

Haazinu Wrap-Up

by Sammy Schaechter

Moshe starts off the Parsha by describing the existence of Hashem in nature as being as obvious as the rain or dew that sustain the fields and gardens. Hashem is completely fair, always good, always compassionate and forgiving. Therefore, all damage and negativity must be credited directly to the bad decisions and actions that we make.

We must always remember that we were chosen from among all the other nations to be directly taken care of by Hashem. Unfortunately, its human nature to forget how much we

TORAH COMICS

On the last day of Moshe's life, he sings a song to the Jews.

"For Hashem I sing this song,
 He serves justice and can't be wrong.
 He created all, from land to sky,
 and you are the apple of his eye.
 Hashem is forgiving, loving, and kind,
 no matter what happens, keep him in mind."

ANDREW

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really depend on Hashem and to make ourselves think that were completely self-sufficient and independent.

destroyed and the Jewish people will again recognize Hashem's superiority and control.

If we do this, we will then be punished with exile and persecution. We will be chased from our land and sold into slavery, and we will experience what it means to be independent of Hashem's direct protection and kindness.

Moshe's song ends with the Jewish people singing about their acceptance and understanding of Hashem's purpose and justice.

However, the other nations will also fail in the same way that we did. They will assume that their ability to enslave the Jewish people and destroy Israel is proof of Hashem's helplessness and their own ability and strength. Therefore, they will be punished and

Moshe presents the entire "song" to the nation and reemphasizes that the condition for keeping the Land is by following the Torah and serving Hashem.

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LEADER TIP:

Haazinu is written in a very unique way, its written like a song. Feel free to teach a new song in honor of Parshat Haazinu!

A Small But Valuable Stone

Ask your elders and they will tell you (32:7)

Before R' Moshe Teitelbaum, the author of Yismach Moshe, became known as a Rebbe, he earned his livelihood by lecturing. He was a wandering *maggid*. During this period in his life, he was adamantly opposed to Chasidus.

Once, his travels brought him to Lublin on the Shabbos of Parashas Toldos. That Friday night, he went to listen to the words of Torah of the Chozeh of Lublin.

The Chozeh dwelt on the words, "And Yitzchak lived (*vayeshev*) in *Grar*." He explained it thus: In the *yeshivah* where Yitzchak learned they were discussing the matter of *grar* — that is, dragging furniture across the ground on Shabbos. R' Shimon rules that if someone drags a bed, chair or bench without intending to make a furrow, it is permissible.

R' Moshe, who was not receptive to such Chasidus, shrugged off the interpretation and did not take the words seriously.

On his way back to his lodgings, he suddenly realized that he was carrying the keys to his room. This was forbidden on Shabbos in Lublin, which did not have an *eruv*. With a twinge of conscience, he felt that the words of the Chozeh had been directed straight at him.

On the following morning, after prayers, the people of Lublin gathered to hear the sermon of the guest *darshan*, R' Moshe. But instead of saying what he had prepared, R' Moshe told a parable:

A diamond merchant once came to a city, hoping to sell his precious wares. But before he could even display them, he passed by a shop in whose showcase were displayed lovely gems that were larger and more sparkling than

his own. He decided not to stop over in that city at all. Before he left, someone stopped him and asked, "Why are you leaving without even displaying your merchandise?" The diamond dealer explained that his goods were inferior to those already being sold in that city. But the man explained, "Those gems do indeed sparkle. But they are only imitations. Even one small gem of yours is worth far more than the largest exhibit in that window!"

"The same applies to me," concluded R' Moshe the *darshan*. "Here in Lublin you have one precious stone that is worth far more than all the glittering merchandise in my case. One small word from the Chozeh far outshines any clever speeches that I could say and is worth far more!"

R' Moshe Teitelbaum refused to say any more. And when he left Lublin, he was no longer opposed to Chasidus but was a sworn follower of the great Chozeh.

The Blessing of the Oil

And oil out of the flinty rock (32:13)

There was once a need for a large amount of oil in the city of Ludkiya. The people gathered and appointed a trustworthy representative to buy the oil, entrusting him with a large sum of money.

