

S3.  
HAAZINU 1981  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Moshe Rabbeinu closes out his farewell speech to the people with a poem, a song. Judaism can only survive if there is a song, a dream, a goal. Moshe knew how the people would turn from G-d but if they would read this song they would understand what was happening to them and they would be able to return. The people would err because they would confuse what the real purposes of life should be. They would not realize that we are junior partners of G-d in creation and that it is our business to help Him perfect the world with all the talents and abilities we do have. We are to do our best. We are not independent masters of our own destiny as many people feel in America. We cannot do with our lives what we want to do. We must be moral and good people. There is no such thing as our talents. We are all given gifts by G-d. We did not determine whether we are smart or dumb. We are only the stewards of these gifts. We are supposed to use these gifts for good. We are not masters of our body. We most certainly have no right to die. We Jews are partners of G-d only in life, not in death. Only G-d kills. This is the same idea why we do not like to tamper with the body unnecessarily after death. Sure, it will decompose but that is G-d's doing not ours. Each of us is given certain gifts and even if we lose some of these gifts in life we still are an important personality. If G-d forbid we should lose a hand or foot we still are ourselves. If we cannot hear so well we still are important if we try our best. In fact, one of the greatest proofs that there is a G-d is where does inspiration come from? Ten equally trained scientists can work on a problem equally hard. One may get an inspiration and nine not. Where does this inspiration come from? According to the Kabala, G-d is constantly sending down His blessings, his Shefa to the world. It is up to us to pick it up. In fact, the Kabala says this is one of the main purposes of prayer, to bring G-d's blessings down to earth, to open ourselves to inspiration. That's why in this week's Torah portion it says Haazinu HaShamayeem V'a Dabairu, listen oh heavens and I will speak, and V'seshma Haoretz, and hear oh earth. We are urged to listen to the heavens, but in order to do that we must prepare ourselves here in earth. Listening to G-d's inspiration is like being in a shower with a record playing. You can barely grasp the notes. If you have rehearsed the tune maybe you can make it out. There is inspiration in the world for all of us. We just have to prepare ourselves and

HAAZINU 1981  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky  
PAGE TWO

listen well. In order to receive scientific inspiration you must study science. In order to receive moral inspiration you must learn Torah. We are told that if we will prepare ourselves we will find answers to our personal problems, and to society's problems. We must listen to the heavens by preparing ourselves here on earth. The story is told of a group of Jews in Kansas City who were dedicating a Shul when the ceiling collapsed. Two of them perished and immediately went to heaven. G-d met them and said, "You are not expected for two weeks. I don't have room for you". He then called Satan and told him to put them up for two weeks. At the end of two days Satan called G-d very excited, "You have to get these Jews out of here. They are organizing a fund raising drive to air condition the place". There is inspiration out there. We can solve our problems if we will but listen.

53.  
HaAzinu 1983  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion HaAzinu we have Moshe's farewell song to the Jewish people. We all know how important a song, a dream is to everyone. With it you can endure everything. Without it the least little upset, the least little pain is too much to handle. We all know how much suffering and pain the immigrant generation endured. We call it sacrifice. They, of course, did it willingly. They wanted their children to get an education, to get ahead. Nothing was too hard for them. They saved and saved for their education. It was called Kischekegelt because they hardly ate anything beyond the basics so that their children could get an education. Today we see the same thing with the Vietnamese who are here. However, without a song, without a dream everything goes to pieces at the first problem. We see that today among people who seem to have everything. Moshe knew that the Jewish people needed a song in order to get through all the adversities that were in store for them. However, right at the end of this Torah portion we also learn again about Moshe's sin, how because he struck the rock instead of speaking to it he was denied entrance into the Land of Israel. Why should this have been so? Why should we learn about this again right next to the song? The Torah is written in paragraphs. It is not written in chronological order and there was no need to put this paragraph here. There seems to be no purpose by mentioning again Moshe's sin right by the song. When the Jewish people first left Egypt we learn in the Torah portion Beshalach how they were thirsting for water, how Moshe was told to take his staff and hit the rock. The word for rock there is Tzor. It means narrowness. The Jewish people had just come out of Egypt. They were slaves. They did not think they could do anything. They were very narrow. Moshe had to goad them and push them into doing anything. He had to take the staff which stands for Midos Tovos Hein, for the fact that they had good qualities and get them to use their good qualities. In the Torah portion Chukas where we learn how Moshe was commanded to speak to the rock, we have the expression for rock being Seleh, a pause or an interlude or to weigh or consider. The needs of the Jewish people were different now. They no longer were a slave generation. They were free men and women who knew how to act. Moshe now had to explain things to them, to let them weigh and evaluate things. His job was not to goad and push them. He had been successful.

