

# פרשת האזינו A Teacher's Guide to Teaching

Before a teacher attempts to plan lessons on שירת האזינו, regardless of the age level it will be taught to, it is incumbent on the teacher to internalize her own deep understanding of the שירה.

פרשת וילך (לא:יט) is unique in three aspects. Its introduction appears in פרשת האזינו

“ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת”

1. שירה 2. שימה בפיהם 3. לעד

These three concepts capture the soul of the שירה:

## 1. שירה:

שירה is a unique word; a לשון נוטריקון for “שיר ה-”. A שירה in the תורה is sung for occurrences which necessitate a special שבח to Hashem. האזינו is not a reaction to a special נס, as the other שירות are. Rather, it is the story of Bnei Yisrael's existence encapsulated in a metaphoric rhythmic structure as a celebration of Bnei Yisrael's life and challenges in Olam Hazeih. The שירה factor in האזינו referred to as שירה, is when Torah uses poetic modalities, such as similies, metaphors, structure, etc. in order to bring a theme to life.

The challenge faced in האזינו presents a sad phase in Bnei Yisrael's history. Yet, it is said in a שירה of praise to Hashem, to alert us that the עונשים Bnei Yisrael face as a consequence for their sins are really an awakening call from Hashem, beckoning them to return. האזינו talks about many occurrences referred to as “מקרה”. There is no random occurrence in Yiddishkeit, and embedded in the word מקרה is its true meaning: “רק מה”.

The first place we find an allusion to the overarching history of Bnei Yisrael is in פרשת ויחי, בראשית מ:טא:

–האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים יקרא – to happen, is spelled יקרא, meaning calling.

This is an overarching understanding in כל התורה כולה. Anything Hashem does, that on the surface appears to be מידת דין, is really not a מקרה, rather a “CALL” from Hashem, beseeching us to return and become closer. Thus, all the עונשים delineated in האזינו should be viewed through this lense.



## 2. שימה בניהם:

”דברים שבכתב אי אתם רשאי ללמדם בעל פה”

מצוה is the only an exception to this rule; it is a direct מצוה.

Pique the students' curiosity by first asking them what part of תורה do they think is the most important to know by heart. (Typical answers: שמע, עשרת הדברות, שמע) Discuss what האזינו imparts to us which is so basic to our Yiddishkeit, that ה' commands we carry this message with us at all times, even when a ספר is not accessible.

- A Recipe for Living בדרך ה'

האזינו is likened to a recipe. It contains all the ingredients for a successful life. It takes into account all the challenges a person might face, and obstacles that prevent him from attaining שלימות as a Yid. ה' instructs us to carry this recipe with us always, so that when we reach a dangerous road, we will have the ingredients we need in order to surmount the challenge.

In life we are blinded by the יצר הרע which prevents us from following clear instructions.

האזינו presents to us:

Scenario A: The proper moral world

Scenario B: How to redirect ourselves when we get off track and forget our purpose

## 3. לעד:

”האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי”

The heavens and the earth are the two witnesses attested to in האזינו, because of their eternity.

האזינו appears in the תורה written in two pillars (following the concept of שירה – דרך – that poetry is written in a structural form that portrays the meaning...) to signify the two witnesses that uphold the truth of Bnei Yisrael's existence.

## Classifying the שירה:

The שירה takes us on a historical overview of the existence of Bnei Yisrael from its very beginning to אחרית הימים. Dividing it into sections, and teaching it as categories, will facilitate comprehension as well as retention.

Students should be able to classify key פסוקים under the appropriate topics.



## Overarching themes in האזינו:

### A. Hide and Seek:

This children's game is an allegory used in ספרים to explain Hashem's revealed presence in עולם הזה הגשמי. עולם comes from the word העלם. When Hashem created the world that we live in, he concealed his שכינה as opposed to the גלויים in עולמות העליונים. When we observe Torah and Mitzvos in the proper manner it transforms this world into a place of קדושה where Hashem is revealed, i.e. גילוי שכינה.

Hashem hides in "טבע", in every flower, tree, and stone. It is up to the Yid to see the G-dliness within these mundane matters. Hashem hides, and the עבודה of the Yid is to seek Him through תורה and מצוות. Sometimes the game gets boring; the one who hides is left in his hiding place, and isn't sought out by his playmates. Such is when Bnei Yisrael stop looking for Hashem in everyday occurrences, and thus causing fallouts to occur.

### B. The "I" Trap:

**נחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה: (דברים ח:יז)**

When a person experiences success, it is instinctual that he attributes it to his hard work, as it says in האזינו: "וישמן ישורון ויבעט". Hashem's ברכה is then overlooked because of the riches one has been blessed with. When this occurs, Hashem conceals himself –הסתר פנים– which is experienced through the חורבן and גלות.

What is the purpose of הסתר פנים?

The psychology of human nature is that when a person feels a void, he begins to seek. Thus, the extra measure of הסתר פנים makes Bnei Yisrael acutely feel Hashem's absence. They then continue to play the "game", and begin to "seek out" Hashem in a way that will cause ה' to once again come out of hiding (i.e. הסתר פנים) and ultimately bring the גאולה.

### C. Twisting the Truth:

**"אשר עשה האלהים את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבנות רבים" (קהלת ז:כט)**

How many times, in an effort to "be right", do people not lie outright, but misrepresent the truth? שירת האזינו is replete with words that denote distorting the truth in an effort to suit one's self. In order to develop this theme, we will target words that repeat themselves in the שירה thus highlighting its message to us.

שירת האזינו, in פסוק ד', describes Hashem as "צדיק וישר הוא".



