

# פרשת האזינו *Parashat Ha'azinu*

*Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:1-32:52, Hosea 14:2-10  
Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27, John 20:26-21:25*

## Are the Words of Scripture Idle and Irrelevant in the Church Today?

In this week's Torah portion we read Moshe saying, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם שִׁמּוּ לְבַבְכֶּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מַעֲיֵד בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּצְוֶן אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לְשָׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת: מִזֹּכֵר כִּי לֹא־דָבָר יָרַק הוּא מִכֶּם כִּי־הוּא חַיִּיכֶם וּבְדָבָר הַזֶּה תִּאָּרִיכוּ יָמִים עַל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם: *32:46 he said to them, 'Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. 32:47 'For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.'*(NASB) How often are these words considered idle and irrelevant in the church today? Moshe speaks of intentionally taking to heart God's Word and apply His Word to our lives. He says, "*For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life.*" The Bible is not simply a book containing a collection of stories. Moshe says these words are the words of life which will prolong your days in the land because of righteousness, justice, holiness, and truth. We are called to holiness and truth because of the God who dwells in our hearts, our lives, and our communities. The greater part of the

Torah reading for Parashat Haazinu (*“to give ear / listen”*) consists of a song Moshe composed in the Masoretic Text that is 70 lines long. Moshe delivered this song to Israel during the last days of his life. The song may be summarized by Moshe calling heaven and earth as witnesses, Moses exhorts the people saying, זִכְרֵי יָמֵי עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שָׁנוֹת דֹּר וָדֹר שֶׁאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיְגַדֶּךָ זִקְנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָךְ: ח בְּהַנְחִיל עָלֵינוּ גוֹיִם בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בֵּנֵי אָדָם יֵצֵב גְּבֻלַּת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: *“Remember the days of old, to Consider the years of the previous generations, and to ask your fathers and they will recount it to you and they will tell you how the Lord God was with them in the desert, made them a people, chose them as His own, and promised them a land filled with milk and honey.”* (32:7-8)

The song also warns against the deception of wealth saying טו וַיֵּשׁ מִן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְעֹט שְׁמִנָּה עֲבִית כְּשִׂית וַיִּטֵּשׂ אֱלֹהֵי עֲשָׂהוּ וַיִּנָּבֵל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ: *“Jeshurun grew fat and kicked, he has grown fat, thick, and round, he forsook God who made him and spurned the Rock of his salvation.”* (32:15) Moshe warns of the terrible calamities that would result due to disobedience which is juxtaposed to the blessings and the curses we had read in the previous Torah portions. Moshe describes what will happen when turning from God towards sin, the Lord will hide His face and look only for our repentance. The nations will come against the abstinent people, and after the people have come to their senses, the Lord God will avenge the blood of His servants, and be reconciled to His people and the Land. The Torah portion concludes with the Lord instructing Moshe to ascend Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land before dying on the mountain saying, *“For you shall see the land opposite you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the children of Israel.”* (32:52) The reason being, Moshe did not sanctify the Lord by his actions and in his heart before the people. The commentary *Rabbeinu Bahya on Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:46* speaks of these things within the context of the two compartments of our heart. The idea is the Lord designed our hearts having two sides which is representative of the base nature which would draws us away from the ways of God (the flesh), and the Spirit which desires to live according to God’s way. This is illustrated in Moshe’s calling of heaven and earth as a witness, calling that which is above and that which is below to be a witness. We are a composition of these things created as both physical and spiritual beings. We are called to observe the previous generations

and not choose the bad which leads to dying in our sins. The Torah speaks of us becoming a people who are blessed of God. For the Jewish people the Torah was given as a guide to life, worship, and service unto the God of Israel. For the non-Jewish person, the Torah was given not to convert a Gentile to become a Jew, but the Torah states *“There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns in your midst. The same law will apply to the person who is native-born and to the foreigner who lives amongst you.”* (Shemot / Exodus 12:49, Vayikra / Leviticus 24:22, Bamidbar / Numbers 15:29) For the non-Jewish person, the Torah was also given as a guide to life, worship, and service unto the God of Israel. This was not meant for a people from another nation to take the place of Israel, but as a way to remember the greatness of our God, as a guide for life, and the hope that we have for loving and living with a merciful God, and to live at peace, with joy, and in love the God who so loved us that He sent His only Son, Yeshua the Messiah, to die for our sins. Not only was the Torah delivered to the Nation of Israel, it is also for those who would join themselves with Israel in the Messiah Yeshua. Let’s discuss these things further in this week’s Torah Portion.