He had rid the people of the slave mentality, but he was still trying to goad them. He was still using old means. That's why, I believe, we learn about Moshe's sin by the song of Israel. Moshe failed to realize that new means, new techniques were used to further and keep alive the Jewish song. The Jewish song is eternal, but the means that we use to implement it change in every generation. Many times the older generation does not realize this. They do not realize that they have been a success and that now new means are necessary. Many times we ask them why we have to do things a certain way and they tell you because they were always done this way. When you question them carefully, though, you find it was only done for the last 20 or 30 years this way after they had changed what the previous generation had done. We Jewish people have always been able to keep the song alive because every generation has re-evaluated our means and techniques for implementing it. Moshe was a great leader but his means were not fit for the new generation. Perhaps that is why Menachem Begin resigned, because he knows that his techniques and means are not what the next generation needs. The ability of the Jewish people to always evaluate their means is what has kept us alive. I am reminded of the story of how it happened that a Frechman had a great, great thirst. He then drank some wine to quench it. A Russian had a great, great thirst. He drank some vodka to quench it. A Scotsman had a great, great thirst. He took some scotch to quench it. A Jew had a great, great thirst. He went to a doctor to see if he had diabetes. Analysis of how to implement our dream has allowed us to live.

HA'AZINU 1986  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

This year in Ha'Azinu we read the Haphtorah of Shabbos Shuva. The Haphtorah in Shabbos Shuva speaks about "Shuva - returning". "Shuva Yisrael Adonoi Elechecha - Return, O Israel, unto the Lord your G-d - Kikoshalta Vanecha - Because you have stumbled in your sins." When it talks about people following G-d's right path, people turning back, usually the expression "Haleecha" is used, the expression of "walking", "going". In fact, that is even what the word "Halacha" means, to walk in the right path. "Vetzhadcheem Yale Chubon - And the righteous, they will walk in it." In other words, when it comes to doing Teshuva, to returning to G-d, we must walk, we must take action. Teshuva does not just mean fulfilling your potential, as I speak about many times. Teshuva does not just mean repenting for those sins you have done and being sorry for them. It also means to return to the source. Teshuva, it is true, means feeling sorry that you have not lived up to your potential, not that you have actively done anything wrong but that you have not answered all the challenges of life. In this Haphtorah the word "Teshuva" is not stressed, but the word "Shuva - returning to your source". Many of us are dissatisfied in life. Many of us are not happy in life because we have, so to speak, turned our back on the source of being. According to Judaism, each of us has a Neshoma, a soul. This soul is part of G-d and yearns for Devaikus, for union with G-d. It yearns to feel meaning and purpose in life, and when we sin we besmear our soul. We estrange ourselves, we alienate ourselves. We cause ourselves to feel depressed. I am not talking about biological depression, which is something else. Sometimes people don't have the right hormones and, therefore, feel depressed. I am talking about people who seem to have everything, but life has no meaning or spark for them. They feel they live in an alien world where they do not really belong. Many of these people actually seek death, if not openly and advertently, at least inadvertently. These people, in effect, are in perpetual mourning. The rabbis say that when a person sins he puts up an iron fence between himself and G-d. He becomes like a mourner. He loses contact with the source of his being, and just as when one loses a loved one, he feels terribly depressed and alone. When a person sins he feels this feeling of mourning, nothing is good, nothing is right. He feels alone.

The rabbis tell us that when G-d created the world everything was G-d, so how could He create the world? He did it by retracting, called "Simsun", and leaving a little piece of Himself in everything. When we do deeds of loving kindness we release these pieces of G-d, and we are able to come close to Him and human beings. In this Haphtorah we learn something very strange. We learn it says, "Altir U'B'Hamos Sedai - Don't be afraid, animals of the fields". Why do they mention this? Animals do not have free will. Animals, it is true, do have a Neshoma, but not a soul like a human being has a soul. Their soul animates them but is not the piece of G-d like ours is a piece of G-d. Why does it say, "Don't be afraid, animals of the fields"? The rabbis explain that a person is happy, a person fulfills his being when he carries like a donkey, pulls like an ox, and when he sows like a cow pulling a plow.

All of us know that in life we must feel connected to G-d and to other people. This we can only do if we assume responsibility. It is the assumption of responsibility for ourselves and others in the world which makes life meaningful and liveable. That's why we should not be afraid of loading responsibility upon ourselves. Of course, not enough to break us. We would not load a donkey until it breaks. We must be concerned about pulling, like an ox does. We must also sow seeds for the future, raise a family, be interested in children, perpetuate and support institutions. In this way we will feel the purpose of life and be happy. It does not good to just sit at home and wallow in your depression and feel self-pity. That does not help at all. What we must do if we are to connect to our source of being, to other people, is Haleecha, to walk, to do things. Even when a person does not feel like doing things and would rather stay home, the person should go out and help people and mingle with people. He should plan for the future by supporting institutions and helping his family.

