

This coming Shabbos, we read Parshas Ha'azinu. It is an interesting parsha.

Moshe Rabbeinu is about to give very tough tochocho to Klal Yisroel, but he prefaces it with a very inspiring posuk:

(ב) יִעֲרֹף כְּמִטֶּר לִקְחִי תֹזֵל כֶּטֶל אֶמְרָתִי כְּשִׁעְרִים עָלֵי דָשָׁא וְכִרְבִּיבִים עָלֵי עֵשֶׂב:

The end of the Torah has a lot of brochos and k'loles. One can get a very negative impression about all the gloom and doom that is predicted about our future. But Moshe starts off with saying Torah is like dew and rain. It is life-giving. Choosing Torah is choosing life itself.

(ג) כִּי שֵׁם ה' אֶקְרָא הִבּוּ גֹדֶל לֵאלֹהֵינוּ:

The gemara in Brochos says we learn from this posuk that birkas HaTorah is de'Oraisoh. The Ramban counts it as a separate mitzvas asei – there is a chiyuv to recognize the gift of Torah and thank Hashem for it. Every time you receive a gift from Hashem, you need to recognize it and thank Him. Therefore, we thank Hashem every day for the amazing gift of Torah that Hashem gave us – as the way of earning eternal reward.

So despite all the disasters and tragedies foretold by the Torah, Klal Yisroel has to understand a basic idea: You can live a life which is like a living death, and you can live a true life. A life of Torah is the way to truly live life. Without Torah, it's not really life.

Rav Saadia Gaon comments on the posuk in Koheles: "נִשְׁבַּח אֲנִי אֶת" "הַמֵּתִים נִשְׁכָּר כִּתּוּ מִן הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר הָקָם חַיִּים עֲדָנָה". What kind of phrase is this: "I praise the dead who already died?" Which dead people didn't already die? He answers that there are plenty of dead people living on Earth who haven't actually died yet. They are walking around, but are living dead. The only real life is a life of Torah.

Moshe Rabbeinu starts the song of Ha'azinu with the fundamental principle of Jewish belief:

(ד) הַצִּוֵּר תְּמִים פָּעֵלוּ כִּי כָל דֶּרֶכּוֹ מִשְׁפָּט קָל-אֲמוּנָה וְאִין עֹל צְדִיק וְיִשָּׁר הוּא:

Rashi explains, even when Hashem brings strong punishments, Hashem delivers it without vengeance but with precision and with rachamim, which enables us to withstand it and rebuild afterwards.

אע"פ שהוא חזק, כשמביא פורענות על עוברי רצונו, לא בשטף הוא מביא, כי אם בדין, כי תמים פעלו:

The Jews always faced tremendous, overwhelming tragedies throughout our history, and at multiple times, millions of Jews were massacred! But despite the enormous losses, Hashem always made sure the devastation wasn't absolute. He always supplied enough rachamim within the destruction to give us a way to escape and rebuild.

Hashem guarantees that ultimately He will reward the tzaddikim and punish the wicked. There may be long delays and we might not understand the cheshbon, but it is absolutely just and correct.

Moshe tells Klal Yisroel that Hashem invested so much in you – He brought you out of Egypt, He took care of you in the desert, He built you up as a special, chosen nation. He continues to love us and wants to give us the inheritance of nations. We are different than all other nations. They have their rules of history, but those rules are suspended when it comes to Klal Yisroel.

Yet as a result of life being so good, we get complacent and spiritually lethargic. We kick back in rebellion against Hashem and then the calamities start to happen.

Historically we see that when Klal Yisroel gets too comfortable, we stop

growing and connecting to Hashem – even while we look and act frum.

And when disaster comes and we have no way to save ourselves, we eventually turn back to Hashem to save us.

Let us examine the Sifri on this incredibly important posuk:

הַצִּוֵּר. הַצִּיּוּר שֶׁהוּא צָר אֶת הָעוֹלָם תַּחֲלָה וַיִּצַּר בּוֹ אֶת הָאָדָם שְׁנֵאמַר (בראשית ב ז) וַיִּצַּר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם.

"Hatzayar" (the designer). He designed the world and fashioned the human being within it".

Whatever you want to say about evolution – whether some animals came from other animals instead of coming from the Earth directly – it makes no difference to us. Our real machlokes with evolution is about the creation of the human being. We don't budge from the belief that Hashem fashioned Odom hoRishon from the dirt of the Mokom haMizbeach on Har Habayis. The Rambam says this is a tradition that everyone agrees with. The dirt from which Odom hoRishon was created was from the place of the Akeidah, where Noach built his mizbeach after the mabbul, and where Odom offered a korban on the day he was created. That is how Odom has kapporah – since he was made from the ground of the mizbeach which gives kapporah.

So as far as the details of evolutionary process, we don't care. And the theory is constantly changing anyway. But you can never think the human being is just a more advanced, more developed animal. He has a neshomo which cannot be contained by an animal body. Odom hoRishon has to be a completely different creation and not come from the animal world.