This week we are looking at *Devarim / Deuteornomy 32:1-14, 35-52*.

### ***Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:1-14, 35-52***

*32:1 ‘Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 32:2 ‘Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass And as the showers on the herb. 32:3 ‘For I proclaim the name of the Lord; Ascribe greatness to our God! 32:4 ‘The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. 32:5 ‘They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation. 32:6 ‘Do you thus repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you. 32:7 ‘Remember the days of old, Con-*

*sider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, Your elders, and they will tell you. 32:8 'When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel. 32:9 'For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. 32:10 'He found him in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. 32:11 'Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. 32:12 'The Lord alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him. 32:13 'He made him ride on the high places of the earth, And he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock, 32:14 Curds of cows, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs, And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the finest of the wheat And of the blood of grapes you drank wine.*

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*32:35 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.' 32:36 'For the Lord will vindicate His people, And will have compassion on His servants, When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free. 32:37 'And He will say, 'Where are their gods, The rock in which they sought refuge? 32:38 'Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, And drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you, Let them be your hiding place! 32:39 'See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand. 32:40*

*‘Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, And say, as I live forever, 32:41 If I sharpen My flashing sword, And My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, And I will repay those who hate Me. 32:42 ‘I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword will devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.’ 32:43 ‘Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people.’ 32:44 Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun. 32:45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, 32:46 he said to them, ‘Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. 32:47 ‘For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.’ 32:48 The Lord spoke to Moses that very same day, saying, 32:49 ‘Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. 32:50 ‘Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, 32:51 because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel. 32:52 ‘For you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving the sons of Israel.’ (NASB)*

In this week's Torah portion we read Moshe saying, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה

מֹ



אֲלֵהֶם שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶּם לְכָל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מַעֲיִד בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּצְּנוּם  
אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם לְשֹׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת: מִזֹּכֵר כִּי לֹא-דָבָר יָרַק  
הוּא מִכֶּם כִּי-הוּא חַיִּיכֶם וּבְדָבָר הַזֶּה תֵּאָרִיכוּ יָמִים עַל-הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם:  
*32:46 he said to them, 'Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. 32:47 'For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.'*(NASB) These are wonderful words, but also words of warning. Moshe warns of the need to intentionally take to heart God's Word and apply His Word to our lives. He says, *"For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life."* The Bible is not simply a book containing a collection of stories. Moshe says these words are words of life which will prolong our days in the land because of righteousness, justice, holiness, and truth. We are called to holiness and truth because of the God who dwells in our hearts, our lives, and our communities. The reason these words of the Torah are so important for us today, is in relation to what was said to Joshua in *Joshua 1:5*.

### ***Joshua 1:5***

*"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you."*

This promise that was given to Joshua was also given to us as God's people where HaShem (The Name, God) will dwell in our midst, He will be with us, He will gird us up and cloth us in the Fear of the Lord. For us it means the wisdom of God, and for our enemies it means dread. They will flee seven ways, those that come against us. That is a description of defeat for our enemies and complete victory for us. Note something here, the reason why He will be with you as He was with Moshe is because Moshe practiced and taught His mitzvot (commandments / Torah). Moshe fulfilled the will and purpose of God, and he is telling us here today that we are called to do the same. This is why the Lord God of Israel sent His Messiah Yeshua, to live as our example. The Apostle John stated these things in the following way:

### ***1 John 2:1-7***

*2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 2:4 The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. (NASB)*

John spoke of the advocate we have in heaven, Yeshua our high priest, who stands before God and who arbitrates on our behalf before God in case we sin and we are seeking forgiveness in Teshuva (repentance). John says that he is not writing about a new command but of an old one, the one which was from the beginning, the Torah. This is what John is speaking of here as we are studying according to the books of Moshe. This is what John meant when he said the one who keep's God's Word is the one who has truly been perfected. (*1 John 2:5*) The commandments serve as a way to sanctify God's Name, meaning that we are humbling our hearts and our lives to sanctify His reputation to make it holy and unique because these are connected. According to the Torah, the Lord gave Israel His mitzvot as part of the covenant agreement, therefore the commitment to follow and obey is reflected not only upon the child of God, but upon the Lord God as well. Good behavior, according to the Scriptures, brought honor upon God, whereas bad behavior profaned God's Name and reputation. Note what it says here in *Vayikra / Leviticus 22:31-33*.