Hashem endowed mankind with this same attribute as referred to in the above-mentioned פסוק, stating: "עשה אלוקים את האדם ישר". However, שירת האזינו continues in 'פסוק ה' with the words דור עקש - which Rashi translates עקום ומעוקל - twisted and crooked. בני ישראל reacted in the exact opposite way of ישר.

This concept further reinforces itself in "כי דור תהפכת המה" (פסוק ב): which Rashi explains מהפכין "רצונו לכעס". This means they 'turn over' their 'constructive' purpose in the world to a 'destructive' one.

The Mefarshim use these descriptions of recurring לשונות to target the theme of the שירה.

Bnei Yisrael distorted the truth, as the expression goes, האומרים לאור חשך ולחשך אור. This concept of דור תהפכת is seen throughout the פסוקים as follows:

פסוק ו: "עם נבל ולא חכם"

פסוק טו: "וינבל צור ישעתו"

פסוק יז: "יזבחו לשדים לא אלה אלקים לא ידעום"

פסוק יח: "ותשכח קל מחלוקה"

פסוק כא: "הם קנאוני בלא קל"

"ויאמר אסתירה פני מהם אראה: פסוק כ" as will be discussed in "כי דור תהפכת המה" causes the הסתר פנים; מה אחריתם.

This is explained: "הם קנאוני בלא אל כעסוני בהבליהם ואני אקניאם בלא עם בגוי נבל אכעיסם" says פסוק כא. As דור תהפכת, they literally turn things around to go away from the eternal truth. What does דור תהפכת do? Notice that the שם ה' used in the above פסוקים is קל.

The term קל denotes עזות כח and ability. They turn it around, creating the word לא, it's not 'ה' ability but our own that brings success, thus the expression "בלא קל". This continues in פסוק כז with the same word "פעל כל זאת" - indicating the negating of 'יד ה', taking קל and turning it into לא.

A number of פסוקים in the שירה continues to express this idea: לוי חכמו ושכילו זאת יבינו לאחרייתם. פסוק כט decry the foolishness of this tactic; for example פסוק ו: "ולא חכם".

The word אחריתם is repeated twice in שירת האזינו. What is this alerting us to?

Three major names of בני ישראל are:

ישראל

יעקב

ישורון

The סופי תיבות spell לבן. The job of בני ישראל in this murky, distorted world is to 'whiten' it with קדושה.



(Note: For advanced classes, cross reference this idea to <sup>A</sup>Wearing white on Yom Kippur as a sign of תשובה and <sup>B</sup>"אם יהיו חטאים כשני כשלג ילבינו".)

However, because of the lack of חכמה which the יצר הרע cleverly robs us of by misrepresenting and perverting the truth, בני ישראל become a דור תהפכת. The תורת חיים is distorted, reversing the סופי of תיבות "לבן" to "נבל" the opposite of קדושה.

Thus we understand the repetition of the word נבל in פסוקים טו and כא.

In the above-mentioned "word play" (an example of שירה ה', ה' gives us the GPS of how stay on the road and how to get back on track if you do stray. Following the roadmap of Getting Priorities Straight - the message of שירת האזינו - is the antidote to דור תהפכת.

## D. Of Fool and Folly:

In the beginning of the שירה, after praising ה', and the Torah, the שירה makes a U-turn towards Bnei Yisrael who have received this precious gift and calls them "foolish"- עם נבל ולא חכם (פסוק ו). This trend weaves through the שירה, as it states: ואין בהם תבונה: (פסוק כח),

לו חכמה ישבילו זאת: פסוק (כט).

The use of the concept of foolishness alludes to when a Yid loses his way and forgets that all life occurrences, good and bad, are from ה'. Bnei Yisrael's misconception is reinstated in פסוק כז with the words "ולא ה' פעל כל זאת".

Let us examine Chazal's insights as to when a person is termed foolish.

1. "זאין דעת אלא תורה" - the biggest poverty is the lack of knowledge. "אין עני אלא בדעת" - when one is devoid of שכל and acts foolishly it means there is a void of Torah and proper השקפות in his life. This is in sync with all the mistakes and poor judgement Bnei Yisrael exercise as explained in the previous themes.

2. "אין אדם עובר עבירה אלא אם נכנס בו רוח שטות" In a right straight mind with clarity and perspective, it would be so obvious to the Yid which is the דרך הישר to follow. A person only does an עבירה when the ר"ר blows into the Yid a spirit of foolishness. This is mirrored in the שירה by stating numerous times that Bnei Yisrael lack חכמה, and only then do they get confused and stumble on a crooked path.

As stated above, all the צרות that Bnei Yisrael encounter as a response to their חטאים, is Hashem's call to them to find their footage back on the right road.



## נושאים בשירת האזינו: האזינו in Outline of Topics

חלק	הנושא	הפסוקים	
א	שבח והודאה לה'	א-ד'	"הבו גודל לאלקנו" (פסוק ג')
ב	כפוי טובה	ה-ו'	"הלה' תגמלו זאת" (פסוק ו')
ג	הסטורי עם הנבחר	ז-יד'	"זכור ימות עולם" (פסוק ז')
ד	נסיון העשירות ומפלתה	טו-כ'	"וישמן ישורון ויבעט" (פסוק ט"ו)
ה	הסתר פנים 1. שנוי בהנהגת ה' 2. העונשים 3. מוסר לבניי לחזור בתשובה	כא-לה'	"אסתירה פני מהם" (פסוק כ')
ו	נקמה על הגוים 1. אין עוד מלבדו- גדל ה' 2. קל נקמות ה'- נקמה לגוים 3. ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד—גאולה	לו-מג	"אני הוא ואין אלקים עמדי" (פסוק ל"ט)

