

פרשת האזינו

Rashi directs us on how to understand the point that the first Posuk of this week's Parshas Haazinu wishes to make. We read (D'vorim Perek 32/Posuk 1):

הָאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי פִי:

Heavens, hear and I will speak; let the land hear the sayings of my mouth.

Rashi writes:

האזינו השמים - שאני מתרה בהם בישראל ותהיו אתם עדים בדבר (לעיל ל/יט¹) שכך אמרתי להם שאתם תהיו עדים, וכן ותשמע הארץ. ולמה העיד בהם שמים וארץ, אמר משה אני בשר ודם למחר אני מת, אם יאמרו ישראל לא קבלנו עלינו הברית מי בא ומכחישם, לפיכך העיד בהם שמים וארץ, עדים שהן קיימים לעולם. ועוד, שאם יזכו, יבואו העדים ויתנו שכרם, הגפן תתן פריה, והארץ תתן יבולה, והשמים יתנו טלם. ואם יתחייבו, תהיה בהם (דברים יז/ז²) יד העדים תחלה (יא/יז³), ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר והאדמה לא תתן את יבולה, ואחר כך ואבדתם מהרה על ידי האומות:

Heavens, hear – That I am warning Israel and you, the heavens and the earth, will be the witnesses in this matter. That is what I said to Israel that you will be the witnesses. And such is the explanation of ‘*let the land hear*’.

¹ The entire Posuk in Parshas Nitzavim reads:

הַעֲדֵתִי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ הַחַיִּים וְהַמּוֹת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה וּבַחֲרַתְּ בְּחַיִּים לְמַעַן תַּחֲיֶה אֶתְּךָ וְזַרְעֶךָ:

I have made the heavens and earth as witnesses against you; life and death I have placed before you, blessing and curse; you shall choose life in order that you shall live, you and your seed.

² The entire verse reads:

יַד הָעֲדִים תְּהִיָּה בּוֹ בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה לְהַמִּיתוֹ וְיַד כָּל הָעָם בְּאַחֲרֹנָה וּבְעֶרְתָּ הָרַע מִקְרַבְךָ:

The hand of the witnesses shall be against him first to kill him and the hand of all of the people at the end; you shall eradicate the evil from your midst.

³ The entire verse reads:

וְחָרָה אַף ה' בְּכֶם וְעָצַר אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָטָר וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבַדְתֶּם מִהָרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר ה' נָתַן לְכֶם:

The anger of G-d will be against you and He will stop the heavens and there will be no rain and the ground will not give its produce; you will quickly perish from upon the good earth that Hashem gives to you.

Why did he make the heavens and earth as witnesses against Israel? Moshe said, 'I am flesh and blood: tomorrow I will die. If Israel will say 'We did not agree to the covenant', who will come and contradict them?' That is why he brought the heavens and earth as witnesses because they exist forever.

Another reason why the heavens and the earth were brought as witnesses is that if Israel will be deserving of reward, the heavens and the earth will give their reward: the vine will give its fruit and the land will give its produce and the heavens will give their dew.

If they will be deserving of punishment, the hands of the witnesses will be against them first such as 'He will stop the heavens and there will not be rain and the ground will not give its produce.' And then, 'You will perish quickly' – at the hand of the nations of the world.

Rashi is responding to multiple questions. His first question is that we already learned in Parshas Nitzavim that the heavens and earth were appointed as witnesses for Israel's behavior over the generations – if so, why is this fact repeated here⁴.

Secondly, Rashi explains why the heavens and earth were chosen as witnesses; he provides us with two explanations.

It is interesting to note that in his commentary to Parshas Nitzavim, Rashi also gives two explanations for the choice of the heavens and earth as Divinely designated

⁴ In fact, there is an even earlier mention of the heavens and earth as being witnesses against Israel. We read in Parshas Voeschanan (D'vorim Perek 4/Posuk 26):

הַעִידֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ כִּי אֲבֹד תֵּאבְדוּן מֵהָר מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ לֹא תֵאָרִיכֶן יָמִים עָלֶיהָ כִּי הַשָּׁמַד תִּשְׁמְדוּן:

I have made the heavens and earth as witnesses today against you that you will certainly perish quickly from upon the land that you are crossing the Jordan River to there to inherit it; you will not have lengthy days upon it because you shall certainly be destroyed.

