

# Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



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**Parashat Ha'azinu**  
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**פרשת האזינו**  
**י"ג בתשרי תשע"ז**

Torah Reading: *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 32:1-52

At the end of Moshe's last speech to *Bnei Yisrael*, Hashem tells Moshe to write down a song to teach to the Israelites. "Put this song in their mouths," Hashem says, "so that the words may become a witness for Me against them. After I bring them to the land that flows with milk and honey, they will eat and be satisfied and become obese. They will turn to other gods and serve them and mock Me and break My covenant. Then when many oppressive evils come upon them, this song will testify against them as witness."

Hashem invokes two very specific witnesses for this song (32:1): "הָאָזִינוּ.  
פִּי הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֶדְבָּרָה; וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ, אֲמַר־בִּי  
the earth will hear the words of My mouth."

Hashem is not the only one to invoke the heavens and earth as witnesses. Nearly 600 years later, the prophet Yeshayahu (Isaiah) uses a very similar construct at the beginning of his searing prophecy about the impending destruction and exile of the tribes of Yisrael. We read this passage on the Shabbat immediately preceding Tisha B'Av, the commemoration of the destruction of both Temples and other national Jewish tragedies throughout history. The text says (1:2): "שְׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהָאִזִּינוּ  
אָרֶץ, כִּי ה' דָּבַר: בְּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוּמַמְתִּי, וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי  
Hear, heavens, and listen, earth, for Hashem has spoken: I have raised children and brought them up, and they have rebelled against Me."

It is no coincidence that Yeshayahu echoes Hashem's words. Yeshayahu wants to bring back to the people's minds that all that was said in the Song of *Ha'azinu* had come to pass: the people had turned to other gods and broken Hashem's covenant.

The opening words of the song in this week's *parasha* invoking the heavens and the earth also echo an *earlier* verse, the very first verse in the Torah: “בְּרֵאשִׁית, בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ. – In the beginning, Hashem created the heavens and the earth.”

Again, it is not coincidental that the same literary elements are used in both verses. As Hashem calls witnesses to the covenant with the Bnei Yisrael, Hashem invokes those things first created by the Divine, almost as if to say, “I have the power. I created the heavens and the earth; they are eternal; and they will bear witness eternally to this covenant.” Citing the heavens and earth gives the covenant permanence; and indeed eventually not once, but twice, the Jewish people were exiled from the Land and the Temple was destroyed.

I do not believe that it is a coincidence that we read this *parasha* on the Shabbat between Yom Kippur and Sukkot. This is the time of year that we renew our covenant with Hashem, and we follow that by demonstrating our faith by building our fragile “homes,” returning to the state of “heaven and earth” and depending on Hashem for our sustenance and safety.

*Gmar Chatima Tova!* May Hashem seal for us a happy, healthy, peaceful year.  
Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- Close your eyes and imagine the “heavens and the earth.” What do you see? What feelings does it evoke?
- Why do you think Hashem wanted the covenant witnessed? Didn't Hashem trust the Bnei Yisrael?
- What is the difference, if any, between “listening” and “hearing”?