



Parashat Ha-Azinu 5770

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On the Parashah

Parashat Ha-Azinu: The Song without Any Preconditions

[Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Devarim p. 505-508 – edited by Rav Aviner]

The song "Ha-Azinu" briefly and broadly describes how the Master of the Universe leads the Nation of Israel from the Exodus out of Egypt, then the generation of the desert, and all of the generations until today and on to the end of days. The Torah portion begins: "Listen heavens...and hear earth" (Devarim 32:1), i.e. there is a cosmological value to all matters relating to Israel. The Ramban explained that this song is not dependent on Israel's repentance (ibid. verse 40). This idea is explicit in the prophet Yechezkel (36:22): "It is not for your sake, House of Israel, that I act," but for my sake, because there is disgrace and desecration of Hashem's Name. "Woe to the father who exiles his children" (Berachot 3a). It is impossible to continue enduring this desecration of Hashem's Name: "It was said of them: These are Hashem's Nation and they had to leave their Land" (Yechezkel 36:20). Therefore, "I sanctified My great name, which is desecrated among the nations... And I brought you to your Land" (ibid. 23-24). And then you will be healed.

We must first come home to the Land of Israel. This is established by the Ramban that the Land of Israel must be in our hands and not "in the hand of another one of the nations" (Additions to Sefer Ha-Mitzvot, Positive Mitzvah #4) as it says, "And you shall possess it and dwell in it" (Devarim 11:31). It is necessary to have a State. A

land under control of a nation is none other than a state. The Ramban therefore says that there is no precondition: there will be the Redemption of Israel and their return to their Land. And then "He will forgive His Nation through His Land" (Devarim 32:43), since "the Air of the Land of Israel makes one wise" (Baba Batra 158b). We will first return to the Land and then we will be spiritually healed.

The Chafetz Chaim relates that Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin once asked the Vilna Gaon: We learn all positive character traits from Hashem based on "And follow His ways" (Sotah 14a explaining Devarim 13:5) – just as He is gracious and merciful, so too you should be gracious and merciful (Shabbat 133b). But where do we learn that Hashem is "happy with His Lot" (Avot 4:1), from which we learn the obligation to be happy with our lot? The Vilna Gaon answered: From the verse "For Hashem's portion is His Nation" (Devarim 32:9) from the song Ha-Azinu, since we are called His children whether we act correctly or not (Kiddushin 36a). Hashem is happy with His children even when we fail to act in the appropriate manner of being His children. This is a song with no strings attached.

Rav Aviner on...

Why Eretz Yisrael?

[From "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah" –

Parashat Netzavim-Vayelech 5769 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: Why is Eretz Yisrael the only thing that interests you people? You're fixated on it! Certainly it's important, but there are other important things: Torah study and mitzvah observance, education and our country's social problems.

Answer: Indeed, this claim has provided a ready excuse for complaining over the years, and there are two answers to it:

First, why be inaccurate? Why mislead and confuse people? It isn't true. We're involved in Eretz Yisrael, but also in Torah learning and mitzvah observance and education and social issues. "Everything G-d said, we will do and obey" (Shemot 24:27). And precisely because the battlefield is so long, we have to work on ourselves in every one of these spheres, and G-d will come to our aid.

Second of all, are we properly devoted to Eretz Yisrael? It should only be so! Surely you can't suspect Moshe of not being devoted to Torah and mitzvot, education and society, yet he still begged to enter Eretz Yisrael: "I beseeched G-d at that time saying, 'Let me pass through and see the good land...'" (Devarim 3:23-25). G-d finally said to him, "You've said enough!" (verse 26). Don't ask anymore. "Let people not say, 'How unfair the Master! How stubborn and incalcitrant the disciple!'" (Rashi). That shows how vociferously Moshe begged. "Here is one of three places where

