

Moshe already told Yisroel that they should write down this song. He begins.

הָאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבָּרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִי:

“Hear, the heavens, and I will speak. And the Land should listen to my mouth’s words.” (Devarim 32:1).

A song is not meant to be literal. It is meant to be allegorical and to convey a feeling, emotion, and message. It is meant to be remembered long after one forgets the memorized texts. It is also meant to give a deeper meaning to a message that seems plain on the surface.

Yeshayahu gives a similar preamble to his entire book. Yeshayahu was the first one to be called “נָחֻן” a seer. In fact, the previous navi says that “seeing” was rare. (Shmuel I 3:1). A seer is different from a regular navi as he does not merely get inspiration and deal good advice. He is able to actually see the past, present, or future, and understand it as if actually seeing it. In this same vein Yeshayahu is introduced and gives his preamble. “שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהָאֲזִינוּ אָרֶץ כִּי הַדְּבָר בְּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוּמַמְתִּי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי.” (Yeshiah 1:2). He does not call *the* heavens or *the* earth. The purpose of talking to heavens and earth is different than Moshe’s, as we will explain.

“Give ear o the heavens.” Moshe concluded talking to Bnei Yisroel about keeping the Torah. He had already exhausted the messages from Hashem. He spent the entire book of Devarim telling them about the important mitzvos and reiterating the significant steps in their history. He warned, cajoled, and admonished them. He taught them how to love Hashem and gave them enough fodder of the evils to come if they disobeyed so that they feared Him, too. Another “song” to bring home this point is superfluous. The point of the Ha’Azinu song is for the world to know. Specifically, the heavens and the Land of Eretz Yisroel.

There is no אָת here to make the heavens a proper noun. It is not אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ. (Bereishis 1:1). Moshe could not warn ministering angels and other heavenly beings that are out of his jurisdiction. However, he could ask the heavens itself to give ear. If the heavens give an ear then perhaps all of its encompassing dwellers will also heed and understand. While the heavens generally had to give ear, it was *the heavens* – the sky that is visible, that had to give ear. Be ready. When Yisroel enters the Land then it must be ready with rain.

“And I will speak.” This is future tense. Moshe would soon be joining the celestial beings in heaven after he passed. He was also asking for permission. He was about to sing about the greatness of Hashem and the Land, so he was asking for an audience. More than that he was also respectfully deferred to the heavens before speaking about them. He was also about to command it. “Speak” means to command. *Give ear o heavens, I am giving you a request.*

“And the Land should listen (carefully).” We already pointed out there is no proper noun here referring to all the earth and all its creatures therein. Moshe was talking to *the Land* – Eretz Yisroel. He was telling the Land to also listen carefully. It is not just Yisroel that will have to keep the Torah. The Land itself will have to follow it and be bound by it. All the promises of the Land flowing milk and honey, producing crops enough for three years, and the grazing that will satiate the people, all must come to fruition. The promises of the Land spitting out the people, drying up, and its soil becoming like iron also must come to pass – under the ascribed conditions.

The Land has to pay attention because it had to produce. The reason the heavens did not have to listen as closely is because rain is natural for the heavens. Weather changes. However, it was the Land that would either have to produce an inordinate amount of yield despite bad farming practices (but good mitzva practices) or produce little despite the best rains and cultivations. The Land would have to yield or hold back supernaturally, and that is why it had to pay attention carefully.

“To my mouth’s words.” *To the words I utter.* Hashem already put the words in my mouth.

Moshe was in both the heavens and earth. He was drawn out of the water as a baby and spent time in the heavens on Har Sinai. Thus, he spoke familiarly to them.

Moshe also spoke directly to the skies above the Land so he says *the* heavens. He refers to Eretz Yisroel so he says *the* Land. He asks the heavens to do what is natural but the earth to do something unnatural, so the skies merely give ear while the Land has to listen carefully.

In contrast, Yeshayahu was talking to heavens and earth as he saw them. It was not all the heavens nor all of the earth. It was not specifically Eretz Yisroel. *Listen heavens and give ear o land.* He was directing his words toward Yisroel but talking indirectly. He talked to the ministering angels Heavens and Earth, warning them that if Yisroel can be seen as wayward then the heavens and earth themselves are unsafe from Hashem’s retribution. Rebuke is better when directed at another. He was also saying, *listen carefully those far like heavens and near like land. Certainly, Yisroel shall heed.* He does not refer to his own speaking or words because he is conveying a message from Hashem. He is giving a message that the Creator is fed up with Bnei Yisroel. *Listen carefully heavens and give ear earth, Hashem is frustrated with His people.*

This message ties in nicely to the shtikel on Succos. *See infra.* May the message always ring clear and true.