Rashi does not note this earlier verse. Rabbenu Bachaye, whom we will learn shortly, does discuss that verse in conjunction with his commentary to Parshas Nitzavim (D'vorim Perek 30/Posuk 19).

witnesses – with one explanation that is the same as one he gives in our Parsha and one explanation that is different.

Rashi writes in Parshas Nitzavim:

העדתי בכם היום את השמים ואת הארץ - שהם קיימים לעולם וכאשר תקרה אתכם הרעה יהיו עדים שאני התרתי בכם בכל זאת.

I have made the heavens and earth as witnesses against you – They exist forever and when bad will happen to you, they will be witnesses that I warned you about all this.

This explanation certainly seems parallel to the first of the commentaries that Rashi gives in our Parsha.

The second part of that Rashi is different. We read:

דבר אחר העידתי בכם היום את השמים וגו' אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל, הסתכלו בשמים שבראתי לשמש אתכם, שמא שנו את מדתם שמא לא עלה גלגל חמה מן המזרח והאיר לכל העולם...הסתכלו בארץ שבראתי לשמש אתכם, שמא שנתה מדתה, שמא זרעתם אותה ולא צמחה, או שמא זרעתם חטים והעלתה שעורים, ומה אלו שנעשו לא לשכר ולא להפסד אם זוכין אין מקבלין שכר ואם חוטאין אין מקבלין פורענות, לא שנו את מדתם, אתם שאם זכיתם תקבלו שכר ואם חטאתם תקבלו פורענות על אחת כמה וכמה:

Another explanation of 'I have made the heavens and earth witnesses' – Hashem said to Israel, 'Look at the heavens that I created to serve you. Perhaps they have changed their attributes? Perhaps the rotation of the sun did not arise in the East and give light to the world? Look at the earth that I created. Perhaps you planted and nothing grew? Or, perhaps you planted wheat and the earth brought up barley?

And these, the heavens and the earth, that were not created to be rewarded or to have a loss – if they merit they do not receive a reward and if they sin they are not punished -they did not change their attributes. You, Israel, if you merit you will receive reward and if you sin you will be punished – all the more so you should not change your attributes.

We can certainly understand why Rashi's second explanation in our Parsha is different than his second explanation earlier in Nitzavim.

When Rashi justifies the seemingly repetitiveness of our Parsha, he teaches that the object of Hashem's words in Parshas Haazinu is not the same object as His words in Parshas Nitzavim.

In Parshas Nitzavim Hashem addresses Israel and thus, in addition, to emphasizing the eternity of the heavens and the earth, He also tells Israel that the heavens and the earth can serve as an example to them; they should be inspired by them.

Presumably, the Mishnah in Masseches Ovos presents the relevant principle. We learn there (Perek 1/Mishna 3):

אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק הוא היה אומר אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין
את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת
לקבל פרס ויהי מורא שמים עליכם:

Antigonus the man of Socho received the *Masorah* from Shimon HaTzaddik. He would often say: Do not be like the servants who serve the master for the purpose of receiving a reward. Rather, be like the servants who serve the master not for the purpose of receiving a reward; the fear of heaven should be upon you.

This Mishnah, if it is the source of the idea behind Rashi's explanation, can explain Rashi's words that 'all the more so you should not change your attributes'.

Antigonus was not saying that there is no reward that accrues to people. He is saying that the receipt of reward should not be a motivation.

Certainly, then, when these Divine creations serve G-d, not because they are not attentive to reward but because they receive none, they are worthy of emulation. Israel should certainly be willing to serve G-d, all the more so, all the more because in addition to being His servants, they, in fact, do receive a reward.