The rabbis say that only the outward part of our soul could ever be besmeared, but the inner part of our soul, the core of our being, still yearns for G-d and still wants Tavaikis with Him. This we can achieve if we Shuva - return - to our roots. It means

not only living up to our potential and feeling sorry for our sins, but it also means returning to the source of being and finding meaning and purpose in life. You cannot just sit home. That just makes things worse. I am reminded of a man who met his friend and said, "Business is terrible. Monday I only sold one suit. Tuesday I sold no suits, and Wednesday was even worse than Tuesday." His friend said, "How could Wednesday be worse than Tuesday? You didn't sell anything on Tuesday." The man said, "Yes, but the man who bought the suit on Monday returned it on Wednesday."

We see that things will only get better if we act, if we do things. They will not get better if we sit at home. We must energize ourselves, do more Mitzvahs. We must learn to connect more with other people. If we connect more with other people we will release those sparks, and we will have a good relationship with man and G-d. We will return to our source of being, and we will be blessed with a good and happy year. Amen.

HA'AZINU 1987  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Ha'Azinu we learn how Moshe, in his last speech to the Jewish people, concludes with a poem which he said the Jewish people should read every time they get in trouble, and then they will understand why these troubles came upon them. Moshe knew the Jewish people had to have a song in their hearts if they were to survive. When they would read this poem, this song, they would understand why the evil things came upon them.

In this song it seems to me that the key to understanding why evil things came upon the Jewish people as a whole is included in one sentence which says, "Elohim Lo Yodoum Chodoshim Meekorobochu - New gods came up - V'Lo Shorum Avosechem - which your forefathers dreaded not - Seeleechu Techu - the rock that begot you you forgot, you forgot the G-d that bore you." In other words, the Jewish people were overcome by new things. Today, too, we seem to have the same idea that whatever is new is better. This may be true in the technological field. After all factories which are using the same techniques today they used forty years ago are going to go broke. They will not make it in the market place. And, of course, one of the reasons the United States is having a hard time competing in the marketplace today is because our factories were never destroyed in World War II so we are still

producing many products from factories that are 60, 70, 80 years old while the factories in Japan and Europe are much newer and are using much newer techniques. Most of the vaunted Japanese technology really comes from the United States. They have just used the techniques we have developed but which we have not implemented, and they have implemented them right away. Our companies said, "Well, we invested too much in this machinery and need to get a few more years use out of them. The new machinery we will put in slowly." We actually invented the robots, but the Japanese use them. We actually invented new quality control methods, but the Japanese use them. We did not. We invented a car in which all four wheels turn when you steer but we have not produced it; the Japanese have. In technology it is probably right that what is new is better, but, of course, life is not just technology. Life is more than technology. When it comes to new methods of producing products, new is better, but, you know, in life many things have changed throughout the generations. Man has different languages and customs and cultures, but one thing has never changed, and that is man's passions. The passions man has today are the same passions that man has had since recorded history. You can read the cuniform writings of the Sumarians, the ancient Indian sanscript, the ancient Greek writings, the papayra of the Egyptians, and, of course, of own Bible, and you can see that man's passions has not changed one bit. We are still the same human being

with all our foibles. We are filled with ambition, cupidity, lust, all sorts of competing and conflicting passions which strive to take us over. We may not agree with some of the solutions of the Greek writers to these passions, but they speak about them. They speak about man's overweening ambition, his arrogance, his greed, etc. We know our passions have not changed. They have remained the same.

The wisdom of the old is very relevant today. We, to our own peril, have dropped the wisdom that has been accumulated through thousands of years, and we are suffering for it today. For example, today young people do not have a sexual identity, and, because people do not have a sexual identity, we have all these problem of husbands leaving wives and wives not wanting to be mothers, etc., even after having children. One of the biggest problems we have today is that there is no sense of sexual identity. In fact, Margaret Mead, before she died, wrote an article and said that if it were up to her she would not have coeducational high school, because coeducational high schools blur the difference maleness and femaleness and the men and women do not have a sense of sexual identity. We have done many things to confuse young people today so, therefore, women do not want to have children and men do not want to support their wives and families are not what they used to be. Twenty-five percent of the children of America live in poverty. This

is a terrible statistic. We have so many fathers who run away and so many mothers who desert their children. It is a terrible blight, and there are so many young people who do not want to get married at all. There is a famous author, Ben Rotenberg, who was known for his liberal views, who recently wrote a book and said America is decaying because the elite, the people who have all the education are not having any children. It is a terrible situation. We can look at our own families and see the problems. Sometimes you have a wonderful husband whose wife just gets an idea in her head that she does not want to be a mother anymore and will not take care of the children and vice versa. We have so many bad situations today.

