

The Birth of a New Year

Parshas Haazinu Encapsulates Everything

Haazinu is a very significant parsha, the Ramban explains that:

Parshas Haazinu includes the present, past and future, this world and the World to Come. It is referred to as כל 'the entire thing' because it includes everything that will happen in the future. Even though it is a small Parsha, it explains many things.

The Ramban further explains¹ that each of us is alluded to in this parsha. Every person, place and occurrence that was, is and will be, can be found in Haazinu.

Seek Hashem the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah

The Prophet Yeshaya exhorts the Jewish People, "דַּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמְצְאוֹ קְרִיבוֹ" ², 'seek Hashem when he can be found, call out to him when he is near'. The Gemara³ notes, that this refers to the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah – the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - when Hashem is especially close to us.

It is much easier to develop a relationship with Hashem during these days. However, we have to truly live within the time, not merely cross the boxes off the calendar.

The Bais HaMikdash Corresponds to the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah

The Sefer Yetzirah explains that the world was created in עולם; עשן – place, שנה - time, נפש – person. For every point in time, we will find a corresponding place and person.

The Torah did not tell us where the most important edifice of Jewish life – the Bais HaMikdash - was to be built. Hashem wanted us to search for the place of his dwelling. "לִשְׁכְּנוּ תִדְרְשׁוּ וּבֵאת שְׁמָה" ⁴, 'You shall seek out his dwelling place and come there.'

The Bais HaMikdash is in 'place' what the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is in 'time'. They are both the dwelling place of Hashem, but are elusive to us. In order to find the Bais HaMikdash or *be* in the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah one must exert effort. It is not something that comes easily.

King David spent days and nights searching for the site of the Bais HaMikdash. He relates in Tehilim⁵ "זָכוֹר ה' לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל-עֲנֻתָיו... אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לֵה' ... אִם-אֶעֱלֶה עַל עֶרְשׁ יְצוּעֵי... אִם-אֶתֵּן שְׁנַת לַעֲיִנַי...עַד-אֶמְצָא מְקוֹם לֵה'" 'Hashem, remember for David all the pain... he swore to Hashem... 'I will not lie down in a bed... I will not give sleep to my eyes... until I find a place for Hashem.'

Just as King David gave up sleep in his relentless quest of finding the dwelling *place* for the Divine Presence, in Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, the *time* of the year that Hashem dwells among us, we also deprive ourselves of sleep in our relentless quest of finding him; we wake up early for Selichos.

The Bais HaMikdash is the Origin of Creation

The Kodosh HaKodoshim (Holy of Holies) was built upon a stone called, "אבן שתיה". It was so called because, as the Gemara tells us, "שִׁמְמָנָה נִשְׁתַּח הָעוֹלָם" ⁶, 'the word began developing from it'. It was the point in space where the world began evolving from. When this point developed further, Yerushalayim was created, then Eretz Yisroel, and then the entire world. King Shlomo says in Mishlei, "אֶרֶץ וְחֻצוֹת" ⁷, first Eretz Yisroel was created and then the lands outside of it.

The אבן שתיה is the point where the creator and the created unite. It is the place on this world that is closest to Hashem. It is the entry way to heaven; all of our prayers travel there in their ascent heavenward.

The Chasam Sofer explains a puzzling Gemara which states "ארץ ישראל גבוה מכל הארצות... בית המקדש גבוה מכל ארצות" 'Eretz Yisroel is the higher than all the lands; the Bais HaMikdash is higher than Eretz Yisroel'. Geographically, we know that this is not true. There are many mountains that are much higher than the Temple Mount. So what is the meaning of this Gemara?

The Chasam Sofer gives a parable of someone holding a ball. He could never know which point is the highest, because it depends which point of the ball is on top. If, however, the creator of the ball tells you from where he began fashioning it, and that that point belongs on top, then you would know which point on the ball is the highest in altitude.

Each country on this spherical planet of earth can claim to be the highest by supposing themselves to be on top of the globe. But only Hashem knows which point is on top, i.e. from where he began the creation. Hashem tells us that the country that is on top is Eretz Yisroel, and the point from where He began creation is the אבן שתייה.

The Word הַר is related to the word הַרְיוֹן and הַרְהוֹר

Yerushalayim is called הַר, mountain, as in the verse, "וְהֵבִיאֹתִים אֶל-הַר קְדְשִׁי"⁹, 'and I will bring them to my holy mountain'. The Hebrew word for pregnancy is הַרְיוֹן, a process in which a small point develops into a complete human being. Yerushalayim is called הַר because it is the point from which a הַרְיוֹן took place; a singular point in space began developing into a complete globe.

