

## Nature in the Parasha

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

### Parashat Ha'azinu – Blessed Droplets of Torah

#### The Song of Gestation

*Shemitta* (the sabbatical year of the land) is finally over! I once again embrace my plot and feel how the land delights in returning to its faithful owner. It's been a whole year. We have come full circle as we plan and prepare our winter gardens. I can now freely clear out the straggled weeds that don't belong in the flowerbeds. The entangled, long winding, dried, dead sticks of the Bougainvillea that had been an irritating eyesore since the winter-snows, have finally been removed. The love-scratches on our arms testify to the pruning of the high maintenance roses still hanging with their heads, brown spots on their leaves saddened by continuous neglect. No guarantee we will be able to revive them. Nevertheless, it is so exciting to dip our hoes and fingers again in the rested caking earth, gradually transforming its parched drying flakes to becoming moist fertile soil. The time between Rosh Hashana and the end of Sukkot feels like a gestation period between the old and new year. We are still processing what was, while becoming ready for what will be. The remnant of last year's fruit lingers on while seeds of the new year's greens are being sown. The leaves of the trees are browning and falling, the last grapes show their wrinkled faces between their drying leaves. The figs are worming but the pomegranates are still shining bright red under the cloudy sky. The heat has broken and the dew caresses the yellowing herbage with promise of renewed life. We pray, "Remember us with life, King who desires life..." while we welcome the increasing moisture heralding the scents of fall.

#### Turning Torah into Prayer

Just as we have come full circle, we read in this week's *parasha* about how the Torah is called a song – שיר/*Shir*, which in the holy tongue means a complete circle from the word שרשרת/*sharsheret* – neck- or bracelet. This song is great it includes the moment, the past and the future. It includes both this and the coming world. Therefore, all the songs in the Torah are written after a completion, when all the details are woven together to form a complete harmony. Moshe's opening words of the song of *Ha'azinu* is like a prayer.

ספר דברים פרק לב: (א) האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי:  
(ב) יערף כמטר לקחי תזל כטל אמרתי כשעירם עלי דשא וכרביבים עלי עשב:

"Listen heavens and I will speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop down as the rain, my speech flow as the dew; like droplets upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb" (*Devarim* 32:1-2).

As I enjoy the fresh breeze, I ponder Rashi's explanation on our Torah verse, "like droplets (שעירם/*seirim*) upon the tender grass." שעירם/*seirim* can also mean stormy wind, like the winds that bring rain. Just as the winds strengthen the herbage and promote their growth, so too the words of the Torah promote the moral growth of those who study them (Rashi). "May it be your will that my words not return empty, but leave beautiful fruits in the hearts of those who hear them; in the same way that dew and rain satiate the dry land, and cause it to bring forth fruits of praise for the benefit

of all” (*Chizkuni*). Rebbi Nachman teaches that we perpetuate the Torah by transforming it into prayer. When we learn Torah in a song-filled, prayerful way, then the words of Torah enter our heart like dew and rain and we merit being able to keep the Torah. The song of *Ha’azinu* is written to ensure that we keep the Torah at the End of the Days. It is a witness that the Torah will never be forgotten from the children of Israel, as it states, “Then this song shall answer them as a witness that [the Torah] will never be lost from the mouth of their offspring” (*Devarim* 31:21). Moshe included in *Ha’azinu* all of the Torah in the aspect of song which is prayer, because this is what we need to perpetuate the Torah for the End of Days (*Histapchut HaNefest* 14). The heaven and earth are actually active witnesses. When the Jews perform the will of G-d, the heavens send dew and the earth brings forth harvests. G-d forbid, if the Jews deviate from the Torah, these witnesses are the first to react by withholding their blessings (Rashi). The existence of heaven and earth proves that the Jews accepted the Torah upon themselves. Heaven and earth testify that the world’s continual existence is dependent upon the Jews receiving Torah at Sinai. If the Israelites had refused the Torah at Sinai, the heavens and earth would have returned to a state of nothingness (Kli Yakar).

### Why are the Words of Torah Compared to Rain and Dew?

I love the sound of the dripping dew from the gutter as the morning sun rises, and the drops reflect its rays in the colors of the rainbow like diamonds. The Torah is compared to dew because everyone rejoices in it, whereas rain involves annoyance to some people, as for instance to those on a journey. Yet the Torah, which Hashem gave to Israel, is life to the world like the rain that enable life to grow on earth (Rashi). The Torah is called *ליקחי/likchi*, which literally means something taken. Hashem took the Torah from heaven and dropped it down to earth for Israel like the rain and the dew (Ramban). Just as the rain and the dew that fall on the ground do not fall for their own benefit, but for the sake of the world, likewise the words of Torah are not for the sake of Moshe’s personal benefit, but for the sake of heaven and for the benefit of all Israel (Noam Elimelech). The holy words of Torah are like raindrops that fall on the earth. Just as the rain does not reveal its influence on the plants immediately, but only later do we recognize the blessings of the rain through the fruits; likewise is the effect of the words of Torah on those who hear them. Their positive influence is not always recognizable at the first. Yet, ultimately, they will have their blessed effect on those who keep learn Torah (Simcha Bunim). The reason the Torah is compared to both dew and rain is to teach us that our words should be few in quantity yet great in quality. The *לקח/lekach* – moral lesson that may be gleaned from our words should be full and rich like heavy rain pouring down, yet, our *אמרות/imarot* – words, should be few in quantify like dew (Abarbanel). I will try to learn from this teaching and condense myself this time.