***Vayikra / Leviticus 22:31-33***

*“You shall faithfully observe My commandments: I am God. You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people, I the Lord who sanctify you, I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God, I am the Lord”* (לֹא וְשִׁמְרֶתֶם מִצְוֹתַי  
תִּי וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה: לֵב וְלֹא תַחֲלִילוּ אֶת-שְׁמִי קֹדֶשִׁי  
(וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה מִקְדָּשְׁכֶם:

The Lord describes having sanctified the people by bringing them out of Egypt. Egypt is typified as the land of sin, the occult, bondage, slavery, etc. This separation from these evil things is coupled to the Lord providing a way for atonement, for forgiveness, for life, and freedom, to be set free from the bondage of sin and the occult. This sanctification process is the Lord God bringing us into holiness and righteousness. These Scriptures commend all of God’s people to do what is right, by listening to (obeying) the commandments, because God’s reputation is at stake. Sanctifying God’s name is a powerful motivation to do what is right. The Hebrew word for *“holy”* (kadosh, קָדוֹשׁ) literally means, *“set apart”* or *“like no other.”* This is why the Torah states obeying the mitzvot, God’s people become a nation that is unique and set apart from all the other nations in the world. Since we have agreed to obey God’s commands, we are called God’s treasured people. This theme permeates the Bible, which is emphasized at the Mountain of Sinai in *Shemot / Exodus 19:3-6*:

***Shemot / Exodus 19:3-6***

*“Moses went up to God, and God called to him from the mountain saying, ‘Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My most treasured possession among all the nations. Indeed all of the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’”*



The Torah calls God's people an "*am segola*" (a treasured people) and defines this within the context of "*holy*" as special and unique from among all others. It is important to note how God's people are holy, and the Scriptures say the entire nation are priests unto the Lord. The Lord has sanctified us by delivering us from sin, bondage, slavery, and evil. As a result, we are called to a life of holiness, by seeking His righteousness and holiness. If we are not doing these things, if we do not have this desire, are we truly His people?

Yeshua the Messiah said the following to His disciples:

***John 13:13-17***

*13:13 'You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 13:14 'If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 13:15 'For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 13:16 'Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 13:17 'If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (NASB)*

This attitude of servant hood is being taught here in the act of the washing of another persons feet. Note how he states he has done this for our example, and how the master is not greater than the slave. He says *13:17 'If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (NASB)* What exactly is he referring to? This is the attitude of love in serving the Lord God in heaven and serving one another. This is how the people of God are to live and what it means by the Lord living in our midst in relation to the need to intentionally take to heart God's Word and apply His Word to our lives. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:47*) God's Word is not an idle thing!

The rabbis say the following in the commentary by *Rabbeinu Bahya on Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:46 Part 1*.

***Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim/Deuteronomy 32:46 Part 1***

*שימו לבבכם לכל הדברים אשר אנכי מעיד בכם היום, "apply your hearts to all the words that I testify against you*

*this day;” this is not part of the testimony but is simply a form of warning, just as was Exodus 19,21 when G’d told Moses: רד העד בעם, “descend and warn the people.” We have a similar occurrence of the verb העד as “warning” in Exodus 19,23 כי אתה העדות בנו, “for You have warned us.” In this verse Moses warns the people that everyone should pay careful attention to the words of the Torah; this is why he speaks of לבבכם instead of לבכם. He urges people to serve the Lord with both parts of our hearts, the good urge as well as the evil urge, יצר הרע. This is why the sages said in Kidushin 30, quoting G’d: “I did create an evil urge, but I also created the Torah as its antidote.”*

The rabbis describe man as having two sides, the Yetzer Hara and the Yetzer Hatov. This is illustrated by the two compartments of our hearts which was designed to teach us something. We are both physical and spiritual beings, this is the warning we are given, and the Torah is the connecting point, being led by the Spirit to obey God, and humbling the physical senses and actions by using our bodies to serve the Lord. (see *Romans 12:1-5*)

Rashi has the following comments on *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:46 Part 1*.