Thought is where every entity begins its development. The Bais HaMikdash is "בראש ההרים"¹⁰, 'on top of the mountains'. That is why the Hebrew word for thought is הַרְהוֹר, a mountain on top of a mountain, like the Bais HaMikdash, which is the point from where Yerushalayim which is the beginning of the world began emerging.

The Ramban often refers to Eretz Yisroel as 'the center of civilization'. It is a center point around which the entire creation accumulated. This is universally accepted by all nations; they named the sea that borders Eretz Yisroel's western border, the 'Mediterranean Sea', 'medi'-terrain, the middle of the land. Eretz Yisroel is the point where the three most populated continents meet; Asia, Europe, Africa.

Elul through Yom Kippur is the start of the הַרְיוֹן in 'שנה – Time'

The creation of 'נפש - person', the human embryo, takes place in forty days, during which the gender of the unborn baby is undetermined. After forty days the developing child is termed a fetus and the gender is finalized.

Correspondingly, in 'שנה – time', the creation of the new year also takes place in forty days; the forty days between the first day of Elul and Yom Kippur.

The Gemara says that one should pray for the gender of a child during the first forty days of gestation, because after that, it would be a supernatural feat to change the gender of the fetus. The same is with the year; during the first forty days, from Elul until Yom Kippur, one should pray that the year be one that bestows blessing.

Rosh Hashanah is of the most significant days of the birth process of the year. Therefore, we say by the Musaf prayer, "היום הרת עולם", 'Today is the birthday of the world'

Ascending the Mountain of Hashem

Rosh Hashanah, the birthday of the world is in 'time' what הַר, Yerushalayim, is in 'עולם' – 'place'.

Just like the starting point in 'place', the Bais HaMikdash, is the שער השמים, the Gateway to Heaven, so too the starting point in 'time', Rosh Hashanah, is when our prayers from a whole year enter heaven.

We must seek Hashem during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah because it is the point in time when the creator and the created are united, the point where the touch of G-d is manifest; it is the יצור כפיו, work of His hand.

We enter Yerushalayim in 'time' with the first day of Elul, and we begin climbing toward the peak, the Bais HaMikdash of 'time', Rosh Hashanah. (Yom Kippur is the Kodesh Kodoshim, Holy of Holies of 'time'.) After the Maariv Prayer of Rosh Hashanah we recite the 24th chapter of Tehilim which talks about the qualifications one must have if he wishes to ascend the Mountain of Hashem.

"מי-יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר ה' וְיָקוּם בְּמִקְוֵם קִדְשׁוֹ... נָקִי כַפַּיִם וּבֵר לֵבָב אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִשְׁאַ לְשׁוּא נִפְשֵׁי... זֶה דֹר דֹרָשׁוּ מִבְּקִשֵׁי פְּנִיד" '...Who can ascend the Mountain of Hashem and [furthermore] who can remain standing in the place of His holiness? [One of] untainted hands, and a pure heart, that did not swear his life in vain... this is the generation that seeks, they want your presence [, Hashem]'.
"מי-יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר ה' וְיָקוּם בְּמִקְוֵם קִדְשׁוֹ... נָקִי כַפַּיִם וּבֵר לֵבָב אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִשְׁאַ לְשׁוּא נִפְשֵׁי... זֶה דֹר דֹרָשׁוּ מִבְּקִשֵׁי פְּנִיד"

Climbing the mountain of Hashem cannot be accomplished by placing oneself in a certain geographical location, or by finding oneself in a day of the year. It is only achieved by hard work, by truly seeking Hashem.

The Seed Contains Everything

Were scientists to develop a microscope that would be able to fully observe the minutest details of the first drop from which the fetus develops, they would be able to project what the person would look like at any point further in his development, because the initial particle contains everything which will develop from it.

That would be so not only in 'person', but in 'place' and 'time' too. The אבן שתיה contains the genetic material for the entire planet earth and the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah encapsulate the entire year. Everything that will happen in the coming year is being formulated now.

Appropriately, Adam, who was the first person and therefore contained within himself all future people, was created on Rosh Hashanah, the first point in time. He was also created from the first point in 'place'; the dust that Hashem used to fashion Adam with came from the site of the Bais HaMikdash.