Moshe told G-d, 'I won't relent until You tell me if You're going to fulfill my request or not' (Rashi, verse 23). Yet surely Moses had a reason for doing so. Eretz Yisrael has profound importance, the very most profound importance of all. It was only for a matter of such profundity that Moshe begged G-d in this manner. And Eretz Yisrael involves not just one profound matter, but 252 profound matters. Ha-Rav Natan Shapiro, the Chief Rabbi of Cracow, born in 1591, was one of the greatest mekubalim [mystics] of Poland in his day. His entire book "Megaleh Amukot" is devoted to those same 252 arguments used by Moshe to explain why he craved to enter the Land. He did not invent them all. Rather, they are taken from the works of Rabbi Menachem Racanati, the "Rokeach," the Arizal, Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Pano, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero and Rambam's Guide to the Perplexed. (see the work, "Kol HaNevu'a" by Rabbi David HaKohen, "the Nazir", page 269). For example, number four is: "If someone possesses the merit from Eretz Yisrael, he can rid the world of its craving for idolatry." Also, Eretz Yisrael is a key to "attaining the secret of wisdom... because the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise." Certainly Moshe was full of divine wisdom, yet he still craved to enter Eretz Yisrael to add on more.

Principle 170 is: Eretz Yisrael is the key to fulfilling "The humble shall inherit the Land" (Tehillim 37:11), for the culmination of all character traits is humility. Certainly Moshe was the most humble man on earth. Even so, he longed to enter the Land to become more so.

Principle 187: "Eretz Yisrael is the key to bringing all the nations under the wings of the Divine Presence. That's why Moshe beseeched Hashem. He was acting for the sake of Heaven, with the intent of helping all mankind to serve G-d."

Indeed, Eretz Yisrael is a very profound matter. And may we merit to become more closely attached to Eretz Yisrael and to delve more deeply in the topic of Eretz Yisrael.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

The Holocaust

Our Rabbi gave a parable in relation to the Holocaust: There is a house next to a forest and a young child plays at the edge of the forest. It begins to get dark in the late afternoon, and the mother goes out and calls to the child: "Come inside the house, it is beginning to get dark and cold." The child does not listen. The mother goes out and calls again: "It is already cold. There is hot water for a shower, a hot meal and a clean bed. Come into the house," but the child does not hear. She yells next time: "It is already night, lions and bears roar in the forest, and they will soon go out to search

for prey. It is dangerous to be outside, but the child continues to hide from her. The mother finally decides that she needs to bring him in by force. She approaches him and grabs the child, who is yelling and protesting by force. The time had arrived to go home, and to save him from the attacking animals, she would have pulled off one of his limbs, if she had to. (Ha-Rabbanit Chana Tau, Am Nolad p. 17)

Volkswagen

Someone once came to pick up our Rabbi in a Volkswagen. He refused to enter. (Ha-Rav David Goldenberg)

Amalek

Our Rabbi disagreed with what Ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik said in the name of his father, Ha-Rav Moshe, that anyone who arises against the Nation of Israel to wage war is in the category of Amalek in all respects (Kol Dodi Dofek p. 101, Five Derashot and Nefesh Ha-Rav, p. 87). And he said that it was only a derashah (a homiletic teaching), and one should refrain from saying things such as like this. While Ha-Rav Moshe held that "Amalek" is defined by a philosophy and can apply to any nation, our Rabbi held that it only refers to the biological offspring of Amalek (Ha-Rav Yitzchak Shilat quoted in the book "Melumdei Milchamah" of Ha-Rav Nachum Eliezer Rabinovitz. See Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of the Rambam #187 and Moreh Nevuchim 3, 50).

*From Rav Aviner's Commentary on Birkat Ha-Mazon,
entitled Shir Ha-Ma'a lot*

"For the Messianic Age and for the life of the World-to-Come"

The Rambam explained that these two realities are completely separate. The World-to-Come is a spiritual world full of miracles which does not contain the body, only the soul. In contrast, the Messianic Age is in this world, but with the return of the Kingship of David to its former sovereignty: The Messianic Age is in this world and the world will continue according to its pattern, but the Kingship will return to Israel. And our early Sages already said: "The sole difference between this world and the Days of the Messiah is the servitude to the nations" (Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah - Laws of Repentance 9:2 and see Hilchot Melachim - Laws of Kings 11:1, 12:1).

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