We thought we were doing good. We were going after the new. We thought we were going to improve human relations, but the fact is we have not. The old ways are actually better. It is important that young people develop a sexual identity. In fact, that is actually what is happening in traditional homes where actually the only Jewish people who are actually marrying early and having children are those who go to traditional religious institutions, by and large. It is a very difficult situation, and it is very hard to convince somebody of it, because they are so enamored of the new that they cannot see that the new methods they use are bringing about bad results.

As Moshe said in his poem, "Remember the days of old. Consider the years of many generations." In other words, when it comes to human passions and emotions there is thousands of years of experience here based upon the Torah which has always allowed the Jewish family to be strong and to be filled with vigor and to be a family where youngsters can learn proper values. Unfortunately, today the Jewish family is disappearing. It is hard for a rabbi. He tries to give this message over and over again, but the people do not seem to be listening.

It reminds me of the story they tell about a rabbi who went to an insane asylum and there he gave a talk to the inmates. In the middle of his speech one of them jumped up and said, "This is the biggest garbage I have ever heard." The rabbi finished his speech and as he was leaving the warden said, "You know, rabbi, you have to come back again. You did so much good. You know that man who jumped up in the middle of your speech and said he had never heard such garbage? That's the first sane thing he has said in years." Unfortunately, that is the case with many of the pronouncements that rabbis have been trying to get across. People just do not understand them and will not accept them. It is a shame because not everything new is better. In technology it is true, but when it comes to human relations the old should be listened to. They yielded in the past better results than we

have today. Let us hope and pray that in the New Year we will return to these values and once again have strong Jewish families.

HAAZINU 1988  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Haazinu we have Moshe's last words to the Jewish people. They are in the form of a poem, because only if the song of Judaism is in the heart of every Jew will Judaism survive. In this poem Moshe predicts that the Jewish people <sup>will</sup> rebel against G-d, but if they read this poem they will come back to G-d and they will understand why evil things occur to them. Other religions have taken the Bible in totality, including this poem, and have applied all the curses to the Jews and all the blessings to themselves. It is true, though, that many times our people get tired of the religion, that many times our people do not follow the precepts of morality and justice which are delineated in the Torah. When they do this, of course, catastrophe comes upon them, families break up, Jews stop being Jews, etc. It says, "And he said, referring to G-d, 'I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end shall be because they are a generation who turns things around, children in whom there is no faithfulness.'" This, of course, means that many times people will run after the new instead of sticking with the solid and the traditional. They will look for things to turn their lives around which cannot help at all, ~~that~~ they will go after new fads and experiences and forsake decency and loyalty and devotion and dedication, all those things which really make life worthwhile.

I am reminded how people sometimes act against their own best interests because they are mad and do certain things. It says, "And children, they will have no faithfulness." I know recently how many young women have come to me complaining. Their husbands are mad at them so they do not give them child support. Does that really settle the argument? Is the father of the children really getting even with the mother? What he is doing is punishing

HAAZINU 1988  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

his own children. Many times when we seek to accomplish things we do the exact opposite of what we should do. This father, by withholding child support payments, is harming his children. He is not really harming his wife. Is that really what he wants to do? Recently I attended a meeting at the Federation where certain people got up complaining about Shamir and the Israeli Lichud policies. One man said from now on he would not give money to Israel. Is this really going to help? Where does the money from the UJA go to? It goes, by U.S. law, to the same type of institutions it goes to in America, to old folks homes, to education, to help poor people, to Jewish family services and Jewish community centers. By withholding funds from Israel he is not going to change their defense policies one iota. All he is going to do is harm the poor. We see this also in synagogues where sometimes people get mad and will not give money to the synagogue. All that means is that the synagogue is going to build a larger debt at the bank, and there will be more interest to pay, and later on when the fellow is reconciled to the synagogue, he is going to have to make a larger donation.

This so often happens that we act the opposite to our own best interests. Sometimes the only person who can help you is the person you turn against because you are so angry. I once witnessed how a person thought he had a reservation on an airline. The plane, though, was full. The person, who obviously had an emergency, and had to take that airplane. However, instead of talking nicely to the reservations clerk who was helping the passengers, he berated her and called her names and acted in a very bad way. The only person who could really help him, he really castigated and was very angry at. Of course, he did not get any help. This happens many times, that the only person who can really help you is the person that you are angry at. I have seen it happen many times when one spouse was sick and the other spouse