The man set out. He traveled many days, until he reached Jerusalem and asked where he might purchase a large amount of oil.

When he said how much he required, people shook their heads. "We do not have such large reserves of oil. You must seek elsewhere. Perhaps in Tzor, you will find what you are looking for."

The city of Tzor is in the north, far from Jerusalem. The messenger finally reached Tzor. He asked the people

there where he could purchase a large quantity of oil. But they could not help him either and suggested that he try the city of Gush Chalav. Once, again, he traveled for many days until he reached Gush Chalav. Hoping that he was at the end of his search, he asked the townspeople if they produced oil in great quantities. They replied, "There is one man who will be able to sell you as much as you need. His field is not far from here. Go and ask him."

They gave the stranger directions. He soon found the man he sought, working in a large olive grove, digging around the roots of his olive trees. The stranger from Ludkiya approached him and said, "I have come to purchase a large quantity of oil. Can you supply me with what I need?"

"Certainly. I have as much as you can possibly use. But I cannot interrupt my work. Would you mind waiting until I finish?"

The man agreed to wait. When the farmer was finished, he shouldered his tools and motioned to the stranger to follow him.

They walked through the olive grove. Each time they passed some weeds growing underfoot, the man would bend down and pluck them out. If he saw stones on the way, he would cast them aside. The visitor could not believe his eyes. If this man really owned such great quantities of oil, then he must be very rich! Why, then, was he working so hard! Surely, he could afford to hire laborers. Perhaps everyone was misleading him.

PARSHA STORIES

With these thoughts still troubling him, he found himself at the threshold of the owner's house. A servant hurried out with warm water for the master to wash his hands and feet. A moment later he returned a second time with a gold vessel filled with oil. The master anointed his hands and feet with the fragrant oil. The traveler now realized that his host was really wealthy.

The owner of the grove invited the stranger in for supper, which turned out to be a sumptuous meal. Afterwards, they filled vessel after vessel. There was still oil to spare, but the man from Ludkiya had already spent all the money he had brought.

"Is this enough, or do you need

more?" the farmer asked.

"I would gladly buy more oil, but I have no more money," said the stranger.

"Never mind! I will give you more on credit. I will go along with you to Ludkiya where you can pay me back."

The quantity of oil was so great that all of the horses and donkeys in Eretz Yisrael had to be hired to transport it! The messenger returned to his city, happy to have succeeded so well.

When the people of Ludkiya perceived the approaching caravan of horses and donkeys, they rushed out. To their joy, they would now have as much oil as they needed. They heaped

praises upon their loyal representative who had succeeded so well in his mission.

"I am not the one to praise," he said modestly. "Praise and thank this man, who is standing by my side. He, alone, supplied all of this oil. He is an industrious person and very wealthy, too. And yet, despite his great riches, he works in his own olive grove, doing all the difficult tasks by the sweat of his own brow!"

The people of Ludkiya now understood why the man had been blessed with so much oil and such great wealth.

(According to Tractate Menachos 85b)

TALES OF TZADIKIM

Avner

I said I would drive them into a corner and cause their remembrance to be forgotten among men (32:26)

The Ramban had a disciple, Avner, who abandoned his master's teachings. He denied the teachings of the Torah, converted, and became a high official in the court of Spain.

One Yom Kippur, this apostate sent for the Ramban, ordering him to come at once. When the Ramban, his former teacher, stood before him, the convert butchered a pig, cooked it and ate it. Then he asked, "How many sins have I just committed?"

The Ramban replied, "Four sins. But what has brought you to deny the Torah of your fathers and act thus?"

"YOU!" said the minister, pointing an

accusing finger at the Ramban. "You once taught that all of the commandments of the Torah were hinted at in the parashah of Haazinu, if one knew how to look for them. You said that this parashah contained everything past and future, even the secrets of science and nature. I refused to believe this. How could one small parashah be so full of knowledge? Your statement brought me eventually to deny the entire Torah."

"I do not take back what I said. I still maintain that everything, all human knowledge, all the laws of science, all past and future history — everything — is contained in Haazinu. If you don't believe me, challenge me and I will show you. Ask me anything."