In contrast, to the context of Parshas Nitzavim, in Parshas Haazinu Rashi teaches us that Hashem addressed the heavens and the earth. The second explanation of Rashi in the former Parsha is irrelevant to those creations in our Parsha. What is relevant to them is the appointment that they have received. The heavens and earth are not only permanent and thus can 'testify' regarding the warnings that Hashem gave to Israel, they are also imbued with the directive given to human

witnesses – they are the first to mete out the consequences of their testimony – whether it be for good or for bad.

However, as well-known as these explanations that Rashi gives us for the mentioning of the heavens and the earth are, there is an alternative way to look at their prominence in our Parsha. If there is an alternative way to look at their prominence in our Parsha, then the question of repetition may become irrelevant.

In his introduction to Parshas Haazinu, Rabbenu Bachye, as always, interprets a Posuk from Sefer Mishlei and tells us how that verse informs us regarding the first Posuk of our Parsha.

That verse in Mishlei (Perek 10/Posuk 31) reads:

פִּי צַדִּיק יִגְוֵב חֲכָמָה וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפֹּכֹת תִּפְרָת:

The mouth of the Tzaddik yields wisdom; and the upside-down tongue will be excised.

שלמה המלך עליו השלום הודיענו בכתוב הזה כי הצדיק והרשע שני הפכים, ודבורו של צדיק הוא פרי חכמה ודבורו של רשע בהפך ממנו.

King Shlomo informed us with this verse that the righteous and the wicked are two opposites. The speech of the righteous is the fruit of wisdom and the speech of the wicked is the opposite.

הצדיק נמשל לעץ, הוא שכתוב: (תהלים א/ג) "והיה כעץ שתול על פלגי מים אשר פרו יתן בעתו ועלהו לא יבול", והעץ מוציא עלה ופרי,

The Tzaddik is compared to the tree. That is what is written in Sefer Tehillim, 'He will be like a tree implanted in parcels of water; it will give its fruit in its right time and its leaf will not wither.

והענין הזה בו טבעי שהוטבע בו כן ביום שלישי במאמר: (בראשית א/יא⁵) "תדשא הארץ", העלה יש בו תועלת כי הוא מגין על הפרי בצלו מפני חום השמש, והפרי הוא

⁵ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים...תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דְּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינוֹ אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ בוּ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי כֵן:

G-d said, 'Let the earth make grass, shoots of grass that will produce seed and fruit trees that produce fruit of different kinds, that have seed in them, on the land; and it was so.'

העיקר, כן הצדיק יש בו עלה ופרי, העלה שלו הוא דבורו בדברי חול בעסקי העולם הזה במוסריו וספור דבריו, ויש בהם תועלת גדול כשם שיש תועלת בעלה המגין בצלו, וזהו שדרשו רז"ל: (עבודה זרה יט ב) ועלהו לא יבול, אפילו שיחת תלמיד חכם צריכה תלמוד, הפרי שלו הוא דבורו בתורה ובחכמה שהיא העקר כשם שהפרי עקר באילן, ומפני זה הזכיר שלמה בכאן: פי צדיק ינוב חכמה, באורו: כי דבורו של צדיק פרי חכמה...הצדיק כל כך הוא מרגיל עצמו לדבר חכמה עד שתחזור בו החכמה טבעית כפרי הזה שהוא עיקר האילן.

This is a matter of nature that was implanted in the tree on the third day of Creation by G-d's Word, as it says, 'Let the earth make grass'. The leaf has a purpose because it protects the fruit from the sun with the shade that it provides. And the fruit is of principal importance.

The Tzaddik is similar he has a leaf and fruit. His 'leaf' is his speech when he speaks about non-sacred topics regarding worldly matters in this world, it expresses his morality and how he speaks. That speech is of great benefit just like the benefit of the leaf that protects the fruit with its shade.

That is what Chazal interpreted in Masseches Avoda Zarah regarding the verse, 'its leaf will not wither'. The Gemara says that even a 'regular' conversation of a Talmid Chacham should be studied.

The 'fruit' of the Tzaddik is his speech regarding Torah and wisdom which is of principal importance. It is just like the fruit of the tree being that which is of principal importance.

