

Understanding the Purpose of Every Soul

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

The Story of Every Soul in the Song of Ha'azinu

It is well known that in the song of *Ha'azinu* are encoded the personal histories of every single Jewish soul and all that it will experience from that moment until the coming of the redeemer. In *Seder Hadorot*,¹ a 17th century biographic history of the world (and of the sages of all the generations), we find the following wondrous story that illustrates this point:

Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (the Ramban, or Nachmanides) had a student by the name of R. Avner who converted to Christianity. As he was destined to become a great man, he became a powerful person feared by all. After many years had passed, on one Yom Kipur, he sent for his former master, the Ramban [who had no choice but to comply]. When the Ramban was before him, he took a swine, and in front of the Ramban he killed it, cut it up, cooked it, and ate it.

After he finished eating he asked the Ramban: "So, how many transgressions for which my soul will be cut off from the root of Israel have I committed in this act?"

The Ramban answered, "Four!"

Avner said: "No, Five!" And awaited his teacher's reply, anticipating a dispute with him.

But, the Ramban stared at him angrily and he fell silent, for he still had a small measure of respect for his former master.

After a few moments, the Ramban asked him what the reason for his perfidy against his religion was.

*Avner answered that one year he heard the Ramban teaching the parshah of *Ha'azinu* and he noted that in the song of *Ha'azinu*, all the commandments and all that would come to pass in the world are contained in it; and this seemed impossible to him and it caused him to question his entire life and transformed him into a different man.*

When the Ramban heard this he stated that he still held by his earlier words and to show Avner that this was so he challenged him to ask him about anything he would like... Avner thought for a moment and then said: "Show me my name in the song!"



Answered the Ramban, "So you have spoken and I will show you." The Ramban went to a corner and prayed, and the verse that came into his mouth was: "I said I shall abandon them, I shall erase them from the memory of man."² The 3rd letter in each word in this verse spells "R. Avner" [אָמַרְתִּי אֶפְאַיֶהֶם אֶשְׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאַנּוֹשׁ זְכָרָם], the man's name.

When Avner heard this his face fell and he asked his master if there was any way to heal his perfidy. The Ramban answered: "You heard what the verse says." And he left.

Immediately Avner boarded a ship without neither captain nor sailors, letting the wind carry him wherever it did and he was never heard from again.

Let us now look at the verse brought in this story more carefully. As the *Ba'al Haturim* comments, the final letters of the three middle words in this verse words "I shall abandon them, I shall erase them from man" (אֶפְאַיֶהֶם אֶשְׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאַנּוֹשׁ) permute to spell "Moses" (מֹשֶׁה), hinting to us that Moses [ben Nachman—the Ramban] returned to the world in order to give a *tikun* to R. Avner's soul.

The final letters of all five words in the verse (אָמַרְתִּי אֶפְאַיֶהֶם אֶשְׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאַנּוֹשׁ זְכָרָם) permute to spell "the heavens" (הַשָּׁמַיִם), alluding to the first verse of the song of *Ha'azinu*, "May the heavens listen...." Indeed, the word "the heavens" (הַשָּׁמַיִם) has 5 letters and its gematria is 395, which means that the average value of each letter is 79, the value of "*Ha'azinu*" (הֲאִזִּינוּ).

Transformation and the Fiftieth Gate

The *gematria* of the initial letters of all five words in the verse (אָמַרְתִּי אֶפְאַיֶהֶם אֶשְׁבִּיתָהּ מֵאַנּוֹשׁ זְכָרָם) is 50. The number 50 is most clearly associated with the 50 Gates of Understanding, the 50th of which was attained by Moses on the day of his passing from this world and the day on which he spoke the song of *Ha'azinu*. This suggests that knowledge of the 50th gate is the key to understanding the particular *tikun* of every soul, until eternity.

The value of the entire verse is 2170 = 31 · 70, or the product of the values of the two words "no" (לֹא) = 31 and "yes" (כֵּן) = 70. The multiplication of "no" by "yes" suggests a paradoxical state that is at the core of the 50th of the 50 Gates of Understanding. The sages describe this paradoxical state when they attest that when Moses was buried by God on Mt. Nevo no one could find his grave. The angels thought that the grave was below—in the physical realm—and men thought that it was above—in the spiritual realm. The truth was that it is paradoxically in both places at the same time.

In regard to offering *tikun* for lost souls, the product of multiplying "no" by "yes" refers to Moses' ability to turn the "no" state of the soul—its negative reality—into a "yes" state—a positive one. This ability is alluded to in the Torah's famous description of Moses: "Not [לֹא] so [כֵּן] is My servant Moses with all that is in My house he is trusted"³; the first two words of this verse "no" and "yes" suggesting that "My [God's] servant, Moses," knows the secret of turning a "no" into a "yes." When we add the value of "no"

(31) and "yes" (70) together, we get 101, which is the value of "from nothingness" (מֵאִין). In Chassidut it is explained that in order to transform from one state to another, a person must pass through a state of nothingness.

Moses in Every Soul

If we subtract the value of "Moses" (345) from the value of the entire verse (2170), we get 1825, or the product of 25 and 73, where 73 is the value of "wisdom" (חִכְמָה). But, 1825 is also the sum of the three possible letter-fillings of the word "wisdom": חֵית כֹּף מֶם הָא plus חֵית כֹּף מֶם הָה plus חֵית כֹּף מֶם הָי! Moses' essence continues to exist spiritually within the soul of every single Jew. By this analysis, we come to recognize that Moses' essence in each of our souls corresponds to the *sefirah* of wisdom, which is described as the force of life that enlivens the soul. More specifically then, we learn that this point of life giving wisdom in the soul is actually Moses' ability to understand the specific *tikun*—the particular rectification—needed by that particular soul.

Now let us concentrate for a moment on the name Avner (אבנר). The *gematria* of Avner is 253, or the triangle of 22, alluding to the 22 letters of the Torah alphabet—the Hebrew alphabet—that was given by Moses.

If we create a series out of the values of the four letters of Avner (which increase in value from the first to last letters), we will find that its base is 55:

1	2	50	200
	1	48	150
		47	102
			55

$55 = \triangle 10$, alluding to the great lights of the ten *sefirot* of the World of Chaos, of which it is said in the Book of Formation: "There are ten *sefirot*, ten and not eleven, ten and not nine" (in the World of *Tikun*, in certain cases eleven *sefirot* are counted and in certain cases nine, as explained by the Arizal). The original Avner in the Bible was a great leader, King Saul's minister of war (in Kabbalah it is taught that his soul will return to be the Mashiach's minister of war), which also connects this name to the great lights of the World of Chaos.

Indeed, when computing "Avner" using ordinal numbering, we find that its value is 37, the *gematria* of "the singular one" (יְחִידָה), the highest level of the soul, which Moses attained on the day of his passing.

¹. Year 4954. See also *Emek Hamelech, Sha'ar Sha'ashu'ei Hamelech*, ch. 4.

². Deuteronomy 32:26.

³. Numbers 12:7.