The Sifri continues:

תָּמִים פָּעֵלוּ. פְּעוּלָתוֹ שְׁלִימָה עִם כָּל בְּאֵי הָעוֹלָם וְאִין לְהִרְרָה אַחֵר מִעֲשִׂיו אֲפִילוּ עִילָה שֶׁל כָּלֹם וְאִין אֶחָד מֵהֶם שִׁסְתַּכֵּל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵילּוּ הָיוּ לִי שְׁלֹשׁ עֵינַי וְאֵילּוּ הָיוּ לִי שְׁלֹשׁ יָדַי וְאֵילּוּ הָיוּ לִי שְׁלֹשׁ רַגְלַי וְאֵילּוּ הָיִיתִי מִהֶלֶךְ עַל רֹאשִׁי וְאֵילּוּ הָיוּ פְּנֵי הַפּוֹכוֹת לְאַחֲרֵי כִמָּה הָיָה נֹאֵה לִי תִלְמוּד לֹמַר כִּי כָל דְּבָרָיו מִשְׁפָּט, יוֹשֵׁב עִם כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד בְּדִין וְנוֹתֵן לוֹ מָה שֶׁהוּא רָאוּי לוֹ.

"Perfect is His work." People might think: Wouldn't it be better If I had three eyes? If I had three hands? If I had three feet? How wonderful it would be to see behind me!

Don't make this mistake. Hashem made the human body in the most perfect, complete way for us to function.

Sixty years ago, there was a trend in biology to identify and remove certain organs that were considered "extra" or unnecessary because they were vestiges from previous stages of human evolution. They removed the spleen and the appendix without hesitation. But now they know that the spleen plays a very important function in the immune system and the appendix plays a very important function in the digestive system.

Every organ and limb was fashioned with intention and purpose by Hashem. Nothing was an accident. Only something designed by Hashem directly can become the carrier of a Divine neshomo. And since the Torah came before creation, Hashem wanted the human body to be the ideal vehicle to fulfill the Torah in the best possible way. This vehicle doesn't change or evolve with time – just like the neshomo doesn't evolve.

קָל-אֲמוּנָה. שֶׁהָאִמִּין בְּעוֹלָם וּבְרָאוּ.

Hashem believed in the world and created it, knowing it can fulfill the goals and plans He set for it – to fulfill the Torah.

ואין עול. שלא נבראו בני אדם להיות רשעים אלא צדיקים וכן הוא אומר (קהלת ז כט) לבד ראה זה מצאתי אשר עשה הא' את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבונות רבים.

"Without injustice." He did not create men – whether their bodies or their souls – to become wicked reshaim. True, there is a yetzer horo which tests us, but we have the capacity to overcome it by going back to the way we were originally created. We were created by Hashem to be straight. But they tried to make all kinds of cheshbonos that pull us off-track.

צדיק וישר הוא. מתנהג בישרות עם כל באי העולם.

He deals justly with all of His creations. Hashem has an exact din and cheshbon with every person in the world. And He deals with us accordingly. Nothing happens to us without that din and cheshbon being taken into account by Hashem. Everything is handled by Hashem in a detailed, hands-on way.

דבר אחר, **הצור.** התקף. **תמים פעלו.** פעולתו שלימה עם כל באי העולם ואין להרהר אחר מעשיו אפילו עילה של כלום ואין אחד מהם שיסתכל ויאמר מה ראו אנשי דור המבול להשטף במים ומה ראו אנשי מגדל שנתפזרו מסוף העולם ועד סופו ומה ראו אנשי סדום להשטף באש וגפרית

Don't question Hashem's justice. Don't think: Did the generation of the mabbul really deserve to be wiped out entirely? Couldn't they be redeemed somehow? And couldn't the dor haflogah be reformed? Why did they deserve such extreme dispersion? Was it really necessary to destroy an entire city of S'dom – men, women and children?

We say yes – everything Hashem does is with an exact cheshbon and it is absolutely just and correct.

ומה ראה אהרן ליטול את הכהונה ומה ראה דוד ליטול את המלכות, ומה ראו קרח ועדתו שתבלעם הארץ תלמוד לומר **כי כל דרכיו משפט**

Don't question Hashem's judgment about who Hashem favors. Aharon for the kehunah and Dovid for malchus, etc. Don't think it isn't fair and it isn't just. You may not understand the cheshbon, but it is absolutely justified.

This is an introduction to the rest of the Parsha.

Before Hashem tells us about the tochocho and all the pain and suffering Klal Yisroel will endure throughout the centuries, Hashem lays down the foundation – it is all just and correct. There is no injustice or unfair punishments that can be criticized. No matter how bad the golus gets – millions of Jews died and thousands of communities destroyed and uprooted. But it is all just. Just like all these tragedies in Chumash were just.

יושב עם כל אחד ואחד בדין ונותן לו מה שראוי לו. **ק-ל אמונה,** בעל הפקדון.

Hashem deliberates about the fate of each and every individual. He will get exactly what he deserves in the end.