When planting a tree a farmer will be very careful in choosing the seed. The quality of the seed will affect the entire tree; its bark, branches, twigs, leaves and fruit. A defect in the seed is very far reaching. So too, our actions during the seed of the year, the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, must be carefully contemplated.

Tishrei is the Brain of the Year

As mentioned above, Rosh Hashanah is called הַרְת עוֹלָם, the birthday of the world. The word הַרְת is related to the word הִירָהוּר, thought – the function of the brain. The brain controls the entire human anatomy. Rosh Hashanah controls what will happen during the entire year.

There is a debate among the sages as to when the world was created, in Nissan or in Tishrei. Tosfos'¹¹ conclusion is that although the world was actually created in Nissan, the thought of creating the world arose in Tishrei. This is why Tishrei is the 'brain' of the year; it controls the year because in 'thought', the world was created now.

The Avos were born in Tishrei

In Tishrei, the month that is the origin of the whole year, the origin of the Jewish People was created. The Avos (Patriarchs) were born in Tishrei.

The Avos are alluded to in the verse "אשא עיני אל ההרים", 'I lift up my eyes to the mountains'. The Midrash¹² interprets the word הרים, mountains to mean הורים, parents, referring to the Avos. הורים and הירור are of similar etymology. The Mountain of Tzion is the origin of the world and parents are the origin of their children. They are both the 'thought' of the subsequent product.

Space Expanding to Contain More Than It Physically Can

Eretz Yisroel is referred to as "ארץ הצבי"¹³, 'the land that is like a deer'. The hide of a deer is too small to cover it, it is stretched over its body, and when it is removed, it shrinks to its actual size and cannot again wrap the animal.

Eretz Yisroel is the same. When Jews live there, it enlarges to contain them. It is impossible to understand how millions of Jews were able to live in just one small city of Eretz Yisroel. This was before they were exiled. Afterwards, the land was physically reduced in size.

Yerushalayim contained more than it technically could to an even greater degree than Eretz Yisroel did. It is stated in 'Avos DeRabi Noson'¹⁴ that no one ever complained that he had no lodging in Yerushalayim when he came for the Holidays. This can not be reconciled with the laws of mathematics. There were millions of people in Yerushalayim for Yom Tov, and there were much less beds!

The phenomenon of a small place containing more than it physically should be able to was manifested even stronger in Yerushalayim than in Eretz Yisroel.

In the courtyard of the Bais HaMikdash, this was even more evident. The Gemarah¹⁵ talks about a miracle that would occur every year on Yom Kippur. The Jewish People would stand tightly packed together, watching the Kohen Gadol (high priest) perform the service of Yom Kippur. When they needed to prostrate themselves there was, miraculously, ample place for each individual to fall on his face and to even have space around him.

The Kodesh Kodoshim, the place in the Bais HaMikdash directly above the אבן שתיה, was altogether completely above mathematical constraints. The Aron, wondrously, took up no space at all. The mass of the Aron did not deduct from the space of the room of the Kodesh Kodoshim!¹⁶

The closer we get to the אבן שתיה, the more we see that space contains more than it actually can. This is because the closer we get to the point from where everything originated, matter becomes closer to its original state of 'thought' which is intangible. Space can therefore contain more within it because it isn't so physical yet.

Seeking the Point of Origin

Because the point of origin isn't tangible, it requires seeking.

Mashiach, the origin of 'נפש – man', is hidden very well. He will always appear to be the least likely candidate for the task. Even a great prophet would have a hard time finding him.

King David is Mashiach; Mashiach is a reincarnation of the Neshama of Adam who was the origin of all of man. אדם is acronym, משיח, דוד, אדם. King David was also elusive.

The greatest prophet, Shmuel, couldn't figure out who he was. He even erred after he was told by Hashem to which family David belonged! Shmuel thought that the oldest brother was to be king, until Hashem told him, 'Don't look at externals'.¹⁷ The external glance of the prophet Shmuel was much deeper than we could ever hope to perceive with our most profound understanding.

When the Prophet Shmuel and his Disciple, King David, searched together for the site of the Bais HaMikdash, the origin of 'מקום', they also erred at first. Their initial conclusion was that it should be built in a place called עין עיטם. It was only later that they deduced from words in the verse, where the correct place that the Bais HaMikdash should be built was.

The origin of the year, 'שנה' is also hidden. Rosh Hashanah is referred to as 'בכסה', hidden.

The Origin is Sovereign

A King is sovereign because he is the origin his nation. There is a commandment to have reverence for a king.