"Very well," the former disciple challenged. "Show me where my name, Avner, is to be found."

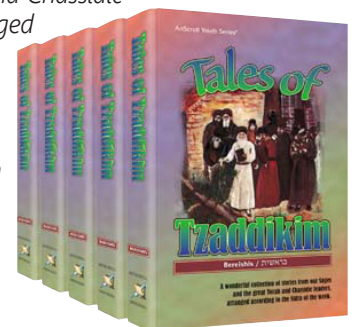
Hashem endowed the Ramban with divine intuition and he quoted without hesitating, "Afeihem, ashbisah me'enosh zichram. Join the third let-

ter of each word and you will have the name Avner. Do you know what this verse means? It means that Hashem will wipe your memory off the face of the earth!"

Avner turned a deathly white; he realized that not only did the verse include his name, it also prophesied his future!

Avner left the Ramban. He left his country and his position of wealth and power. He embarked upon a ship and no trace was ever found of him! Truly, his memory was wiped off the face of the earth.

Tales of Tzadikim by G. Matov is a wonderful collection of stories from our Sages and the great Torah and Chassidic leaders, arranged according to the Sidra. The five-volume set is available from your favorite Jewish book store, or online at artscroll.com.



LEADER TIP:

Is it better to make promises all the time and sometimes keep them and sometimes not keep them or not promise anything ever but still help out when you can?

PARSHA PUZZLERS

TEST YOUR PARSHA KNOWLEDGE

by Sammy Schaechter & Dovid Saleman
Answers on page 7.

EASY Qs

1. How was Moshe going to die?
2. What word did Moshe use to call these witnesses?
3. Why did Moshe select these two eidim (two answers)?
4. Moshe reminded the Bnei Yisrael that when Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim, HaShem protected them like an eagle protects its babies. How does an eagle carry its babies differently than all other birds?
5. Why does the eagle carry its babies on its wings?
6. What did HaShem do to protect the Bnei Yisrael that was like an eagle?
7. What is Bnei Yisrael's key to life?
8. Why did HaShem tell Moshe to go up to the top of Har Nevo?
9. What incident is the reason for Moshe not being able to enter Eretz Yisrael?

10. When Moshe warned Bnei Yisrael not to leave the Torah, he called for two special eidim (witnesses). What were they?

MEDIUM Qs

11. HaShem said that He would never destroy the Bnei Yisrael, even if they do aveirot. Why not?
12. Who is HaShem's chelek (portion)?
13. What is the only way Bnei Yisrael could defeat their enemies?
14. How does Moshe remind the people to stay loyal to HaShem?
15. Why do all other birds carry their babies between their feet?

HARD Qs

16. How did we act in return to HaShem?
17. How will HaShem repay us?
18. In the song of Haazinu, what three things did Moshe compare HaShem to?
19. What two things are the Torah compared to?
20. How does HaShem act toward us?

CRACK THE PARSHA CODE

by Rabbi Yaakov Levine
Answers on page 7.

1. M S this S of Parshas H, on the L D of his L
2. M told the H and E to be W to what he was about to S to B Y
3. M C the T to R. the W cannot S without R, and we cannot S without T
4. H is C a R to show His S
5. All of H W are F and J even if we don't U them
6. The S speaks about H L for us and for the 3 A
7. The S speaks about the G of E Y
8. The other N will P BY, how we S with H throughout all the D T
9. H will P B the N that tried to H BY
10. H told M to go up to H N, so that he can S the L of EY, because he wont be E'ing into it
11. M is T that he will D on top of H N

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PARSHA STORIES

TALES OF TZADIKIM

Charity Is Insurance

He is a shield to all who seek refuge in Him (Haftorah Parashas Haazinu, Shmuel II 22:31)

Reb Gershon, a man rich in lands and Rand goods, lived on a large estate near Horodna. One day, Reb Gershon decided to insure all his possessions.

