

Spiritual Healing in the Torah

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Parashat Ha'Azinu

How Can We Become More Forgiving by Rising to the Heavenly Realm?

Practicing Forgiveness on our Forgiveness

We have come full circle and entered the holiest time of the year. Now, we have the opportunity more than any other time to “Seek G-d while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near” (*Yesha’yahu* 55:6). At this time, I’m struggling to forgive an increasing number of people who I feel have wronged me lately. I’m keenly aware of the adverse effects of keeping these grudges, and their negative implications on my physical and emotional health, my relationships, and my judgment by Hashem, etc. Therefore, I was crying out to Hashem to remove this bitterness from my heart, and I was surprised to experience how it actually worked! The very same day that I implored Hashem profusely on my weekly hitbodedut walk, I experienced an immediate release that I have never experienced so fast and to that extent. When, later during that day, I thought about all the painful things people had done against me, the pain had subsided, and the bitterness was almost completely gone. I can only attribute my feeling so light and free from emotional pain to the divine assistance available to us at this time. Even when it is not always possible to work out everything that happened with the various people involved, we can still forgive them on a deeper and deeper level at this time. Like Rebbe Nachman says, “You need to do teshuva on your teshuva,” I’d like to say, “You need to practice forgiveness on your forgiveness.” Perhaps the reason why it is much easier to make rectifications during the Ten Days of Teshuva, which seemed impossible all year long, is because this time brings us closer to heaven. It is like we are being lifted above all the nitty gritty earthly things that bug us down with all our petty expectations of others, and our oversensitivity to their painful ruthlessness.

Connecting with Heaven During the Ten Days of Teshuva

On Shabbat Teshuva we usually read Parashat Ha'azinu that opens with Moshe's addressing heaven and earth:

ספר דברים פרק לב פסוק א האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי:

“Listen, O heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth!” (*Devarim* 32:1).

Reading *Parashat Ha'azinu* before Yom Kippur highlights the fact that each of us is “close to the heavens” at this time. Moshe's words are reflected by the prophet Yesha'yahu:

ספר ישעיה פרק א פסוק ב

שמעו שמים והאזינו ארץ כי השם דבר בנים גדלתי ורוממתי והם פשעו בי:

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Hashem spoken; Children I have raised and exalted, yet they have rebelled against Me” (*Yesha'yahu* 1:2).

Drawing Down Heaven and Elevating Earth

The word **האזינו**/*ha'azinu*, from the root א-ז-נ *alef/zayin/nun* – ‘ear’ literally ‘give ear,’ is a stronger verbiage than **שמע**/*shema* – ‘hear.’ Comparing Moshe and Yesha'yahu's prophecy, Moshe addressed the heavens with the word *ha'azinu* because he was “close to the heavens, and far from the earth.” Therefore, he was able to address the heavens at close range. Yeshayahu, by

contrast, was still “close to the earth, and far from the heavens.” Thus, he used the word *ha'azinu* to address the earth (Sifri, *Devarim* 32:1). Moshe Rabbeinu's perception paralleled that of the world of Atzilut, which refers to being unified and at one with G-d. Although Moshe had a physical body, he perceived everything as an extension of G-dliness. Even when living in this world – and especially during the Ten Days of Teshuva – we can connect with the world of Atzilut and feel the direct awareness of G-d and the closeness to Him.

Yeshayahu, who related to the world of Beriah, by contrast, saw G-d from afar. He addressed the earth from close range with the word *ha'azinu*. The angels whom he describes proclaim: “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Hashem of Hosts” (*Yeshayahu* 6:3), which also refers to being distinct and separate. Why did Moshe address the earth as well as the heavens? And why did Yeshayahu address the heavens as well as the earth? Why did they not confine themselves to speaking to the realm closest to them? This is because it is a major principle of the Torah to connect heaven and earth. Judaism involves drawing down spiritual reality until it meshes with worldly experience (Moshe's contribution) while elevating worldly experience until a bond with the spiritual is established (Yeshayahu's contribution). By revealing the Torah, Moshe endowed every individual with the potential to become “close to the heavens.” Yeshayahu developed the connection further, making it possible for a person to experience being “close to the heavens” while being “close to the earth,” involved in the mundane details of material life (Eli Touger, *Close to the Heavens*).

