

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*

Serving Demons and Freedom

This week's Torah Portion is the song of Moshe. In the song of Moshe we read the following according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:15-17*, וַיִּשְׁמֶן יִשְׂרוּן וַיִּבְעֵט שְׂמֹנֶת עֲבִית כְּשִׁית וַיִּטֵּשׂ אֱלֹהִים עֲשָׂהוּ, וַיִּנְבֵּל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ: טז יִקְנֹאֵהוּ בְּזָרִים בְּתוֹעֵבֹת יִכְעִסְהוּ: יז יִזְבְּחוּ לִשְׂרִים לֹא אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם הַדְּשִׁים מְקָרֵב בָּאוּ לֹא שְׁעָרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם: 32:15 *'But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked You are grown fat, thick, and sleek Then he forsook God who made him, And scorned the Rock of his salvation. 32:16 'They made Him jealous with strange gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. 32:17 'They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread. (NASB)* Idolatry comes in many forms. Here we see Moshe saying that יִשְׂרוּן (Jeshurun), kicked (וַיִּבְעֵט), grew fat (שְׂמֹנֶת), bloated (עֲבִית), abstinent (כְּשִׁית), abandoned God (וַיִּטֵּשׂ אֱלֹהִים), and regarded as nothing the Rock of his salvation (וַיִּנְבֵּל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ). The name יִשְׂרוּן means "upright one" and is a symbolic name that describes the ideal condition of Israel. We note how when Israel came into prosperity, she was described as growing fat. This teaches us how dangerous wealth can

be as leading one away from God. We note that Isaiah states Jeshurun is Jacob according to *Isaiah 44:1-2*, “*God comforts His people with these words: But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says-he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.*” The God of Jeshurun means the God of the upright ones. Jeshurun is also a poetic reference to Israel, a term of endearment. Isaiah begins with a condemnation of the sins of Israel calling the people a sinful nation. Yet the Lord God calls them His Jeshurun who turned their backs on Him. This is what we see here according to the Torah, the sense of abandoning the Rock of their Salvation which is the God of Israel. (וַיִּנְבֵּל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ) The way the people turned or abandoned God was in their idolatry as the text continues saying, יִקְנְאוּהוּ בְּזָרִים בְּתוֹעֵבֹת יִכְעִיסוּהוּ “*they made jealous with strange abominations they provoked Him.*” Then Moshe says יִזְבְּחוּ לְשֵׂדִים לֹא אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם “*they sacrificed to demons who are not gods, to gods they did not know.*” According to the sages, this יִזְבְּחוּ לְשֵׂדִים “*sacrificing to demons*” is one of the most abhorrent forms of idolatry. (*Daat Zkenim on Deuteronomy 32:17 Part 1*) What is interesting about these words is Moshe saying, gods they did not know (אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם). This is an interesting statement as they obviously heard about these false gods, why else would they have worshiped these false gods? The key is not knowing (לֹא יָדְעוּם) these false gods, Moshe using the word יָדַע provides us with a picture of intimacy. These gods Israel did not know, because it was the God of Israel that delivered her from bondage in Egypt, and brought them powerfully before His mountain, and into the Holy Land of Israel. The thing they had not known or heard was that these idols did not possess any power at all. Notice the level of intimacy that God has on our behalf, according to *Shemot / Exodus 3:7*, וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה רָאָה, רָאִיתִי אֶת-עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת-צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו כִּי יִדְעוּ-רָאִיתִי אֶת-מַכָּאֲבֵי: 3:7 *The Lord said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. (NASB)* We note how God tells us He knows us intimately as knowing our afflictions and our sufferings! The Lord God in heaven is concerned with

the sufferings of His people. These deities the people have turned to were completely unaware of the problems, issues, needs, and wants its worshipers faced due to these idols being inanimate objects. (*Daat Zkenim on Deuteronomy 32:17 Part 3*) The statement יִזְבְּחוּ לְשֵׂדִים “sacrificing to demons” reveals a spiritual component as well. Rashi writes:

Rashi on Deuteronomy 32:17 Part 1

לֹא אֱלֹהִים — *Understand this as the Targum does: They sacrifice unto devils in which is no utility, for if there were at least any utility in them to the world (as e.g.; the sun, moon and stars) God’s jealousy would not have been so intense (lit. — doubled) as it is now. (Sifrei Devarim 318:13).*