It is for this reason that Shlomo HaMelech says here, 'The mouth of the righteous will produce wisdom'. The explanation is that the speech of the Tzaddik is the *fruit* of his wisdom. The Tzaddik habituates himself to such an extent to speak of wisdom until the wisdom becomes a matter of nature to him just like this fruit which is of principle importance to the tree.

ולשון תהפוכות תכרת, קרא את הרשע...כי הוא בהפך מן הצדיק כי מדתו בכל דברי פיו בהפך ממדת הצדיק אשר פיו ינוב חכמה, ומרוב גנות המדה הזאת אשר לרשע הזכיר בו קללה ואמר "תכרת"...וידוע כי מדת השפלות היא בגדר החכמה, והרשע שקראו "לשון תהפוכות" יש בו מדת הגאווה כי היא הפכו בכל דבר, וכשם שהחכמה פרו של צדיק כן הגאווה פרו של רשע...ובא לומר כי כל כך הכסיל מרגיל עצמו במדת הגאווה בפיו ובלבבו עד שתחזור בו הגאווה טבעית...

‘The tongue that is upside-down shall be excised’ – that is what the wicked is called. Because he is the opposite of the Tzaddik because his attributes in all of his manners of speech are the opposite of those of the righteous whose mouth produces wisdom.

And because this attribute of the wicked is so contemptible, a curse is said, ‘it will be excised’.

It is known that the attribute of humility and a sense of lowliness is within the definition of ‘wisdom’. The wicked who has an ‘upside-down tongue’ has the attribute of conceit because conceit is completely the opposite of humility.

Just like that wisdom is the fruit of the righteous so is conceit the fruit of the wicked. And this verse comes to tell us that the wicked habituates himself with the attribute of conceit in his mouth and in his heart until that conceit becomes part of his nature.

...כי הצדיק הוא נמשך אחר עסקי הנפש שהיא נצחית, והרשע נמשך אחר עסקי הגוף שהוא כלה, ודבר ידוע כי הגוף מן הארץ והנפש מן השמים, והנה בעוד שהאדם בעולם הזה בחיים יש לו קורבה בשמים ובארץ: בשמים מצד הנפש, ובארץ מצד הגוף, ולכך כשהזהיר משה לישראל בקיום התורה והמצוות יעיד עליהם עדים השמים והארץ שהם קרובי האדם, כאדם שמתרה לחברו ומעיד עליו עדים בפני קרוביו. וזהו שאמר: האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי...

The Tzaddik is attracted to matters of the soul – which is eternal. The wicked is attracted to matters of physicality which is finite.

It is known that the body is from the earth and the soul from heaven. As long as a person is alive in This World, he is related and has a closeness to the heavens and to the earth. He is related to the heavens from his spiritual aspect and to the earth from his physical aspect.

Therefore, when Moshe warned Israel to fulfill Torah and Mitzvos, he called upon the heavens and earth because of their closeness to man to be the witnesses, just like when one person warns another person and he uses relatives and those close to him to be the witnesses.

That is what is meant by the Posuk:

הָאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבָּרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי פִי:

Heavens, hear and I will speak; let the land hear the sayings of my mouth:

Rabbenu Bachye presents us with an entirely new perspective on the appointment of the heavens and earth as witnesses.

The heavens and earth, Rabbenu Bachye teaches, are the perfect witnesses for Israel because they model the duality of the nature of man in *Olom HaZeh* and thus are an everlasting reminder of the potential that man has to fulfill his role in this world by the proper use and balance of his *kochos*: spiritual and non-spiritual.

Man is able to identify with these witnesses because they reflect who man is, a being who is capable of harmonizing those strengths and potentials or bringing them into conflict and entering a dialectical state.

The goal of man, says Rabbenu Bachye here, is not that there should be a struggle or battle between one's spirituality and physicality – such tension is not part of man's appropriate nature. Each aspect, both the physical and the spiritual, have their role. Man is part of this world, and thus he was created with physicality. The goal of that physicality is to serve and enhance the spiritual, furthering the individual forward in his desire for *shleimus*, completion and wholesomeness.

It is true that if there has to be a battle we are rooting for the spiritual to overcome the physical. However, we are not rooting for a battle; we are seeking harmony and accord. Perhaps, the word 'synthesis' is most appropriate as long as we know to identify that which is of principle importance and that which has an importance that is secondary.

