

Parashat Ha'azinu - Shabbat Shuvah 5785, 2024:

*Chesed, Emet and Yerushalayim*

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ה' יעזור וירחם על אחינו כל בני ישראל, בארץ ישראל ובכל חלקי הארץ

The final three *pasukim* of *Sefer Michah* are found in this week's *haftarah* and following the recitation of *Sefer Yonah* on Yom Kippur afternoon:

Who is a God like You, Who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His anger forever, for He desires loving-kindness. He shall return and grant us compassion; He shall hide our iniquities, and You shall cast into the depths of the sea all their sins. *Titane emet l'Ya'akov chesed l'Avraham asher nishbata l'avoteinu mimai kedem*—You shall give the truth of Ya'akov, the loving-kindness of Avraham, which You swore to our forefathers from days of yore. (7:18-20, This and all Tanach translation, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

In my view, *Chazal* enacted the public readings of these *pasukim* because of the six key concepts they convey: Hashem cannot be compared to any entity; He forgives iniquity, and even pardons rebellious transgressions; He does not sustain his anger against us, for “He desires loving-kindness;” just as we return to Him in *teshuvah*, so too will He will return to us, rekindle our relationship with Him and treat us with great mercy; Hashem will hide our iniquities from His view and metaphorically toss them into the depths of the sea; and lastly, “*titane emet l'Ya'akov chesed l'Avraham asher nishbata l'avoteinu mimai kedem.*”

The first five statements are not unique to *Sefer Michah*, since they appear in various formulations in Tanach. In contrast, “*titane emet l'Ya'akov chesed l'Avraham*” introduces a new theme regarding our connection to Hashem. In his *Commentary on the Torah*, Rabbeinu Abarbanel *zatzal* (1437-1508) suggests this interpretation:

This means that [Hashem] will fulfill His attestation to Ya'akov, namely, the *chesed* that He had promised to perform for Avraham, for from this *chesed* will come forth the *emet*,

and the fulfillment to Ya'akov and his descendants who are the offspring of Avraham the chosen one; and this is the inner meaning of [the Torah's expression ["Hashem] Who is great in *chesed v'emet*."] (Interpretation of the 13 Attributes of Mercy, *Sefer Shemot* 34, Abarbanel translations, underlining and brackets my own)

Based upon his comparison of the Torah's description of Hashem as He "Who is great in *chesed v'emet*" to Michah's phrase, that places *emet* before *chesed*, the Abarbanel suggests that *emet l'Ya'akov* is the outcome of the *chesed* that Hashem promised to do on Avraham's behalf. He elaborates on this *chidush* in his *Commentary on Sefer Yonah*:

And the substance of this verse [*titane emet l'Ya'akov...*] is that the Holy One blessed be He will give the *emet l'Ya'akov* by bestowing upon Avraham's descendants the *chesed* that he gave to him, namely, the inheritance of the Land of the Seven Nations [Israel]. It is as if the verse was stated: "*titane emet l'Ya'akov me'hachessed sh'asita l'Avraham*—You shall give the *emet* of Ya'akov **from the *chesed* that you performed for Avraham.** [And] just as You performed *chesed* for him [Avraham] when he stood at the *Brit bein HaBetarim*—the Covenant of the Pieces, may the *emet* [be] the fulfillment of this covenant for all Ya'akov's future offspring. (Chapter four)

In this exegetical tour de force, the Abarbanel provides us with powerful insight into the relationship that obtains between the *chesed* of Avraham and the *emet* of Ya'akov. According to his analysis, the *emet* of Ya'akov is none other than the everlasting gift of *Eretz Yisrael* to Ya'akov's descendants. This, he maintains, is an extension of the *chesed* Hashem performed for Avraham at the *Brit bein HaBetarim*.

May the *Schechinah* return to *Eretz Yisrael* soon, and in our days, so that we may experience the joy of Hashem's holy presence once again. *L'shanah habah b'Yerushalayim. V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom, and *G'mar Chatimah Tovah*

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