Looking at “these are not gods” לֹא אֱלֹהִים means that these evil spirits have no ability to help. Rashi compares this to the sun, moon, and the stars which are able to tell us the times and seasons that we are living in and then compares their inability to help. We note that Onkelos states the following, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:17*, דְּבַחֵוּ לְשֵׂדִין דְּלִית בְּהוֹן, צְרוּךְ וְחָלוּ דְלֹא יִדְעוּנִין תְּדַתָּן דְּמִקְרִיב אֲתַעְבְּדִידָא דְלֹא אֲתַעֲסִקוּ בְּהוֹן אֲבָהֵי תַהוֹן: “*They sacrificed to demons in whom there is no help, (nothing that is needed) and fearful things that they had not known, new (gods) that were lately made, with which your fathers had no dealings.*” The idea is that these gods they had no fear of as there was no value at all to their worship. To turn around and forsake the Creator God, the God of Israel, for false gods, and even demons, was an insult to the Lord God Almighty. This is how Moses describes God’s jealousy as having been aroused by a “no-god” so that he retaliates by arousing the jealousy of His people by a “no-people” according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:21*, כֹּה הֵם קִנְאוּנִי בְּלֹא-אֵל כַּעֲסוּנִי בְּהִבְלִיָּהֶם וְאֲנִי אֲקַנְיָאֵם בְּלֹא-עָם, 32:21 בְּגוֹי נִבָּל אֲכַעֲסֵם: “*They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (NASB)* What does this statement remind us of in the Apostolic Writings? It should remind us of what Paul is

ספר דברים פרק לב

טו וישמן ישרון ויבעט שמנת עבית כשית ויטש אלוה
עשהו וינבל צור ישעתו: טז יקנאהו בזרים בתועבת
יכעיסהו: יז יזבחו לשדים לא אלה אלהים לא ידעום
חדשים מקרב באו לא שערום אבתיכם: יח צור ילדך
תשי ותשכח אל מחלף: [רביעי] יט וירא יהוה וינאץ
מפעס בניו ובנתיו: כ ויאמר אסתירה פני מהם אראה
מה אחריתם כי דור תהפכת המה בנים לא-אמן בם:
כא הם קנאוני בלא-אל כעסוני בהבליהם ואני אקניאם
בלא-עם בגוי נבל אכעיסם: כב פי-אש קדחה באפי
ותיקד עד-שאול תחתית ותאכל ארץ ויבלה ותלהט מוסדי
הרים: כג אספה עלימו רעות חצי אכלה-בם: כד מזי
רעב ולחמי רשף וקטב מרירי ושון-בהמת אשלה-בם עם-
חמת זחלי עפר: כה מחוץ תשכל-תרב ומחזרים אימה
גם-בחור גם-בתולה יונק עם-איש שיבה: כו אמרתי
אגור פון-ינכרו צרימו פון-יאמרו ידנו רמה ולא יהוה פעל
כל-זאת: כז כח פי-גוי אבד עצות המה ואין בהם תבונה:
[חמישי] כט לו חקמו ישפילו זאת יבינו לאחריהם: ל
איכה ירדף אהד אלה ושנים יניסו רבבה אם-לא פי-צורם
מכרם ויהוה הסגירם: לא פי לא כצורנו צורם ואיבינו
פלילים: לב פי-מגפן סדם גפנם ומשדמת עמרה ענבמו
ענבי-רוש אשפלת מרת למו: לג חמת תנינם יינם
וראש פתנים אכזר: לד הלא-הוא כמס עמדי חתום
באוצרתי: לה לי נקם ושלם לעת תמוט רגלם פי קרוב
יום אידם וחס עתדת למו: לו פי-ידין יהוה עמו ועל-
עבדיו יתנחם פי יראה פי-אזלת יד ואפס עצור ועזוב: לז
ואמר אי אלהימו צור חסיו בו: לח אשר חלב זבחימו
יאכלו ישתו יין נסיכם יקומו ויעזרכם יהי עליכם סתרה:

לֹט רָאוּ | עֲתָהּ כִּי אָנִי אָנִי הוּא וְאִין אֱלֹהִים עֲמָדֵי אָנִי
 אָמִית וְאֲחִיָּה מְחַצְתִּי וְאָנִי אֶרְפָּא וְאִין מְיָדֵי מְצִיל: [ששי] מ
 כִּי-אֶשָּׂא אֶל-שָׁמַיִם יְדֵי וְאָמַרְתִּי הִי אֲנֹכִי לְעֹלָם:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:15-40

32:15 *'But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked You are grown fat, thick, and sleek Then he forsook God who made him, And scorned the Rock of his salvation.*

32:16 *'They made Him jealous with strange gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. 32:17*

'They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread. 32:18

'You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth. 32:19

'The Lord saw this, and spurned them Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. 32:20

'Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no

faithfulness. 32:21

'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who

are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation, 32:22

For a fire is kindled in My anger; And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the founda-

tions of the mountains. 32:23

'I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them. 32:24

'They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague And bitter destruction; And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, With the venom of crawling things of the

dust. 32:25

'Outside the sword will bereave, And inside terror Both young man and virgin, The nursling with the man of gray hair. 32:26

'I would have said, 'I will cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from men,' 32:27

Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy, That their adversaries would mis-

judge, That they would say, 'Our hand is triumphant, And the Lord has not done all this.' 32:28 'For they are a nation lacking in counsel, And there is no understanding in them. 32:29 'Would that they were wise, that they understood this, That they would discern their future! 32:30 'How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold them, And the Lord had given them up? 32:31 'Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, Even our enemies themselves judge this. 32:32 'For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, And from the fields of Gomorrah; Their grapes are grapes of poison, Their clusters, bitter. 32:33 'Their wine is the venom of serpents, And the deadly poison of cobras. 32:34 'Is it not laid up in store with Me, Sealed up in My treasuries? 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, (NASB)

It is quite interesting how Paul is drawing on these concepts from the Torah while teaching the people in *Romans 10*. Notice how all of these concepts from this week's Torah portion are contained within Paul's letter here in *Romans 10:14-21*

Romans 10:14-21

10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 10:15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' 10:16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. 10:18 But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.' 10:19 But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, By a nation without understanding will I anger you.' 10:20 And Isaiah is very bold and says, 'I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' 10:21 But as for Israel He says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.' (NASB)

Paul describes a nation who does not know God as calling upon His name. (10:14) He makes the statement that “*they will believe in Him whom they have not heard.*” Then asks the question, “*how will they hear without a preacher?*” His making these statements draws out an interesting point. He is pointing to a gentile nation. This leads to the question, have you ever seen an orthodox Jew taking Torah to the nations and telling them they need to obey God’s Word? Most people know that Jews rarely proselytize non Jews. It is very unlikely to have your doorbell ring and when opening the door one encounters a couple of rabbis eager to debate spiritual matters. Similarly, Jews don’t send missionaries to other countries or hand out flyers in the streets. There are many reasons given why Jews do not proselytize which includes both theological and historical reasons. When looking at the Torah, in Bereshit / Genesis, God called Abraham to move to

a new land, one that contains a large number of pagan peoples who live and travel through it. The Lord God then promised Abraham that “*all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 12:5*) Early Midrashic writers interpreted this to be a passage that called Abraham to proselytize, meaning that he converted those he met to faith in the One True God. The remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures teaches the theme of the Israelites being a light to the gentiles. A famous example is the story of Jonah. He was a prophet that God called to preach to the Assyrians, a task he eventually accomplished despite an unplanned trip in the belly of a whale due to fleeing from his calling by God. Paul draws these questions and comments to the Romans when he speaks to the Jewish persons in the synagogue about their lack of faith. Note the concepts of unfaithfulness, turning from God, knowing God, listening to His Word, and then God making them jealous by a nation without understanding of the God of Israel (*10:19*) are all found here in *Romans 10*. Calling on the Lord is an act of worship. There is an ancient story, in Midrash Rabbah, that states before God offered the Torah to the children of Israel, He first offered the Torah to the other nations to see if they wanted it? God did this so that the nations wouldn’t be able to claim that they would have accepted the Torah if only they had been asked. So the Midrash describes God first asking the children of Esau. They ask, “*What’s in the Torah?*” God replied, “*You shall not murder.*” Well, we could never accept that, they complained. “*Isaac’s blessing to Esau said that we would live by the sword*” (see *Bereshit / Genesis 27:40*), and they said how could we stop doing that? And so they refused to accept the Torah. God then went to ask the children of Ishmael. They also asked, “*What’s in it?*” “*You must not steal,*” God answered. Well, we could never accept a Torah like that, since we make our living by stealing, they replied. So God decided to ask each of the 70 nations whether they would accept the Torah, but each refused it for one reason or another. Finally God came to the Israelites. “*Do you want my Torah?*” He asked them. “*Of course we want the Torah,*” they replied without even asking what was required of them they answered, “*kol asher diber Adonai na’aseh*” (כָּל אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה נַעֲשֶׂה) “*all that the LORD has spoken, we shall do,*” *Shemot / Exodus 19:8*). So God gave the Torah to the children of Israel. All of these things offer a rich context

to Paul's words, as he reasoned from the Torah to explain how God was taking His words and His blessing to the nations, to those who are called to be His people, even from the gentiles.