There is a fundamental problem with people who try to explain the creation of the universe, the origins of life, and history of the world through natural, random forces. Nothing happens by accident – from the form and design of the human being, to the events of world history and Jewish history. The best thing for a human being's design is to have two eyes – it's not just because other animals had two eyes and the human being developed naturally from them. And when anti-Semitism suddenly erupts over the entire world, it isn't just because people are upset with the actions of the government of Israel in Gaza. Hashem planned it this way – it fits Hashem's ultimate plans for Klal Yisroel.

This is how Parshas Ha'azinu begins.

It begins by giving us the right perspective on the Torah. Don't think the Torah is all about punishments and tragedies and bad things. The truth is that the Torah is gentle like dew and life-giving like rain. The Torah is a beautiful thing and we have to thank Hashem for such an amazing gift.

Then it gives us the right perspective on the functioning of the world.

Whether it is the physical world and the physical form of man – designed with precision with nothing extra or inefficient. Whether it is the neshomo or the Torah.

Hashem is not the source of evil. Human beings with their poor choices introduce evil and injustice into the world. But Hashem Himself is perfectly just and fair in everything He does.

Later in the parsha we read about Hashem punishing us with a nation that is not a real people.

(כא) הם קנאוני בלא אל כעסוני בהכלייהם ואני אקניאם בלא עם בגוי נכל אכעיסם:

I often think this is referring to the Palestinians. They got the entire world to believe that Eretz Yisroel is really their ancestral homeland that they were living in from time immemorial. Anyone who knows the slightest thing about the history of Palestine before the State of Israel knows how ridiculous this lie is. It is a figment of the imagination that Hashem is using to punish us for abandoning Him.

(י) וימצאוהו בארץ מדבר ובתהוה וכל יששן ויבכנהו ויבוננהו ויצרנהו כאישון עינו: (יא) ויפשו ויעיר קנו על גוזליו ורחם ופרש כנפיו וקחהו וישאנהו על אברתו: (יג) וירכבהו על במותי ארץ ויאכל תנובת שדי וינקהו דבש מסלע ושמן מחלמיש צור:

(טו) ויששן וישרון ויבטט שמנת עבית כשית ויטש א' עשהו וינבל צור וישערתו: (טז) ויקנאוהו בצרים בתועבת ובעיסה: (יז) ויבחו לשדים לא א' אלהים לא ידעום חדשים מקרב באו לא שערום אבותיהם: (יח) צור ילך תשי ותשכח א' מחללך: (יט) וירא ה' וינאץ מפעם בניו ובנותיו: (כ) ויאמר אסתירה פני מהם ארצה מה אחריתם כי דור תהפכת הפה בנים לא אמן בם:

The psukim describe horrible churban. Why? Because Hashem gives and gives, and we just take it for granted. The wealth of the Jewish community in general – including the orthodox community today – is probably the most wealthy that Jews have ever been in our entire history. Of course, Jews take credit for all this wealth – our education, or our intelligence, etc. But they are all gifts from Hashem and He expects us to do things for Hashem in return. Not just to indulge in luxuries and material comforts. But the human ego takes over and we don't want to recognize that it doesn't come from us and we owe it back.

Then disaster hits and after trying everything they can, Klal Yisroel finally realizes there is no choice but to turn to Hashem for salvation.

I heard about a statistic recently – not sure if it's true – which says 25% of secular Jews in Israel feel that they are closer to religion since October 7th. It is an incredible statistic.

In the end of the parsha it says:

(כח) כי גוי אבד עצות הָפָה ואין בהם תבונה: (כט) לו חֲכָמוּ וישכילו זאת יבינו לאחריהם: (ל) איכה ירדף אחד אלף ושנים יניסו רבבה אם לא כי צורם מקרם וה' הסגירם: (לא) כי לא כצורנו צורם ואיבינו פלילים:

(לה) לי נקם ושלם לעת תמוט רגלם כי קרוב יום אידם וחס עתדת למו: (לו) כי ידיו ה' עמו ועל עבדיו יתנחם כי יראה כי אזלת יד ואפס עצור ועזוב: (לז) ואמר אי אלהימו צור חסיו בו: (לח) אשר חלב זבחימו יאכלו ישתי יין נסיכם וקוחו ויעצרכם יהי עליכם סתרה: (לט) ראו עתה כי אני אני הוא ואין אלהים עמדי אני אמית ואחיה מחציתי ואני ארפא ואין מידי מצייל:

We need to come back to our senses. We need to realize that our enemies only have power over us because of our spiritual failings, and we need to come back to Hashem to be saved. Nothing in the world that we worship can save us – not money, not technology, nothing.

It is a very rough, frightening parsha. But it is short. Study it with Rashi.

History is not a bunch of random things happening by accident. We know now that the Israeli intelligence was absolutely blinded to Hamas' plans. It wasn't an accident. The unbelievable anti-Semitism that sprung up immediately after Hamas' attack was not an accident.

That is what this parsha is about – how to read history and how to read current events. Hashem is managing everything to the finest detail. The only thing we control is our bechiroh and our level of ruchniyus.