On his way to the office of the insurance company he met R' Nachum, the tzaddik, making his rounds to collect for the many charitable causes which

he supported. Reb Gershon stopped R' Nachum and said, "You know, R' Nachum, I was just about to take out an insurance policy for my home and possessions when I saw you and had second thoughts. If I were to give you the money which the premium would cost me, and keep on giving it year in and year out, could you insure me against fire?"

R' Nachum nodded and said, "I am

certain that the merit of your charity will indeed protect your home from fire."

Reb Gershon immediately gave the sum to R' Nachum. And, year after year, he continued to do so. Rather than pay an insurance premium, he would give that amount to R' Nachum.

Many fires broke out in Horodna, but they never spread as far as Reb Gershon's property.

PARSHA PUZZLERS

TORAH RHYMES & RIDDLES

Answers on page 7

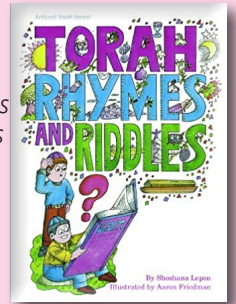
1. This is what Moshe was told to write
And teach to every Israelite

2. Moshe called us both to hear
The words that he would say.
We'll be around forever
Bearing witness to this day.
----- and -----
3. The Torah gives life and so do I,
When I fall down from the sky.

4. Hashem is our father And we are
His flock. He is called "Tzur"
Which is Hebrew for ----
5. On top of my wings
I carry my young, Protecting them
when
Any arrows are flung.
And Hashem guarded Israel
From Egypt's attack,
Just as I shelter My young on my
back. The ----
6. Hashem told Moshe to climb up
high

To the mountain where he would
die.
In the land of Moav, facing Yericho,
Was a mountain called Har ----

Torah Rhymes and Riddles by Shoshana Lapon (Author) and Aaron Friedman (Illustrator) is filled with rhyming riddles that test young children's comprehension of the weekly Parsha. For more great children's Torah books, visit artscroll.com



PARSHA STORIES

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

An Unquenchable Thirst

*"May my teaching drip like the rain,
may my utterance flow like the dew"*
(Devarim 32:2)

R'Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, rosh yeshivah of the Mirrer Yeshivah, had an unquenchable thirst for hearing original Torah thoughts from his many students. The students were very precious to him, and he remembered all their divrei Torah for years afterward.

A young man who was a student of his once came to see the rosh yeshivah with happy news: His wife had just given birth to a baby girl. R' Eliezer Yehudah congratulated him warmly, then gave him a shrewd look and said, "You no doubt wished for a son ... Being a sensible man, you probably did not wait until the days between the birth and the bris to prepare a dvar Torah. You already have something up your sleeve! Nu, let me enjoy a few words!"

The rosh yeshivah was intensely interested in every original thought expressed by every mind that absorbed itself in Torah. He even paid some of his students for the privilege of hearing their chiddushim. Word spread around Jerusalem: Whoever lacked money for

fish on Shabbos should go to the rosh yeshivah with some brilliant insight in learning — and his Shabbos was assured.

To R' Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, his students' chiddushim were like life-giving dew.

Bein hazemanim — the weeks between the end of one zeman at yeshivah and the beginning of the next — were especially packed with pleasure for the rosh yeshivah. Young men came in droves, seeking acceptance to the yeshivah. Each one came armed with a pearl to add to the rosh yeshivah's collection. There were days when ten bachurim would be lined up at his door, promising the rosh yeshivah an especially happy day.

On R' Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's wedding day, his father turned to him and said humorously, "Yosef Dov, you must prepare 'Torah.' Prepare well ... R' Eliezer Yehudah is probably coming to the wedding, and that is his bread-and-butter. He's been getting ready for this night. You'll see, Yosef Dov — he will not be satisfied with just a little!"

There was a very good student in the Lithuanian Mirrer Yeshivah who, unfortunately, was drafted into the Polish army. This came as a terrible blow to the rosh yeshivah — until he had an inspiration.

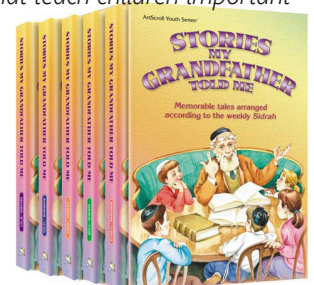
"Open a branch of the Mir in the army!" he told his student.