Taking Charge of Creating Our Heavenly Reality

When Yeshayahu said, “Hear, heavens, and give ear, earth,” many prosecutors came to break his head. A voice resounded, and asked, who dared to speak this way? Who is that who wishes to shake worlds?! Then he opened with the words, it is not I nor is it mine, but “Hashem has spoken” (*Yeshayahu* 1:2). Of Moshe it is written, “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak,” I and no other. “I will speak” without fear, “and hear O earth, the words of my mouth” and not anybody else's. Blessed is his portion. (*Zohar* 3:286b). When Yeshayahu's said, “For Hashem has spoken” he distinguished himself from Moshe who said, “Listen O heavens, and I will speak.” He himself would speak. Just as Moshe forty years previously had split the sea, so is Moshe now taking charge by saying, “Listen O heavens, and I will speak.” He is taking initiative and actualizing creation. This is what happens on Rosh Hashana when the world returns to Bereishit – the beginning. We can receive the very Light of Creation when we accept that we are here to be creators. When we let go of the anger, resentment, and feelings of victimization, make space for forgiveness, give the benefit of the doubt, and share love, when we see in all things an opportunity for growth and creation, and when we understand that everything is for the good, then we draw down abundance and blessings for the coming year – we draw down heaven on earth.

EmunaHealing Exercise for Elevating Ourselves to the Heavenly Realm

1. Find your perfect place to be alone with yourself and Hashem. Take several slow and relaxed breaths and become mindful of your body sitting or lying relaxed on the chair, cushion, or the ground.
2. Breathe celestial light into every part of your body and breathe out tension and discomfort from each limb and organ. Start with the top of your head, then your eyebrows, and move your breath to your eyes, nose, mouth, and chin. Move your breath to your shoulders, lungs, and heart. Keep breathing in and out of your stomach, the liver to the right below your ribcage, and your spleen to the left. Breathe good energy into the kidneys on your back.

3. Then be still and allow yourself to be aware of your body, becoming more and more relaxed and illuminated. Each of your limbs is charged with Divine energy now.
4. Tune into your heart – that delicate flower – where so much emotion is stored. Allow yourself to feel whatever pain you have experienced in the past, and also in more recent times. Bring painful incidents with other people to your attention and recall the upset each of these challenging encounters caused you. Pay attention to where in your body this discomfort and pain reside.
5. Envision the heaven above you – the upper realm where we all are united, and everything is one. Imagine being so light and so weightless, like a ball of feathers. Visualize yourself levitating above the earth rising higher and higher like a helium balloon flying upwards. As you rise, envision being lifted above all the nitty gritty earthly things that bug you down with all your petty expectations of others, and your oversensitivity to their painful seemingly ruthlessness. You are leaving all these petty clashes and conflicts behind as you rise higher and higher to the heavenly realm.
6. הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבְּרָה / *Ha'azinu HaShamayuim v'adabera...* “Give ear O heaven and I will speak...” Speak to Hashem about how you are forgiving and forgetting all your past frictions with others. Now from this elevated place you are in, you can see a greater perspective. You can perceive the other side. You become aware of where these other people, who caused you so much agony, are coming from. You are now able to transform your oversensitivity to becoming sensitive to the pain of others from which they operate. Understanding their perspective transmutes the impact of their words and actions to no longer cause you pain.
7. You are creating your positive reality with your speech. Just as Moshe himself would take initiative and actualize creation through his speech, you too can receive the very Light of Creation when you let go of the anger, resentment, and feelings of victimization, and make space for forgiveness. You can draw down abundance and blessings for the coming year by giving the benefit of the doubt, sharing love, and seeing everything as an opportunity for growth and creation. As you learn to truly understand that everything is for the good, then you can draw down heaven on earth!