



## The Divine Service of Deuteronomy

The purpose of all the songs in the Bible is to express thanks to the Almighty, with great joy. Of all the songs, the one that seems different is the Song of *Ha'azinu*. Its literal meaning seems to be a rebuke of Jewish people and a warning lest they deviate from God's path. In a certain sense, this is fitting, since the song of *Ha'azinu* appears at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy whose central theme is Moshe Rabbeinu's reproach to the people on the eve of their entering the Land of Israel.

However, the Chassidic approach is that it is specifically those things that seem negative that contain the greatest light. We should therefore read the Song of *Ha'azinu* while keeping in mind that actually contains infinite Divine pleasure, which brings to a climax the depth of love that is hidden in open reproach. Indeed, in Hebrew, the letters of "rebuke" (תּוֹכַחָה) equal the value of the words "out of love" (תּוֹדָה אֶהְיֶה), or "love inside." Indeed, we see that immediately after this climactic end to his reproach, Moshe Rabbeinu ends the Torah with a *parshah*-long blessing, *parshat Vezot Habrachah*. Thus, in its inner essence of rebuke and criticism is blessing (as taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov, the Magid of Mezritch, and the Alter Rebbe). Particularly, the blessing hidden within open rebuke comes from the highest level and can only descend incognito, concealed within harsh words. Since the general them of Deuteronomy is reproach, it is incumbent upon us to now reveal how it actually alludes to the highest levels of Divine service and blessing that we can merit receiving. Let us proceed to list the 11 stages of service that correspond to Deuteronomy's 11 *parshah*'s with which we can merit bringing the out the highest light from the apparent darkness.

The first *parshah*, *Devarim*, alludes to the word for "leader." Since it is in the plural it refers to both Moshe Rabbeinu and Joshua, who overlapped to some extent in their leadership. In *parshat Devarim*, these two leaders unite,<sup>1</sup> just as the all-inclusive soul of the leader of the generation and the spark of Divinity within the soul of every individual unite to become one. Every Jew contains a spark of Moshe Rabbeinu, the all-inclusive leader, and the way to reveal this spark is to identify and connect with the Moshe Rabbeinu, the leader of the generation.

Thus the first stage of Divine service that reveals the infinite pleasure hidden within the rebuke (in our times: the state of exile we are still in) is nourishing our soulful connection with the Moshe Rabbeinu of our generation, the individual in whose words the Divine Presence is heard.

The second stage is alluded to in the name of the second *parshah*, *Va'etchanan*, meaning "I begged." It is not enough to merely identify the Moshe Rabbeinu of our generation and create a bond with him. We must also identify and empathize with the heavenly decree the leader faces; in Moshe Rabbeinu's case this was the decision that he would not enter the Land of Israel. We must then cry out from our innermost depths, his own existential cry of "How long...?!" How long will the exile last until we merit the true and complete redemption? The essential characteristic representing the identification of a true disciple of the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation is his ability to not only identify, but to actually experience the leader's existential distress.

We then proceed to *parshat* "Eikev," which alludes to *Ikveta Demeshicha*, a difficult time period where we know the Mashiach is already present because we see his figurative heels, but we cannot experience his complete presence. In its first few words, *parshat Eikev* advises us that, "Because you shall listen..." (וְהָיָה עִקְבֵי תִשְׁמָעוּן). By listening and understanding that the Mashiach is already here (even though his presence cannot be seen) we are prompted to improve our conduct, altering the way we approach even the lightest commandments of the Torah and preparing us for the next stage: seeing!

The name of the next *parshah*, *Re'eh*, means "See!" The next word in the *parshah* is *Anochi*, the form of "I" with which the Almighty refers to himself in the Ten Commandments. The true leader of the generation reveals the aspect of Moshe-Mashiach described as the "Infinite within the finite." The stage of our service described in *parshat Re'eh* is to actually see the Mashiach.

These first four steps allow those who have engaged in seeking, identifying, and connecting with the Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation to direct their efforts externally and rectify the world, transforming reality into a dwelling place for the Almighty, where God can be revealed openly.