And thus, the threat of the permanence of the heavens and the earth is not their main purpose in the testimony they will give. The permanence of their being, the reason why they were given this Divine task is that they are to be an everlasting reminder to man of the goals for which he is to strive and the balance which he is to seek to achieve.

And these words of Rabbenu Bachye regarding *Shiras Haazinu* can lead us to look at an additional *Shira*, termed as *Perek Shira* by Chazal. *Perek Shira* teaches us of the nature of G-dly creations to sing His praises. I saw a reference from the

Kabbalistic Sefer *Knaf Renanim* that when all of the creations recite their specific *Shira* it is like a grand symphony where the various instruments provide a unity of musical experience.

The heavens and the earth sings G-d's praise as do the days of the weeks. The animal kingdom is not left out as an ongoing list of creations and creatures all have recorded praises of G-d.

But, from the vast array of creations, the absence of one of them is strikingly missing.

Man!

Perek Shira does not tell us about the song of Man and the reason is clear. *Perek Shira* cannot tell us about how man praises G-d because unlike all of the other creations – Man has *bechira chofshis*.

The songs that are enumerated in *Perek Shira* are not songs that those creatures sought to sing. That is part of the nature of their creation. They did not achieve those songs as being natural to them because of their exalted habituation. That nature was imbued within them during the Seven Days of Creation.

The capacity for man to praise G-d is endemic to him. Whether or not he will praise G-d is subject to man's choice. If he has an exalted habituation, they will become natural to him. Or, the extreme opposite could happen.

And thus we must ask, what makes *Perek Shira* so special if all of those members of that grand symphony were pre-programmed to make their recitations?

The answer is, I believe, that it is the conductor of that symphony which realizes its potential. And who is that conductor? It is Man when he chooses to recite his original composition and offer it before G-d.

Hashem is the lyricist. Man's song of praise combines the voices of all of Creation to provide a holistic and perfectly harmonized offering.

And that is the intent of *Shiras Haazinu* – as Rabbenu Bachye teaches. Man views the heavens and the earth and the, following their example, seeks to emulate them, developing the proper relationship between his 'heavens and earth' and then beginning to conduct the grand symphony of creation in its performance. The

better the proper relationship and balance that man creates, the more successful he will be as the symphony's conductor and the the more beautiful its music will be.

The more imbalance that exists in man's interrelationship of his 'heavens and earth', the less successful he will be as a conductor, and the less beautiful its music will sound. In extreme instances, and sadly enough there are many, many such examples, he can make transform that would-be music into grating and intolerable noise.

Man's *shira* is not just an addition to the song of all creations; it is the enabler that brings all of those songs together.

And, with this explanation we can turn the page back one week and have a fuller understanding of the last verses of Parshas Vayelech.

We read there the almost final words of HaKodosh Boruch Hu to Moshe Rabbenu in Olom HaZeh (D'vorim Perek 31/Posuk 19):

וְעַתָּה כָּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמָּדָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמָּה בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה
לִי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Now, write for yourselves this Song and teach it to B'nei Yisroel; place it in their mouths in order that this Song will be a witness for me forever for B'nei Yisroel.

The Torah continues (ibid. Posuk 22):

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיְלַמְדָהּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Moshe wrote this song on that day and he taught it to B'nei Yisroel.

The concluding verse of the Parsha (Posuk 30) reads:

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בְּאָזְנֵי כָּל קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת עַד תַּמָּם:

Moshe spoke the words of this song in the ears of the entire congregation of Israel until they were completed.

Undoubtedly, these P'sukim are referring to *Shiras Haazinu* which immediately follow them.

However, Chazal understood these P'sukim as being far more comprehensive and inclusive than *Shiras Haazinu* alone. We can learn in Rambam what that understanding of Chazal was.

