and Shanah Tovah,
-Yisroel Hochman

For more MTA Torah, join our WhatsApp group, where we share weekly recorded divrei Torah from our yeshiva community, shiur updates, and more! Use your phone camera to scan the QR code to join the chat, or to listen to this week's dvar Torah.



GEDOLIM GLIMPSE: MAHARAL OF PRAUGE

Biography

Meir Morell ('22)

Yehudah Loew was born in Poznań, Poland, to Betzalel Loew. He was born in either 1512, 1520, or 1526. His uncle, Rabbi Yaakov ben Chaim was the *Reichsrabbiner* (Rabbi of the empire/Chief Rabbi) of the Holy Roman Empire. His brother, Chaim of Freidberg, was also a Rabbi and a published author. Many leading scholars believe that Maharal was an autodidact, a person who teaches himself.



Maharal accepted an offer to be the Rabbi in Mikulov, Moravia, in 1553, and he retained his position there until 1558. However, he continued to be viewed as the *posek* and leader of the community for long afterwards.

One of the main stances which he took was rallying against slander about families, which could ruin marriage possibilities for their kids. This was the topic of his 1583 *Shabbos Shuvah drashah*.

He moved to Prague in 1588, and became the Rabbi there. In 1592, the Maharal left Prague and moved to Poznań, where he had been elected as Chief Rabbi of Poland. Towards the end of his life, however, he moved back to Prague, where he died 18 *Elul*, 5369 (1609). He was buried in the Old Jewish Cemetery, Prague. With his wife Pearl, he had 6 daughters, and a son named Betzalel, the eventual Rabbi of Kolin.

Maharal wrote many *seforim*, including *Gur Aryeh*, a supercommentary on Rashi's commentary on the *Torah*; *Derech Chaim*, a commentary on *Pirkei Avos*; and *Gevuros Hashem*, a commentary on the *Haggadah of Pesach*.

Stories Of Our Sages

Emanuel Tzrailov ('22)

When the first Jews settled in Prague, they were accepted by the local gentiles who lived there. However, this period of tolerance was soon interrupted by the crusades, which caused a spike of antisemitism. The Jews of Prague suffered from many pogroms and blood libels. During the blood libels, gentile children were murdered, and then planted in the backyards of Jews. The next morning, the perpetrators would accuse the Jew of murder, and then show the body in the backyard as evidence. This tactic was used time and time again, and led to the execution of many innocent Jews. According to legend, the Maharal of Prague used his powers of *kabbalah* to create a Golem, whose appearance is that of a man, but is unable to speak, due to not having a soul. Golems can only serve their creator, and in this case, the Golem's purpose was to protect the Jews in Prague. A potential source for this story can be found in the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 65b), which states that certain *tzaddikim* who were on an extremely high level could gain powers of creation, as the *possuk* says "for your sins have separated you from *Hashem* your God." This *possuk* can be interpreted to mean that a person with no sins would be able to replicate some of *Hashem's* abilities, so-to-speak. While this is certainly an extremely high level for a person to reach, we do see that some *tzaddikim* were able to achieve this.

PARSHA PUZZLERS

Submit your answers to shemakoleinu@yuhsb.org along with your name and cell phone number to be entered into a raffle at the end of the sefer! 1 answer = 1 entry!

(Hint: Use the commentaries in the Mekraos Gedolos Chumashim, along with the Toldos Aharon on the side to find relevant Gemaras and Midrashim)

1. At the beginning of *Parshas Ha'azinu* (*Devarim* 32:2), Moshe compares the *Torah* to rain. Give four reasons for this comparison.
2. Where do we see a promise of *techiyas hameisim* (revival of the dead) in this week's *parsha*?
3. Which two requests are *Hashem* answering with the words of the final *possuk* in this week's *parsha*?

Parsha Summary

This week's *parsha* mainly consists of the deep and esoteric song which Moshe Rabbeinu sang right before his death. The song begins by describing *Hashem's* ever-present and kind nature, as obvious and beneficial as the rain or dew. Consequently, any negative occurrences in the world must be ascribed to the negative actions of mankind. Moshe goes on to give the context for these inevitable rebellious actions; the Jewish people were rescued and nurtured by *Hashem* to be a chosen people, but they will eventually become greedy and full with all that *Hashem* gave them, causing them to lash out at their Creator. This will bring exile and all sorts of troubles onto the people. However, Moshe continues, the same malady of thought will affect the nations of the world, as they assume that their ability to conquer us was based on their own physical prowess rather than Divine intervention. *Hashem* will then strip these nations of their power, and return *Bnei Yisroel* to their rightful place in *Eretz Yisroel*. The song ends with *Klal Yisroel* singing their acceptance of the Divine method of justice. At the end of the *parsha*, Moshe emphasizes one final time that the condition for keeping *Eretz Yisroel* is continued adherence to *Torah* and *mitzvos*.

Rosh Yeshiva: Rabbi Michael Taubes

Head of School: Rabbi Joshua Kahn

Associate Principal: Rabbi Shimon Schenker

Rabbinic Advisor: Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson

Editors in Chief: Yisroel Hochman, Shimi Kaufman

Head Writer: Yeshurin Sorscher

Assistant Head Writer: Yosef Flamenbaum

Executive Editors: Yitzchak Hagler, Meir Morell

Distribution Manager: Noam Steinmetz

שבת שלום!!!

This Publication contains Torah matters and should be treated accordingly.

*To receive Shema Koleinu in your community, or to sponsor a week of Shema Koleinu, please email
shemakoleinu@yuhsb.org*