Transforming reality begins with the three communal commandments that we the Jewish people were commanded with upon entering the Land of Israel: Appointing a king, annihilating Amalek, and building the Holy Temple. These three commandments correspond to the next three *parashot* in the Book of Deuteronomy: *Shoftim*, *Ki Teitzei*, and *Ki Tavo*. *Shoftim* opens with the commandment to appoint the religious judicial court and continues with the commandment to appoint a king. *Ki Teitzei* opens with a description of laws related to making war and concludes with the war against

*Amalek*. *Ki Tavo* opens with the commandment to bring the first fruits to the Holy Temple.

Freed from the burden of war as described in *Ki Teitzei* and *Ki Tavo*, we proceed to the final goal of the communal commandments, the unity of the Jewish people, described in the opening verses of *parshat Nitzavim*. Complete Jewish unity is possible when all Jews (from the greatest to the smallest) recognize their common spiritual root as manifest in the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu and the Mashiach.

From *parshat Nitzavim* we continue to *Vayelech*, wherein Moshe Rabbeinu elevates higher and higher in order to bring about the revelation of the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate – the revelation of the Divine essence. Revealing the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate came as an answer to his supplication from 38 years prior, “Show me Your glory.”<sup>2</sup>

This week’s *parshah*, *Ha’azinu*, reveals the hidden pleasure inherent in every event that occurred and will occur in the history of our nation until the coming of the

Mashiach (revealing the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate), the resurrection of the dead and life in the World to Come.<sup>3</sup> It is then that we will be able to wholeheartedly identify with the words spoken by Isaiah, “I thank you God for Your reproach... You have comforted me.”<sup>4</sup> The great *tzadikim* deeply endeared *parshat Ha’azinu* because through its reading, we merit being shown how the rebuke and the blessing come together as one, as above.

Finally, we come to the termination of the Book of Deuteronomy in *parshat Vezot Habrachah* where we read of, “...The blessing that Moshe, the man of G-d, bestowed upon the Children of Israel before his death.” When Moshe Rabbeinu is fully revealed, “...before the eyes of all Israel,”<sup>5</sup> then end of the Torah reconnects with its start, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”<sup>6</sup> revealing to us all, “...the new heavens and the new earth”<sup>7</sup> that were always before God.

*(Based upon the Daily Dvar Torah for Ha’azinu, 5768)*

#### Notes:

1. The possibility of Moshe Rabbeinu and Joshua uniting in a single generation is one of the most important signs of the coming redemption, as explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe.
2. Exodus 33:18.
3. As alluded to in the seventh verse of the *parshah*.
4. Isaiah 12:1.
5. Deuteronomy 34:12.
6. Genesis 1:1.
7. Isaiah 66:22.

#### HASHEM OHEV TZADIKIM – “GOD LOVES TZADIKIM...”

This Thursday (13<sup>th</sup> of *Tishrei*) is the birthday of the 4<sup>th</sup> Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shmu’el (known as the *Moharash*) Schneersohn, may his merit protect us and the entire Jewish people.

From childhood, the *Moharash* was a gifted craftsman. From the age of 5, he would fashion wood into beautiful utensils with a penknife he had received as a present.

His father, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lubavitcher Rebbe, the *Tzemach Tzedek* had an elderly chassid who was a successful merchant. This chassid also had a knife, one that was far better for carving wood. One time he showed his knife to the young *Moharash* and asked him whether he might like it as a present.

The child answered, “Of course!”

The chassid told the *Moharash* that he would give him the knife if he would answer just a single question. The child agreed and the chassid said, “Tell me, Where is God?”

The *Moharash* immediately replied, “I will answer your question, but only if you tell me where God is not!”

The chassid enjoyed the young *Moharash*’s reply and gave him the knife as a present.

*(from the Children’s Gathering of 6<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, 5767)*

*Mazal tov to Rabbi Chaim Moshe and Leah Jacobson on the upcoming upshernish of Yosef Yitzchak David. May they merit speedily returning to our holy land.*  
*Mazal tov to the parents of the new chayal betzivot Hashem, Yitzchak Feivish Eidelsohn, may they merit to raise him to be a chayal, yereh shamayim, and lamdan, all in good health*