We read there (Hilchos Tefillin, Mezuzah, v'Sefer Torah Perek 7/Halachah 1):

מצות עשה על כל איש ואיש מישראל לכתוב ספר תורה לעצמו שנאמר ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה, כלומר כתבו לכם תורה שיש בה שירה זו לפי שאין כותבין את התורה פרשיות פרשיות

It is a positive commandment of the Torah for each and every man in Israel to write a Sefer Torah for himself as it says, 'Now write for yourselves this song'. This means to say, 'write for yourself a Torah that contains this song'. [The explanation of this *d'rasha* is] because a Sefer Torah cannot be written as individual sections [and thus, once there is a commandment to write *Shiras Haazinu* it becomes necessary to write the entire Torah.]⁶

⁶ Rambam continues there:

ואף על פי שהניחו לו אבותיו ספר תורה מצוה לכתוב משלו, ואם כתבו בידו הרי הוא כאילו קבלה מהר סיני, ואם אינו יודע לכתוב אחרים כותבין לו, וכל המגיה ספר תורה ואפילו אות אחת הרי הוא כאילו כתבו כולו.

Even if his fathers left him a Sefer Torah as an inheritance, it is a Mitzvah for him to write his own. And if he writes it with his own hand, it is as if he received the Torah from Mt. Sinai. If he does not know how to write, then others write for him.

Whoever corrects a Sefer Torah, even one letter, it is as if he wrote it entirely.

Based on this final statement of Rambam, it is a universal practice that when one writes, or has written, a Sefer Torah, that a number of letters at its end are incomplete, their outline has been marked, but they have not yet been filled in. Guests, or sponsors, are then invited to fill-in the letter to make it complete and thus be considered as having written an entire Sefer Torah.

The logic that says that one who writes even one letter, or even corrects a letter is considered as writing an entire Sefer Torah is compelling.

A Sefer Torah with even one letter that has an error is not *kosher* until that letter is fixed. Thus, each letter is an indispensable element of the Sefer Torah and necessary for its *kashrus*.

Rambam has explained to us here the mechanism by which Chazal understood from these verses that refer to *Shiras Haazinu* also refer to the Mitzvah of writing an entire Sefer Torah. Since a Sefer Torah cannot be written piecemeal, as individual sections that stand by themselves, so once we have to write Haazinu, we are forced to write the entire Torah.

However, upon consideration, this logic seems backwards. It seems that Rambam is explaining that the Mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah is dependent upon the Mitzvah of writing *Shiras Haazinu*. That thought is counter-intuitive at the very least.

I would have said that the Mitzvah to write *Haazinu* would only come from the Mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah. Since *Haazinu* is part of the Sefer Torah, the Mitzvah to write it, Haazinu, should be an offshoot of the Mitzvah to write the Sefer Torah.

But the Rambam is saying the reverse: since it is a Mitzvah to write *Haazinu*, as the P'sukim say explicitly, it then becomes a Mitzvah to write an entire Sefer Torah – because there is no choice.

Additionally, if there is such a mechanism that the obligation to write one section of the Sefer Torah leads to an obligation to write the entire Sefer Torah, why was Haazinu chosen to be the vehicle to teach us this mechanism? Why not any other part of the Sefer Torah – the same logic would certainly apply.

In fact, once this mechanism is established, that is by being commanded to write one section of the Torah we are *memeila* commanded to write the Torah in its entirety, I would have chosen to focus upon the Ten Commandments.

Let the Torah command to write the Ten Commandments and then I would have known to write the entire Torah.

And thus, we must ask why was Haazinu chosen to be so important to teach, by virtue of its writing, the Mitzvah to write an entire Sefer Torah?

I think that Rabbenu Bachye's explanation may be the key to our understanding.

Parshas Haazinu becomes the basis for us to find our place in Torah and Mitzvos. Parshas Haazinu defines for us how we are to deal with the duality of our being, our spiritual and physical makeups there are so thoroughly enmeshed.

Are those spiritual and physical makeups intended to be at war with each other, in perpetual conflict? We know that such is the reality quite often – but was that the Divine intention?

Or was the Divine intention that man should appropriately meld those two aspects of his being, his spirituality and physicality, to make himself whole and wholesome?

If the latter is the case, *Shiras Haazinu* is our key and gateway to the completeness of our Torah fulfillment.

