

READ IT
UP 



THE LEARN IT UP NEWSLETTER

Read it Up

Listen Up!

By Raam Levy

As we near the completion of the Torah, we read this Shabbat *Parashat Haazinu*, the second to last *parasha* in Sefer Devarim. Three-fourths of the Parasha is Moshe sharing a song with the Children of Israel. Two common questions that come to mind are why is there a song in the Torah? And, what is it about?

In order to answer the first question, we need to rewind to last week's *parasha*, *Vayeilech*. In the fifth *aliyah*, Hashem appears in the Tent of Meeting to Moshe and the newly announced leader Joshua, and tells Moshe that his end is near and after he passes away the Children of Israel will stray from the Torah. God will then hide his face, meaning to say that Hashem, Our Father, knows what is best for us and will not help us when we don't follow his path, the Torah. Hence Hashem tells Moshe to write the song Haazinu as a witness to the Children of Israel, if and when they have a hard time finding God. The purpose of writing it in song format is because when we hear a song we absorb it in our mind better.

Before I answer the second question, I would like you to know that the song is cryptic and I'm going to sum it up to the best of my knowledge. Ok! Now let's actually get into this week's *parasha* and let's answer what the song is about. To simplify it let's divide the song into three parts, beginning, middle, and end.

In the beginning of the song, Moshe shares how Hashem chose the Children of Yaakov to be His coveted nation, it was He who saved us from Egypt and sustained us in the desert (32: 1-12).

The middle part of the song, Moshe shares that when the Children of Israel will conquer Israel it will be such a fertile and prosperous land we can't even imagine. We will forget though that is was

Hashem who gave us this blessing, and our "yetzer harah" will steer us to follow the ways of the surrounding nations. Then our land will get conquered and we will be exiled (vv. 13-35).

The last part of the song is comfort Moshe shares; that Children of Israel will rejoice and return to their land and, most importantly, they will return to their Father (vv. 36-43).

I think we can learn a big lesson from this week's *parasha* in that God doesn't appreciate it when we aren't thankful for what he has done for us. With every day we should start to become more and more thankful to God.

Let's start now! Let's take a look at the clothes we are wearing on Shabbat, if you are either wearing a beautiful dress or a sharp suit. Realize how much work had to be done and how many people worked on making what you're wearing. If your clothes are made from cotton or wool, think about how much work went into growing that cotton plant or raising the sheep that made the wool. Someone had to pluck the cotton off and shear the wool. Then there is a designer who designed what your wearing and there are people and machines stitching the clothing together. Let's not forget God's hand in nature allowing photosynthesis and cellular respiration to occur and the list goes on to infinity, as to how much God does to provide just your clothes. Now! Feel you clothes! How much more pleasurable does your dress or suit feel?

B'H we all have a sweet year of health, prosperity and celebrations.



Mashal of the Week

In this week's parasha, *Haazinu*, we read a verse that states: "The Rock, Perfect in all His work for all His ways are just; a God of faith and without injustice, righteous and fair is He" (*Devarim* 32:4). The Chafetz Chaim (R. Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1838-1933, Radin) once related a parable connected to this verse.

A businessman once stopped in a small village for Shabbat on his way home from a business trip. Sitting in the synagogue, he was taken aback as the *gabbai* (shul assistant) only gave *aliyot* to the simple people that were there, and no honor was given to the learned and more distinguished-looking members. After the services were over, the businessman went over to the *gabbai* very upset and asked him: "How could you do such a thing and give no honor to the learned and distinguished members of the community?"

"My dear friend," replied the *gabbai*, "you have only been here for one Shabbat, last Shabbat all the distinguished members were honored. We take turns each week so that it is fair for everyone."

So too, explains the Chafetz Chaim, we are only in this world for a short period of time. Whatever "fairness" and "justice" of Hashem that we see is really just a tiny glimpse of the big picture. However, God assures us that His ways are fair and just, and who are we to assume otherwise based on our microscopic view of world history?

The deep lesson to be learned here is that all the things that happen to us, are fair and just. Ultimately everything that occurs in our lives is for the best, because as a father to all of us, Hashem would never do something to hurt his children.

I would like to wish everyone a wonderful, sweet new year filled with health, happiness and success in all of our endeavors.

Shana Tova!



Meet the Rabbi...

R. Ephraim Hagadol

Brief Bio:

- Full name: Ephraim son of R. Isaac of Regensburg; AKA "Ephraim the Great."
- Was one of the earlier *Baalei HaTosafot* and a student of Rabbienu Tam

Famous Works:

- Wrote the beloved *selichot* poem "*Im Afes*," which is read by both Ashkenazim and Sepharadim during the days leading up to Yom Kippur.
 - ◊ Speaks of the Binding of Isaac-*Akedat Yitzchak* in a flowery and poetic fashion.
 - ◊ His name in Hebrew (Ephraim Bar Yitzchak Chazak) can be found in the beginning of each stanza, known as an acrostic.
 - ◊ R. Ephraim in this poem demonstrates an incredible fluency in Tanach through quoting

passages from all over the Bible and integrating them into every stanza, thus providing much depth and history to every line.

Interesting Tidbits:

- His inspiration for writing "*Im Afes*" was the devastating Crusades occurring during his time. He compares the suffering and sacrifice of the Jewish people taking place to the binding of Yitzchak Avinu.

R. Ephraim's great work cannot be ignored. His beautiful poetry inspires Jews till today, and provides us with hope for the future. The *piyut* ends by calling out to Hashem to save and spare us from our troubles, just as he spared Yitzchak our forefather.



Questions? Comments? Ideas? Email us at MYCRiU@gmail.com



ג' תשרי תשע"ד • September 7, 2013

Contributors: Nathan Zaboulani, Oren Heskia, Shawn Aziz, Yosef Zarnighian