The place that is the source of all of 'עולם', the Bais HaMikdash, is the 'place' of kingdom that corresponds to the 'person' that is king. There is also a commandment to be in awe of the place of Kingdom "ומקדשי תיראו"¹⁸, 'you shall be in awe of the sanctuary'. When Yaakov Avinu discovered that he was sleeping on the site of the Bais HaMikdash, he jolted awake, and exclaimed, "מה נורא המקום הזה!"¹⁹, 'How awesome is this place!'

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are referred to as ימים נוראים, Days of Awe. These days are King of the year; they are the origin of the year and control it and reverence for them is demanded.

The Bais HaMikdash is Hinted at in the Center of the Torah

There is a Halacha (law), that if a sage defies the ruling of the Sanhedrin he receives the death penalty.²⁰ However, he is only guilty if he proclaims his defiance in front of the Sanhedrin, and only when they sit in judgment in the courtroom that is in the Bais HaMikdash. This is deduced from the verse which states "ועשית על"²¹ "פי" ²² "פי" 'you should do according to what they tell you from **that specific place**' [referring to the Bais HaMikdash]. The Sanhedrin does not attain its full sovereignty, to the extent of prosecuting its dissenters, only when they are in the place of Kingdom, the Bais HaMikdash.

The Midrash states that the Torah is likened to a blueprint and the world to the building. Hashem wrote the Torah and from it he created the world. Every detail of a building can be found in its blueprint; everything in 'place, time and person' originates from the Torah and can be found within it.

If Yerushalayim is the origin of the world, it is so because it is a reflection of the origin of the Torah which is the blueprint of the world. Just as there is a center in the world, there is a center in the Torah (blueprint) from which the world was created from. It is this origin that the verse refers to when it says, "פי" ²² "פי" 'מצינן תוצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלם' 'for from Tzion comes forth Torah and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim'.

Knowing that Yerushalayim is the center of the Torah, we would expect to find it there. Sefer Devarim is a microcosm of the Torah; it is referred to as משנה תורה, a review of the Torah.

It is fascinating to note that the center of Sefer Devarim is "ומקדשי תיראו", the verse from which we learn that the supremacy of the Sanhedrim stems from Tzion, the place from which Torah comes from.

Diminishing Sleep

How do we search for the 'King' of time?

We give up of our sleep, we wake up for Selichos. The Shofar of Rosh Hashanah beseeches, "עורו ישנים" 'Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep, and you drowsy ones from your slumber'.

There are many people walking around completely awake, but their souls are fast asleep. There is only a small spark in their Neshama which is still awake. King Shlomo proclaimed the lament of a nation which finds itself slumbering spiritually, "אני ישנה ולבי ער"²³, 'I am asleep but my heart is awake'. Only the very essence of my soul still beats, the rest of it is in a deep coma.

When Yaakov Avinu discovered that he was sleeping in the place that is 'King', the place of the Bais HaMikdash, he exclaimed "ואנכי לא ידעתי!", and Rashi explains, 'had I known that I am in such a holy place, I would not have slept!'

We are now in a time that is very holy, we have to wake up! Passing the time will get us nowhere. To merit finding oneself in Rosh Hashanah requires the effort of relentless seeking. No one wants to find themselves in the valley when time has already reached the mountain's peak!

The main requirements to reach the summit are, "נקי כפים ובר לבב", hands clean of wrongdoing and a pure heart.

May we merit being the "זה דור דורשיו מבקשי פניך יעקב סלה", the Generation that will bring Mashiach.

¹ מובא בקב הישר פ' כ"ג

² ישעיה נה:ו

³ ר"ה יח:א

⁴ דברים יב:ה

⁵ פרק קל"ב

⁶ מדרש תנחומא קדושים פ' י' יומא נד,ב

⁷ ח:כו

⁸ סנהדרין פז,א; קידושין סט,א

⁹ ישעיה נז:ז

¹⁰ מיכה ד:א; ישעיה ב:ב

¹¹ ראש השנה כ"ז, א'

¹² מדרש רבה בראשית ס"ח סימן ב'

¹³ גיטין דף נז,א

¹⁴ פרק ל"ה

¹⁵ יומא כא,א

¹⁶ מגילה י', ב'

¹⁷ שמואל ט"ז ז'

¹⁸ ויקרא יט:ל, כז:ב

¹⁹ בראשית כח:יז

²⁰ ריש פ' שופטים

²¹ דברים יז:י

²² מיכה ד:ב; ישעיה ב:ג

²³ שיר השירים ה:ב