



Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 49

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HA'AZINU

13th Tishrei 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 1 - 6

- ✚ Moshe's poetic song begins by calling the heaven and earth to act as witnesses to the words Moshe was about to speak.
- ✚ Hashem's Torah sustains life in this world just like the rain which makes the vegetation thrive, yet there are those who have the audacity to rebel against Hashem because they lack the wisdom to recognise all of his blessings bestowed upon them.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 7 - 12

- ✚ Moshe entreats Bnai Yisrael to reflect on their history, starting with the generation who built the tower of Babel, whom could have been wiped out if not for the fact they were destined to become Hashem's chosen nation in the future.
- ✚ Moshe then describes how Hashem protected them with clouds during their time wandering the Midbar (desert) where they came to realise the unique bond and relationship they had with their creator.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 13 - 18

- ✚ Moshe then warns the people about their future, once they have settled down in the land of Israel.
- ✚ Even though they might become too complacent and abandon Hashem completely by straying into the practise of idolatry Hashem will still protect them from harm because he loves them.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 19 - 28

- ✚ Hashem would become incensed by these behaviours and would mete out strong punishments against them including plagues, famine and allowing their enemies to invade their land, dispersing them all into exile.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 29 - 39

- ✚ The fact the enemy refused to acknowledge it was Hashem who destroyed the Jewish Nation and not their Gods or idols; convinced Hashem to show mercy upon Bnai Yisrael and save them.
- ✚ The Jewish nation will see the errors of their ways and atone for their sins, rededicating themselves back to Hashem and the Torah way of life.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 40 - 43

- ✚ Hashem would take his wrath out against Israel's oppressors and justice will be restored.
- ✚ Moshe concludes the song by telling the people to make sure they teach the Torah to their children as it will prolong your lives on the land which you will soon inherit.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 44 - 52

- ✚ Moshe presents the song to Bnai Yisrael.
- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe to ascend Mount Nevo, where he will pass away.
- ✚ Hashem explains the reason why he refused Moshe's pleas to enter the Promised Land because he rejected the will of Hashem and did not sanctify his name among Bnai Yisrael when he struck the rock, instead of speaking to it.

Haftorah – Shmuel II (2nd book of Samuel) Chapter 22, verses 1 - 51

OVERVIEW:

To express his gratitude to Hashem for saving him from all his enemies David Hamelech composed the following song.

He starts with the famous words, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress." before describing the pain and hardships he encountered during his life and reiterating the point that in those moments of despair, he always turned to Hashem who never once let him down and always delivered him from harm.



LINK TO SEDRA READING:



The Parsha consists of Moshe's last Poem he recited to Bnai Yisrael before he passes away.



The Haftorah is a song that David Hamelech wrote and performed in his old age

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Parsha Ha'azinu contains Moshe's last words to the Jewish people before passing away. What's unusual here Moshe switches from his normal use of prose which is conveyed over the whole book of Devarim and instead recites a poem which for a lot of people seems to be highly literary and difficult to understand. Why finish his speech in this obscure style?

Rav Levi Yitzchak (one of the great Chassidic Masters) answers as follows. At the end of his life Moshe was weak. He was obviously neither the man nor the prophet he had once been. Therefore, he had no option at this point in time but to abandon his clear, direct, precise, and readily understandable prose style which he employed for most of his career and lapse, instead, into an obtuse, allusive, stylized poetic elegance. According to Rav Levi Yitzchak, the poetic material which Moshe produces at the end of his life does not constitute a crowning artistic achievement but, rather, a falling off of his strength of communication, brought on by his advanced age and impending death.

It maybe counterintuitive of me to go against a Chassidic Master, but I would like to view the reason why Parsha Ha'azinu was written as a poem in a more positive light. Maybe it's possible and I'm only speculating here because I don't really know; but by switching to poetry could have been Moshe's attempt to express more beautifully and more richly the last things he wanted to convey over to his beloved nation. After all, as Poet Lauriat, Ted Hughes once quoted about his work. 'Poetry is, well, poetic, whereas just writing prose is, basically, prosaic.' The final chapters of the Torah should be seen as a beautiful, artistic finale to the life of Moshe; rendered all the more touching and inspiring by putting it into verse.

The language of words can be highly suggestive. Fundamentally, Judaism's emphasis on the written and spoken word of the torah is our search for 'the divine truths'. In his defense, Rav Levi Yitzchak sees the beautification of language by poetry as a weaker form of communication. He is naturally suspicious of the beauty of such a text written in the Torah and is afraid that its message, 'its truth', may be obscured in some way and lose its potency.

Rav Levi Yitzchak prefers clarity and directness, with a less ambiguous tone running through it, However I would like to accept that ornamentation and prose has its place too. I strongly believe that Moshe wanted to express one last time to Bnai Yisrael in a way that would ease his pessimistic fear for his beloved nation and their Jewish future, trying to live up to Hashem's high standards is not easy. Moshe's final eternal message to us all is one of hope that we, the Jewish people will live up to our covenant with Hashem, praying wholeheartedly that we actually will. How poetic is that.