### ***Rashi on Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:46 Part 1***

*שִׁמוּ לִבְבְּכֶם SET YOUR HEARTS [UNTO ALL THE WORDS WHICH I TESTIFY AGAINST YOU THIS DAY] — Indeed, it is necessary for a man that his eyes, his heart and his ears, should all be attentively directed to the words of the Torah, for so it states, (Ezekiel 40:4) “Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart [upon all that I shall show thee]” (viz., the plan of the Temple). If in the case of the model of the Temple, which was being made visible to the eyes and was being measured by a rod, it was necessary for a man, according to Scripture, that*

*his eyes, his ears and his heart be attentive, then in order to understand the words of the Torah which are like mountains suspended on a hair (i.e., numerous laws are derived from a single word of the Torah), how much the more is this necessary!*

Rashi focuses upon the importance of our being attentive to God's Word to understand God's Word. This is why it is important for us to study the Scriptures from the Hebrew Language; the verb mitzvah (to command), the word shomer (to keep), and the word shema (to listen). The implications of these words throughout the Torah are astonishing, of which not everyone are aware of. These words have led many Christians to misunderstand the nature of Judaism, where very few Christian thinkers today fully appreciate the concept of the mitzvah and the idea that the Lord God of Israel chose to reveal Himself in the form of the mitzvot (commandments, Laws). The most appropriate word that is a counterpart of mitzvah, is the word shema meaning *"to listen."* This word occurs in the book of Deuteronomy along 92 times (its root word). This word shema (to hear/listen) is what the Lord wants from us as a response to His Words and this is the meaning of *"understanding God's Word."* We are called to *"understand"* that is found within its application (applying the Word). We are to understand the importance of our living for the Lord as a witness to all peoples. Based upon what is written in *Bereshit / Genesis 3:17, 11:7, 14:14, 21:12, and 22:18*, the word Shema means *"to hear," "to listen to or pay attention (heed)," "to understand," "to be willing to obey," and "to respond in deed to what someone else wants."* The shema has all of these meanings which suggest in the Torah there is no such thing as blind obedience. The connection between the word of the commander and the deed of the soldier is not that of command-and-reaction without thought or understanding. The Torah based relationship between God and us is the Lord created us in His image, giving us freedom and the power to think. He wants us to understand His commands and the reason being, the command of God brings life to His people. Note, Paul wrote the command was intended to bring life, but in the end it brought death due to sin. This was why Yeshua the Messiah had to come, to lay his life down on our behalf, and the infilling of God's Holy Spirit to empower us to over-

come sin and to live in the fullness of life according to the command.

Note this is what Sforno believes according to His commentary which states the following:

### **Sforno on Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:46 Part 1**

אשר אנכי מעיד בכם היום, *in the song of Haazinu which I use to make Israel be witness to my admonitions. The principal message is that just as while the Jewish people observe the commandments G'd arranges for their livelihood to be attained with ease and without much sweat, so, He will destroy them if they do not, because they thwart His plans for mankind as a whole.*

### **Part 2**

אשר תצוו את בניכם, *near the end of your respective lives command your children to observe the matters which I have spoken to you about. It is a matter of life and death for them.*

### **Part 3**

לשמור לעשות, *you have to observe all these matters in order that as their role model, your children will do so also.*

Note how Sforno speaks of explaining the commands to our children so they understand to observe the matters of which Moshe had spoken about. Sforno states that the commands are easy, and the one who sets himself against God's commands is thwarting God's plans for all of mankind. What does this mean, "*they thwart His plans for mankind as a whole?*" The meaning is God would that all men would have faith and be saved. (*1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9*)

This week's Torah portion speaks of us becoming a people who are blessed of God and who take God's Word as a guide to life, worship, and service unto the God of Israel. For the non-Jewish person, the Torah was given not to convert a Gentile to become a Jew, but the Torah states "*There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns in your midst. The same law will apply to the person who is*

*native-born and to the foreigner who lives amongst you.” (Shemot / Exodus 12:49, Vayikra / Leviticus 24:22, Bamidbar / Numbers 15:29)*

For the non-Jewish person, the Torah was also given as a guide to life, worship, and service unto the God of Israel. This was not meant for a people from another nation to take the place of Israel, but as a way to remember the greatness of our God, as a guide for life, and a hope for loving and living with a merciful God, and to live in peace, with joy, and in love with the God who so loved us that He sent His only Son, Yeshua the Messiah to die for our sins. Not only was the Torah delivered to the Nation of Israel, it is also for those who would join themselves with Israel in the Messiah Yeshua!