Paul spoke a lot about idolatry, especially in the epistles to the Corinthians. In fact, the first three chapters of his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul, offers an analysis and critique of idolatry that remains useful even today. Paul takes on two types of idolatry, specifically, he criticizes what is known as the idol of lust in the Roman Empire that underscores this kingdom's violence and injustice. The biblical narrative often portrays violence and injustice as having its roots in idolatry. Trusting in things other than the Creator God who made all human beings in His divine image leads to a diminishment of the value of some human beings. This is a prerequisite for injustice and violence against our fellow human beings. Note that the Torah, the prophets, and Yeshua all emphasize the centrality of loving our neighbor as part of what it means to love God above all else. Idolatry emphasis is upon one's lusts. Note how interesting it is to read that the sages say that the reason ancient Israel sacrificed to demons was not because they considered them deities, but that they hoped they could manipulate these demons to do their bidding and take care of their needs. (see *Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:17 Part 1*) This draws out the question, what and why do we worship the Lord in heaven? Is it to manipulate God to do what we want or need? This certainly should not be the case! *Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim 32:17 Part 1-2* states the following on *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:15-17*:

“Another possible approach to these words: There are basically three categories of idolatry (compare author on Yitro 20,3). One of them is the believing in certain philosophies, even if one does not worship something physical. We have been warned against such idolatry by the first words of the second Commandment: לא יהיה לך אלוהים אחרים. The second category of idolatry is the worship of reproductions in a cast form or other three-dimensional form, of celestial phenomena, the assumption being that one thereby wants to “catch” the power of these phenomena and put them to work

on one's behalf. The Torah warns against this with the words: "do not make for yourselves, etc." (Exodus 20,4) The third category of idolatry consists of serving demons, something we have been warned against by the words אשר במים מתחת לארץ, "which are in the water beneath the earth" (Exodus 20,4). These are the demons that dwell in the תהום, "the empty space" mentioned in Genesis 1,1. This is why, at this point, Moses warns against serving these demons, saying we must not slaughter for them seeing they do not possess any power, not even that attributed to the celestial phenomena commonly known as horoscopes. Moses adds the apparently gratuitous words: אלוהים אשר לא ידעום, to emphasize that not only are these phenomena not deities, not equipped with any powers, but they have never even been acknowledged by idolaters as having any power."

Notice how the rabbis draw out three categories of idolatry, (i) certain philosophies, (ii) worship of reproductions, and (iii) serving demons. It is a significant observation that they categorize "*certain philosophies*" as being a category of idolatry! The reason this is so significant is because certain philosophies are the source of much hatred and murders in this country and around the world today! Parashat Haazinu gives us a revelation of God's Wrath. Paul wrote something very similar according to *Romans 1:18*, and also wrote concerning God giving up those who trust in idols (*Romans 1:24*) to fall into self destructive behavior. It is interesting how Parashat Haazinu speaks to the unfaithfulness of God's people, and dynamics of this behavior as leading to trusting in inanimate and lifeless things. This causes the people to lose their connection with the living God, and with life itself! This idea of losing a connection to life itself, is a direct result of one exchanging their humanity as being made in the image of God for created things. Note how when there is an exchange of something, such as a lie versus the truth, or injustice for justice, this is related to life and death according to the scriptures. Paul wrote in *Romans* that this does not have to be the case, that God has shown us what

is needed. When people exchange the glory of God for images that resemble created things, they lose their ability for discernment and literally become like their lifeless images that they worship. This is how David described it according to *Tehillim / Psalms 115:7-8*, *7 they have hands, but cannot feel; they have feet, but cannot walk; they cannot even clear their throats. 8 Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them. Paul wrote saying Romans 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. (NASB)* This indicates to us how the Lord respects human freedom of choice. When people freely choose to serve their idols, they compromise their God given freedoms, they are voluntarily giving themselves over to bondage to sin and to demons. This does not suggest that God is taking revenge on men for their adulterous ways, but that those who seek idols, no matter what form it may be in, will become like what they trust. Trusting in lifeless things will lead to lifelessness! According to Parashat Haazinu, it is the Lord God of Israel who stands with us and gives us purpose and meaning in life! When one turns to worship created things, they no longer reveal the God who sustains us! This is explained by Paul in *Romans 1* when describing relationship (human love) which is to reflect God's love in many ways, but when given over to idolatry, love is reduced to lust, and relationships become broken, unjust, and becomes the context for alienation from one another. This is why Paul wrote what he did concerning God, giving those who are consumed by lust up to degrading passions. (*Romans 1:26*) Parashat Haazinu integrates very well with the book of Romans, illustrating that Paul was teaching Torah right here in the book of Romans. Taking these things together, we can see how when one exchanges trust in God for worship of created things, even as the rabbis include, "*certain philosophies*" this leads to unnatural behaviors. Is it really any wonder why it is the left, the liberals, the unfaithful, those who do not believe in the Word of God, are the one's who are promoting the LGBTQ life styles, destroying property, burning down cities, and beating up people? Our very culture reveals God's truth here concerning these things. It is because of these things the Lord God Almighty sent His Son to show us the way, to reveal to us God's truth, and the wisdom of choosing to walk in God's Ways of righteousness and life!

Digging Deeper Torah Series

The Power of God's Son is that when we believe in Him, our lives will change, we will be transformed, we will be taken from the darkness into the light, made new, and we will be given the desire to be consistent with what God wants from us according to His Word! This is why it is so important for us to have faith in the God of Israel, and in His Son Yeshua the Messiah!