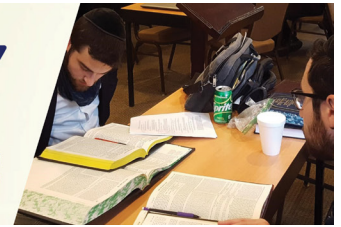




# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Ha'azinu

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## A Taste of Torah Singing a Different Tune

by Rabbi Yitzzy Melamed

For decades, a peaceful country had fended off its aggressive neighbor's periodic invasion attempts. These attacks put the entire country on edge, as their very freedom and way of life were at risk. At the same time, the country was dealing with porous borders, which enabled smugglers to avoid paying taxes on imported items and allowed illegal products into the country. Finally, the king commissioned a wall to be built around his country. After some time, the wall was complete. Unable to breach the country's fortifications, the enemy gave up. At the same time, the wall secured the borders, forcing the smugglers to move on to other places where they'd have an easier time carrying on their illicit work. The grateful citizens blew a collective sigh of relief.

A nobleman presented himself before the king's court requesting an audience with the king. He was granted his wish and proceeded to laud the king and his wall.

"Your Royal Highness, how great is your wall!" he began.

"This wall has achieved wonderful things for our country. Taxes on imports are once again filling the coffers of the treasury. We have funds to provide services, build roads, and beautify our wonderful cities."

"But most of all," concluded the noble, "we have seen a steep reduction in the presence of illegal substances and firearms since the wall brought a stop to the smugglers' nefarious work. We are all most grateful for his Majesty's great achievement of constructing this wall."

This *mashal* (parable) can help us understand an apparent contradiction that arises when studying the Song of Ha'azinu.

In last week's parsha, the Torah introduces the Song of Ha'azinu as Hashem tells Moshe (Devarim 31:19), "And now, write

for you this song and teach it to Bnai Yisrael; place it in their mouths in order so that it will be for Me, this *shira* (song), as a testimony for Bnai Yisrael." The Gemara (Nedarim 38a) teaches us that this verse not only refers to the Song of Ha'azinu, but to the Torah as a whole. The connection between Ha'azinu and the entirety of the Torah can be seen further from an insight of the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna; 1720-1797). He points out that there are 614 words in Parshas Hazinu, 613 words corresponding to the 613 commandments in the Torah and one word corresponding to the Torah as a whole. Thus, the Song of Ha'azinu itself can be described as an expression of the entire Torah.

The problem is that the Gemara tells us (Sotah 36a) that Dovid Hamelech (King David) was taken to task for proclaiming (Psalms 119:54), "*Zemiros* (songs) were your statutes for me in the house of my sojourn, as it was inappropriate to refer to the Torah as mere "songs." How can Dovid Hamelech be held accountable for referring to the Torah as songs if the Torah itself refers to the Torah as song?

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner (1906-1980) explains that the Torah has two distinct effects on its one who studies it. The Talmud (Kiddushin 30b) teaches that the Torah serves as an antidote to the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination). At the same time, Torah study also offers something much more profound, namely, a means to building a relationship with Hashem Himself!

Now, even though both the word *shira* (used in the context of Ha'azinu) and the word *zemer* (singular of the term *zemiros* used by Dovid in Psalms) can be translated as song, Rabbi Hutner explains that there is, in fact, a difference.

The word *zemer* expresses separation, while the word *shira* expresses

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## Stories for the Soul

### Double Reverse

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932), Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935), and Rabbi Bentzion Yadler (1871-1962), three distinguished and learned rabbis and leaders, embarked on a journey in 1914. They travelled through the settlements of Northern Israel, exhorting the pioneering Zionists who were developing and farming the land return to Torah and mitzvos and to observe the Land-based mitzvos.

In one settlement, Rabbi Kook delivered an impassioned plea, and focused particularly on the mitzvah of *shemittah*, allowing the land to lie fallow during the *shemittah* year.

One of the leaders accosted Rabbi Kook after his address. "Leave us alone!" he exclaimed. "We are not interested in your ancient ideas. We will build a modern land with modern ideas, and your own descendants will follow our ways!" Upon hearing this brazen retort, Rabbi Kook burst into tears.

Rabbi Sonnenfeld, however, ascended the podium and began speaking. He quoted a verse in Parshas Haazinu (32:20): "*Ki dor tapuchos heima, banim lo amun bam.*" - "For they are a generation of reversals; children in whom there is no upbringing." The simple understanding of the verse speaks negatively of the Jewish People's loyalty to G-d. But Rabbi Sonnenfeld interpreted the message of the verse differently: Yes, he said, there are people here who are committed to abandoning their faith and traditions. But there will come a future generation that will reverse that tendency, who will reject their parents' approach, and they will return to Hashem with all their hearts and fulfill the mitzvos of

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## Kollel Happenings

### TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at [rnk@denverkollel.org](mailto:rnk@denverkollel.org) for further details.

### BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org), email [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights on Zoom, 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week we asked:** Why would open deliberately make his hands *tamei* (halachically impure)?

**Answer:** Last week's answer discussed the question of whether lack of any intent to allow eating bread while washing one's hands invalidates the washing *bidi'aved* (after the fact). The Mishna Berura (159:75) indicates that one should, if possible, wash again.

The Biur Halacha (159:13 s.v. *ulichatchila*) says that if one does wash again, no blessing is recited, and adds that it is preferable that one make his hands halachically impure so as to require a new washing that would be accompanied by a blessing.

**This week's question:** If it flows, you may dip. If it's still, you will need more. What is this?

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra - Part IX

As noted above, Rabbi Avraham passed away sometime between 1164 and 1167. Less clear is where he passed away. Historians believe he returned to his native Spain late in life and passed away in a Spanish city called Calahora. Others believe he

immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, where he passed away and was buried. In 2017, a tombstone was discovered in a cemetery in Tzefas (Safed) with the inscription "the grave marker of the elderly, wise expert doctor Avraham ibn Ezra."

## A Taste of Torah

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connection. (For an explanation as to how each of these words connote these ideas, see Rav Schwab on Prayer, Introduction to Pesukei Dezimra pg. 115.) These two terms can thus be understood as referring to the two aforementioned qualities of Torah. Referring to the Torah as *zemiros* implies an expression of praise over the Torah's power to disconnect oneself from the *Yetzer Hara*. *Shira*, on the other hand, expresses praise for the connection to Hashem one gains through studying His Torah.

It can now be understood why it is not appropriate to refer to Hashem's Torah as *zemiros* while it is appropriate to refer to it as *shira*. Stating that Torah serves as an antidote to the *Yetzer Hara* certainly

presents a major benefit, but it misses the most important benefit of all, that it creates a relationship with Hashem! This is akin to the nobleman mentioned in the *marshal* above, who praises the king for stopping the work of the smugglers, which is important, but fails to express his appreciation for the wall's ensuring the country's very existence and the lives that were saved by it!

The entire Torah is a song. It is a song proclaiming our deepest feeling of joy over the fact that we can develop a relationship with Hashem. May this idea inspire in us an appreciation of the importance and greatness of Hashem's Torah and bring us to study it with joy!

## Stories for the Soul

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Eretz Yisrael, including *shemittah*!

Some 80 years later, Rabbi Sonnenfeld's great-grandson arrived at the very same settlement in Northern Israel to encourage the farmers who were observing the *shemittah* year. During his address, he told the story of his great-grandfather

and Rabbi Kook. After he concluded his words, an old man approached him.

"I was present, as a child, at that gathering. And I thought to myself that there was no way that your great-grandfather's words would ever come true. Yet time has proven him correct!"