The student gaped. A yeshivah in an army barracks? How was that possible?

"Each month," R' Eliezer Yehudah explained, "you will send me a letter with original thoughts in halachah that the Jewish soldiers have come up with. In return for each such letter, I will send you the amount of money that every

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lessons from the weekly Parsha. The five-volume set is available from your favorite Jewish book store, or at artscroll.com.



PARSHA STORIES

bachur in the Mir gets for learning here.” In this way, the rosh yeshivah hoped, the yeshivah would spread its influence even into the Polish army — and the drafted youth would exchange his military “bench” for a yeshivish one.

Each month, a letter came to the rosh yeshivah’s house marked with the stamp of the Polish army’s military censor. The letters contained the Jewish soldier’s Torah thoughts. And each month, the rosh yeshivah sent the money he had promised his student.

One month, the money did not arrive as expected. The young man contacted R’ Eliezer Yehudah, who explained, “The chiddush that you sent me this month is based on principles that you

wrote to me about last year. You can’t buy two checks with the same set of principles.”

A former student once came to see R’ Eliezer Yehudah. They had not seen one another for thirty years, and the student was greatly moved by the meeting.

After greeting his visitor warmly, the rosh yeshivah asked, “Have you come up with any chiddushim since we last saw one another?”

The student gave a beautiful talk on a Torah topic. When he was done, the rosh yeshivah shook his head. “That is no chiddush! I heard that dvar Torah from you at your own tena’im — thirty-five years ago!”

A student of the Chevron Yeshivah

came one day to discuss Torah topics with the rosh yeshivah. When the Rebbetzin came in to serve lunch, the visitor rose quickly to leave, apologizing for taking so much of the rosh yeshivah’s time. But R’ Eliezer Yehudah would not hear of his leaving. The man sat down again, and as the rosh yeshivah ate his meal, the visitor regaled him with highly enjoyable divrei Torah.

As the man left, the Rebbetzin spoke to him at the door.

“You have a great zechus! Your Torah has revived the Rav’s spirit. Eating is difficult for him — he finds it extremely boring. But while you were telling him divrei Torah, it was different. The food suddenly tasted sweet. Come back here every day!”

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

A Different Perspective

“Were they wise they would have comprehended this, they would have understood from their end.” (Devarim 32:29)

When R’ Shmuel of Kaminka was near the end of his life, there was a certain widow in his town whose only cow — from which she earned a living for herself and her children — died. R’ Shmuel undertook to help her, and he did not rest until he had collected money to buy her a new cow. He rejoiced greatly over this, and asked repeatedly, “Does this cow give milk? And how much?”

R’ Shmuel’s daughter was surprised. “Father,” she said, “why all this fuss over a cow? Why your great interest in such a thing?”

“I will tell you a parable,” R’ Shmuel replied. “This is comparable to a person who earned his living selling sheep’s fleece. He gathered the fleece in a big box and took them to the market to sell. On his way, he spent Shabbos in a wayside inn. The innkeeper asked him to give him some fleece in exchange for the cost of his lodgings.

“That’s too much trouble for me,”

the traveler replied. ‘It’s not worth my while to open the box and then repack everything inside, all for one sheep’s fleece.’

“The next day, the man continued on to the marketplace — but was unsuccessful in his business. He returned to his own city along with all his unsold merchandise. On his way, he stopped at the same inn.

“He turned to the innkeeper and asked, ‘Would you accept a sheep’s fleece in exchange for my lodgings?’

“The innkeeper agreed. The merchant asked his assistant to open the box, choose a nice fleece, and then repack the box. The assistant protested, ‘Why is it that, on our way down to the market, you refused to sell him a fleece — and now you are not only willing to sell it to him, but actually went so far as to offer it to him yourself?’