Sitting in the Succah is described as follows:

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת:

“In booths you shall settle for seven days. Every citizen in Yisroel shall dwell in booths (Succos).” (Vayikra 23:42).

“In succos.” This is not the first time the Torah mentions succos. “And they traveled from Succos, and they encamped in Ethem, at the edge of the desert.” (Shmos 13:20). Oddly, it does not state when Bnei Yisroel arrived in Succos. “And they traveled from Ramses and encamped in Succos.” (Bamidbar 33:5). Thus, Ramses—the area of Goshen they dwelled in, was the start point. They encamped in Succos. “Encamped” signals a temporary dwelling like a succah booth. Succos, then, is tied to their dwelling in Goshen, Mitzrayim. The term succos was mentioned also by Yaakov. “And Yaakov journeyed onto [what would be named] Succos and he built himself a house for himself and booths for his animals. Thus, the place was later called Succos.” (Bereishis 33:16). Yaakov was returning from Charan, Aramea southward. He made it to Shchem. Venturing to Goshen would be out of his way. This Succos by Goshen must be a different place, named after the encampment of Bnei Yisroel.

Succos is vital to Hashem’s message for Bnei Yisroel. At a time of gathering their plenty (they were mostly an agricultural society), they must not forget Succos. They cannot forget that Yaakov, even on the road, cared for his animals. He built a house for himself and he also built shelter for his animals. They must also not forget how they lived in Goshen. They dwelled in booths. Just as the place in Canaan was named Succos after Yaakov’s booths, the place near Goshen would be called Succos because of Bnei Yisroel’s booths. Even dwelling there for centuries, they were still “temporary” residents there as Mitzrayim was not their home. They went from slaves to conquerors and sovereigns. They did not dwell in succos in the desert to celebrate Chag HaSuccos. The pasuk clearly states “citizen” and “when you gather your yield” (Vayikra 23:39). Both are tied to when they entered actual Eretz Yisroel. Living in succos booths is another reminder, six months later, of the *geula* from Mitzrayim. Thus, the *moadim* are bookended by *geula*.

“Settle there for seven days.” A person is not considered settling anywhere unless it is at least seven days. While it is a definite period—only seven days—the obligation is to settle there. This is akin to cleaning out the house for Pesach. For seven days the house is ‘turned over’ with no chometz. In Succos the obligation is to leave the house and settle in the Succah, that is the new home. This is the reminder, too, that even when the Beis HaMikdash stood, Hashem settles in this world in a temporary home. Even those that own booths must go out of their booth and dwell in a succah.

“Every citizen in Yisroel.” This connection to leaving Mitzrayim applies to all those who are citizens in the Land be they born Bnei Yisroel or new residents. The Torah is one constitution for all those living in the Land. It would be logical to think that those

that did not come out of slavery would have no need to be reminded of that *geula*. However, the *geula* and living in the Land free under the Torah, is a benefit of all living in the Land. They also must be reminded of Hashem's protection and greatness because this is Hashem's land.

This includes men, women, and children – all citizens and born Bnei Yisroel. This would seem to exclude living in succos outside of Eretz Yisroel as they are not citizens of the Land and there is no gathering of produce (see *ibid*). However, living in the succos is not tied to gathering of the produce, but the Chag and the arba minim are. The succah is tied to the Chag only to settle there for seven days. *Every citizen in Yisroel* is not dependent on the Land. It is linked to the nation. Everyone who is Bnei Yisroel or who naturalizes into Bnei Yisroel. That is why the term is not רֶגֶל meaning resident alien, but חֲזָרָה. This term refers to a naturalized Yisroel, i.e. a convert. Thus, this pasuk is teaching that all who follow the Torah must abide by this important Law and lesson.

“Settle in Succos.” This is repeated. The word Succos is spelled without a vav in this pasuk two times. In the next pasuk it is with a vav. Each of these refer to the booths and the place in Goshen. The next pasuk says סֹכְוֹת to include both Yaakov's Succos and the Goshen Succos. Hashem was with Yaakov because he protected his loved ones and his property. He cared for his animals. Bnei Yisroel did the same in Goshen despite being mistreated. They were in hard bondage for centuries and yet they protected their families and their animals. They then gave up one of these animals for Hashem as a korban Pesach. *In booths settle for seven days, every naturalized citizen in Yisroel, be it born or alien.* All should settle in booths. *They shall settle in Succos.* They are now all one – born Yisroel and naturalized Yisroel – and they shall settle in Succos. Not literally in the place called Succos but the mindset of the Succos.

Therefore, even with plenty and living seemingly secure in the Land, Succos is meant to remind Yisroel of Hashem's ever-present role in their lives. Moshe adjured the skies and the land. Yeshayahu directed Hashem's frustration at the heavens and earth. Remembering the lesson of Succos keeps Bnei Yisroel from straying.

Have a Chag Sameach.