

Haazinu – Shabbos Shuva – Phil Gilbert *(reprinted)*

ג' תשרי תשע"ח – 23rd September 2017 – שבת פי' האזינו

Haazinu begins with Moshe saying: "Listen heaven and I will speak; hear earth the words of my mouth." The Sifri says that concerning heaven, Moshe used an expression denoting closeness, haazinu, but for earth he used an expression indicating distance, v'sishma, for Moshe was "close to heaven and distant from earth." Since the Torah serves to instruct every Jew, it is evident that like Moshe, we should become "close to heaven and distant from earth." But how?

Haazinu is often read on "Shabbos Shuvah," a "Shabbos of Repentance." The simple reason for this name is that it falls within the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah. However, since every aspect of Torah is extremely precise, we understand that the name "Shabbos Shuvah" indicates that the Shabbos day itself enhances repentance (other days during this week are not denoted as the "Sunday of Teshuvah, or the "Monday of Teshuvah.")

It thus follows, that the name "Shabbos Shuvah" indicates that the teshuvah of this Shabbos is superior to the teshuvah of the other Ten Days of Repentance.

What is the connection between Shabbos and a superior form of teshuvah? The Alter Rebbe explains that the teshuvah of Aseres Yimei Teshuvah involves the soul's essence, while teshuvah during the rest of the year involves only the soul's inner powers. Thus, the current period of teshuvah is far superior to that during the rest of the year.

These two periods for teshuvah also correspond to the two general levels of repentance, the lower level of teshuvah — known as teshuvah tataah — whose purpose is to reunite with G-d through man's rectification of his sins, and the higher level of teshuvah — known as teshuvah ilaah — in which the soul utterly returns and cleaves to its Source.

In a general sense, these two forms of teshuvah are mirrored in the difference between man's spiritual service during the six days of the week and his spiritual service on Shabbos: During the week, man is involved in mundane affairs, seeking to elevate the physical world to holiness. This corresponds to the lower level of repentance, in which the service is that of reuniting the soul's internal powers with G-dliness.

On Shabbos, however, mundane labour is prohibited, as the sanctity of the day is such that man transcends the physical; his labour on that day involves achieving ever-higher levels within the framework of holiness.

Thus the teshuvah of Shabbos is the loftier level of teshuvah, because on that day the soul is elevated and cleaves to its Source.

The seven days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur correspond to each of the seven days of the week of the entire past year; each of the seven days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur rectifies the misdeeds committed on that day of the week in the past year — Sunday rectifies all past Sundays, Monday rectifies all past Mondays, and so on.

Therefore, although the entire period of Aseres Yimei Teshuvah involves the superior form of teshuvah, teshuvah ilaah, nevertheless, since the weekdays of the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah involve atonement for the weekdays of the past year, it follows that the weekday teshuvah is not the loftiest form.

Shabbos Shuvah, however, is the teshuvah for all past Shabbosos, which themselves are inherently superior in service and teshuvah. It therefore follows that the teshuvah of Shabbos Teshuvah is the loftiest of all the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah.

It is the attainment of this level on Shabbos Shuvah that enables each and every Jew to be like Moshe — "close to heaven and distant from earth."

Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XIV, pp. 143-147.

Leilui Nishmas Ovi Morei R' Yitzchok Moshe ben Henoch, whose 1st Yahrzeit is 4th Tishrei 5775.