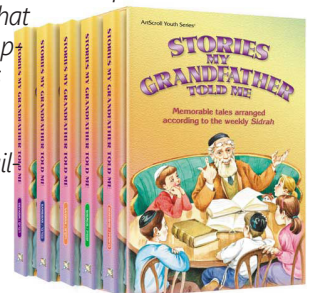
“‘Why don’t you understand?’ the merchant said. ‘Then, I was on my way to market. I was filled with hopes of making a nice profit. It was not worth my while to trouble myself so

greatly over one fleece. But now, returning empty-handed, the trouble is well worth my while, even for a single fleece.’

R’ Shmuel turned to his daughter. “This is the situation we have here,” he said softly. “You, my daughter, are young. You have your whole life ahead of you in the ‘marketplace’ of this world, and time to do a lot of ‘business.’ Therefore, this mitzvah seems trivial to you.

“I, on the other hand, am an old man and have not accomplished a thing. Therefore, even a small mitzvah becomes a great thing in my eyes.”

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JEWISH LEADER OF THE WEEK

Hannah Senesh

July 17, 1921- November 7, 1944

Hannah Senesh was a paratrooper, poetess, and hero, during WW II. She parachuted behind Nazi lines to warn Hungarian Jews of the Nazis. As a young, passionate Zionist, Hannah moved to Palestine, writing, "I am fulfilling a mission." In 1943, she was the first woman Britain trained as a paratrooper. While trying to free people, Hannah was captured, sent to Budapest, and tortured. Refusing to reveal her radio code, Hannah was executed on November 7, 1944.

My God. My God, may these things never end: the sand and the sea, the rush of the waves, the lightning of the sky, the prayers of humankind. – Hannah Senesh. These words, part of a poem, became a Hebrew song. She died at 23 on Kiddush Hashem.

Through her brief but noteworthy life, Senesh became a symbol of optimism and self-sacrifice. She wrote many poems about having hope even when times are tough.

Senesh kept a diary from age 13 until shortly before her death. Although her family was assimilated, anti-Semitic acts in Budapest led her to leave Hungary for Eretz Yisrael in 1939. She studied first at an agricultural school, and then settled at Kibbutz Sdot Yam. While there she wrote poetry, as well as a play about kibbutz life.

In 1943, Senesh joined the British Army and volunteered to be parachuted into Europe. The purpose of this operation was to help struggling Jewish communities. Senesh trained in Egypt and was one of the thirty-three people chosen to parachute behind enemy lines. With the goal of reaching her native Budapest, Senesh parachuted into Yugoslavia in March 1944, and spent three months there.

On June 7, 1944, at the height of the deportation of Hungarian Jews, Senesh crossed the border into Hungary.

She was caught almost immediately by the Hungarian police and tortured cruelly and repeatedly over the next several months. Despite these conditions, Senesh refused to give over any information about her mission. When she was executed by a firing squad on November 7, she refused the blindfold, staring squarely at her executors and her fate. Senesh was only 23 years old.

In 1950, Senesh's remains were brought to Israel and re-interred at the military cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.



PUZZLERS ANSWERS

PARSHA CODE

1. MOSHE SANG this SONG of Parshas HA'AZINU, on the LAST DAY of his LIFE
2. MOSHE told the HEAVEN and EARTH to be WITNESSES to what he was about to SAY to BNEI YISROEL
3. MOSHE COMPARES the TORAH to RAIN. the WORLD cannot SURVIVE without RAIN, and we cannot SURVIVE without TORAH
4. HASHEM IS CALLED a ROCK to show His STRENGTH
5. All of HASHEM'S WAYS are FAIR and JUST even if we don't UNDERSTAND them
6. The SONG speaks about HASHEM LOVE for us and for the 3 AVOS
7. The SONG speaks about the GOOD of ERETZ YISROEL
8. The other NATIONS will PRAISE BNEI YISROEL, how we STAYED with HASHEM throughout all the DIFFICULT TIMES
9. HASHEM will PAY BACK the NATIONS that tried to HARM BNEI YISROEL
10. HASHEM told MOSHE to go up to HAR NAVO, so that he can SEE the LAND of ERETZ YISROEL, because he won't be EN-