### The Soul of Heaven and Body of Earth

Why is *הָאָזִינוּ/Ha’azinu* – “give ear” (active), associated with the heaven, while *וְתִשְׁמַע/tisma* – “will hear” (passive), connected to the earth? Why does it state, *אֶדְבֶּרָה/Adabera* – “I will speak,” to the heaven, while the earth will hear *אִמְרֵי פִי/imrei fi* – “the words of my mouth?” The heaven above is the neshama (soul), while the earth below is the body. The song of *Ha’azinu* represents the whole Torah, as we learn from the verse, “You shall write for yourselves this entire song...” (*Devarim* 31:19) referring to the song of *Ha’azinu* as well as to the mitzvah of writing a *Sefer Torah*. In this song, all the souls of Israel are included. It states, “*Ha’azinu*” connected with the Hebrew word *אִזָּן/ozen*,

which means ear because we need to tilt our ears to the words of the written Torah, which conceal so many layers of truth. The written Torah includes the essence of the Oral Torah and if we really give ear, we can extrapolate its teachings. Therefore, “Had Israel not sinned we would have received only the five books of Moses...” (*Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 22b*). The land represents the Oral Torah, which Moshe handed down to Yehoshua together with the land of Israel. Therefore, it states, “the land will hear,” for the land, which is the body will automatically hear “the words of my mouth,” referring to the oral Torah, literally called *Torah Sh’ba’al Pe* (The Torah of the Mouth).

### The Dew of the Oral Torah

The written Torah is compared to the rain, which we all notice to drop down from heaven. Yet, “my speech shall flow as the dew,” refers to the Oral Torah, for it’s dripping down from heaven is not recognized except when we feel the moisture of the earth. Only then do we notice the dew that also came from above. Similarly, we don’t easily recognize the divinity of the Oral Torah, which seems to be invented by the Rabbis. However, in reality they are the words of the living G-d – the words that Hashem put in the mouth of the Rabbis (*P’ri Tzaddik, Parashat Ha’azinu 1*). The words of Torah are like rain and dew, which may seem as if they are just simply water and moisture, however, in truth they include amazing awesome powers. Just as the rain and dew enable the growth of all kinds of plants and endless amounts of herbs, likewise are the words of Torah. Although they may seem simple, they are so deep and filled with secrets, which have the power to strengthen and help each of us to grow and come close to Hashem (*Likutei Halachot Chol Hamoed, Hilchot Chazakat Karkaot 5*).

### Through Hard Work We Merit “to Flow as the Dew”

Like a field, only after it has been ploughed and the soil turned, then the rains come to actualize the potential of the seeds. Similarly, we need to first rectify our body to become a pure vessel ready to receive the illumination of the Torah. The gates of Torah open for us in proportion to the capacity of our vessels to receive. This in turn depends on how much we have purified our body. This explains the sequence of King David’s prayer, “Create a pure heart for me Hashem, renew within me a steadfast spirit” (*Tehillim 51:12*). First we need to ask for a pure heart (vessel) and only afterwards for a renewed spirit (light of Torah). Following the days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, our souls have become purified and therefore we are judged for water on Sukkot (*Mishna Rosh Hashana 1:2*). Water represents the Divine influence we receive from heaven, for “there is no water except Torah” (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 82a*). Between Yom Kippur and Sukkot is the time to yearn for the illumination of the Torah as we purify ourselves for the sake of becoming suitable vessels for Divine words. Since our souls have become purified on Yom Kippur, we pray to receive a “renewed spirit” on Sukkot. First we need to invest hard work and effort in order to become a vessel for Torah. This is alluded to in, “May the teaching drop down as the rain.” Only afterward do we merit “to flow as the dew.” With everything in life, if we work hard, we will eventually enjoy the fruits of our labor. “The beginning is bitter, yet the end is sweet.” Every Jewish *bala busta* can testify to the sweetness of the Shabbat rest following its vigorous preparations. Our Creator has concealed within our soul a latent potential, but we need to work hard to reveal this potential. Afterwards the help from above will flow as a Divine gift (*Sefat Emet, Parashat Ha’azinu, year 5648*). May we merit the caress of the gentle Divine dew of Torah as we dwell under the Clouds of Divine Glory this Sukkot!