Shiras Haazinu provides us with an eternal message of vigilance to seek the appropriate melding of spirituality and physicality and to be ever-vigilant that the balance that is sought will be maintained.

Since such is the key to our relationship to the entire Torah, Hashem in His infinite wisdom chose to make the Mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah dependent upon the Mitzvah of writing *Shiras Haazinu*, because *Shiras Haazinu*, is the indispensable preamble to the entirety of Torah.

Certainly the preamble is not the main substance of a document, but when it is clearly indispensable, then reading the document without that preamble causes the reader a loss of clarity and comprehension when studying it.

Parshas Haazinu, with its main body being *Shiras Haazinu* is a very difficult Parsha to learn. Its words are difficult and their symbolism and points of reference are most challenging. In fact, Rashi, beginning with his commentary on Posuk 43 (d.h. *v'chi'per admoso*), has us go back many P'sukim earlier and learn them with the benefit of a different prism.

But, we do not have to be so far ahead in history to rely on Rashi for the specialness of our Parsha. Anshei K'nesses HaGedolah, uniquely and singularly, instructed us regarding the division of *Aliyos* of *Parshas Haazinu* as Chazal has informed us in *Masseches Rosh Hashanah* (31 a). We learn there that the first words of the first words of each *Aliya* form the acronym:

הז"ו ל"ך

The Splendor is yours.

And what is that splendor? The splendor of Parshas Haazinu is its designation as our entrée to the entire Torah.

Let us return to another commentary of Rabbenu Bachye on our Parsha (Posuk 41) and allow him teach us the conclusion that we hope to reach and achieve when learning Parshas Haazinu as an requisite preamble for the entire Torah. He writes:

והנה השירה הזאת נחמה גדולה והבטחה מבוארת בענין הגאולה ובאבדן עובדי גלולים ובנקמת ישראל מאויביהם ובכפרת ישראל מעונותיהם. ואולי מפני זה בא סימן ההפסקות לרבתינו ז"ל: הזי"ו ל"ך מתקנת עזרא הסופר הכהן הנביא שראה ברוח הקודש שתהיה תקנתו בקריאת ספר תורה בצבור תקנה קיימת בכל דור ודור, לא תבטל בזמן מן הזמנים, ותקן הסימן הזה בהפסקות הפרשה הזאת המקובלת אצלנו לבאר שיחזור הזיו והזוהר והכבוד והתפארת לישראל כמבראשונה, (ירמיהו לא/טז⁷) ושב בנים לגבולם:

Behold, this song is one of great comfort and a clear promise regarding the Redemption and the perishing of the idolaters and the revenge of Israel from its enemies and the atonement of Israel from its sins.

Perhaps, that is why there is the *siman* that our Rabbis gave for the stops⁸ for the *Aliyos* – הזי"ו ל"ך, 'the splendor is yours, that were an enactment of *Ezra Hasofer* the Kohen and Prophet⁹ who saw with his *Ruach HaKodesh* that this enactment will be a permanent one for each and every generation and it will not be nullified at all at any time.

⁷ The entire verse reads:

יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרֵיֶיךָ נְאֻם ה' וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לְגְבוּלָם:

'There is hope for you at your end', says Hashem; 'the children will return to be within their borders.'

⁸ הפסקות means 'stops' or 'breaks'. In the specific context here, such a term may be seen as being imprecise. In fact, הזי"ו ל"ך does not indicate stops, it indicates beginnings. Because those letters are the first letters of each *Aliyah*, not the last.

The first letter ה is for the beginning of the word האזינו, which is not a stop at all. It is a beginning.

⁹ We learn in Masseches Megilla (15 a) that Ezra and Malachi, the last of the *nevi'im* are one and the same person.

Ezra enacted this *siman* for the stops for the *Aliyos* and it is understood by us to explain the meaning of '*the splendor is yours*' as follows:

The splendor and the brilliance, the glory and the beauty of Israel will return to the state as it once was [at *Mattan Torah*] and the sons will return to be within their borders.

Shabbat Shalom

Chag Sameach

Rabbi Pollock