TERING into it

11. MOSHE is TOLD that he will DIE on top of HAR NAVO

TEST YOUR PARSHA KNOWLEDGE

1. With a kiss (neshikah)
2. Haazinu (listen, lend an ear)
3. a. Because they will be around forever, b. They can deliver rewards and punishments to the Bnei Yisrael
4. An eagle carries its babies on its wings
5. To protect them from the arrows of hunters on the ground
6. At the Yam Suf, the cloud of the shechinah went between the Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians to absorb the arrows and stones of the Egyptians
7. Torah
8. To see Eretz Yisrael from there, and then he would die on Har Nevo
9. The incident of Mei Merivah, in which Moshe

hit the rock instead of speaking to it

10. Shamayim and Aretz (heaven and earth)
11. Because the nations of the world would boast about their power and the power of the avodah zarah to destroy the Bnei Yisrael
12. Bnei Yisrael
13. By placing their total trust in HaShem
14. By teaching them the song of Haazinu
15. To protect them from the eagle that flies above them
16. We were not loyal and did not follow Him
17. He will punish us instead of blessing us
18. A father, a rock, and an eagle
19. Rain and dew
20. With great kindness and care

TORAH RHYMES & RIDDLES

1. Haazinu.
2. Heaven and earth.
3. Rain.
4. Rock.
5. The eagle
6. Nevo

PARSHA GAMES

“The Best”

by Sammy Schaechter

GOAL: To make the kids realize that being “The Best” isn’t always about showing off. Moshe was “The Best” because he was humble. Also, to recognize that no one would be anything, nevertheless “The Best”, if not for Hashem.

TYPE: Moderate, indoor, group game.

HOW TO PLAY: Have each kid stand up in the middle of the circle or front of the room and for 15 seconds explain to the group why they think they’re “The Best”. Have them talk about how smart, funny, cute, good at sports, etc they are and why they think that they are

“The Best”. Then once everyone goes, have them each pick a partner and then each person will come up and for 15 seconds do the same thing, this time telling everyone why they think their friend is “The Best”. If there’s time, you can even do a few extra different rounds such as best athlete, best food, best movie, etc.

For the last round, the kids will each have 15 seconds to tell everyone why HASHEM is THE BEST. After everyone goes, discuss with the kids who “Really is the best”? What makes someone or something “The Best”? Where do all of our “Best” qualities ever come from?

DISCUSSION: In this week’s Parsha Moshe is about to pass away after being our greatest leader for so many years. Moshe is considered the “Best Leader” for many reasons. He is known for his humility, which is part of the reason he was so great. Being humble is super important because it means you know that all your strengths and gifts come from a greater power who is REALLY the “Best”, Hashem. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael in this week’s parsha never to forget that everything we have is from Hashem. Hashem is really in control of everything that happens in the world and all the reasons we think we’re the best or our friends are the best, really come from Hashem and He is the reason we have everything So in reality HASHEM is the One who is the best!

TEFILAH TREASURES

Ashrei

“Happy/fortunate is the nation for whom this is so, Fortunate is the nation that has Hashem as their G-d.” Interestingly this verse is also not from the same psalm as the rest of the prayer. It is the last Pasuk in Psalm 144. Why then is it inserted at this point? It is explained that with the addition of this verse the word Ashrei is then mentioned three times demonstrating that we say the Ashrei prayer three times a day.

“Fortunate is the nation for whom this is so..” For whom what is so?

The Etz Yosef explains that this is referring to the previous verse in the prayer i.e. we are fortunate that we are able to be יבשוי רייתיב – those that may dwell in the house of G-d. He also writes that “We are fortunate that to have Hashem as our G-d” refers to the fact that the Jewish people are intertwined with G-d i.e. that even our name Israel is graced with a name of G-d – E-L.

The Gaon of Vilna advances a different idea to interpret the verse. He

states that since the Gematria/ numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word 444= ששכש is the same as the Hebrew word of our Teacher 444=שחש, the implication of the verse at hand is that we are thankful for our leaders from the time of Moses and Mt. Sinai until today.

LEADER TIP:

Do we say Ashrei every day? Let’s try saying it if we don’t! Let’s say it as a group!

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