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Parshat HaShavua sheet**

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Parshat Haazenu

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HEAVEN HELP US

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In Parshas Haazinu, Moshe sings a swan song for eternity — a haunting ballad filled with allusions to the future and grim predictions lest his people stray. Unfortunately, the dire predictions were clearly fulfilled throughout the Diaspora. And the lessons that contained within are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago when they were first imparted.

One verse reads: “*When Hashem will have judged his people, He shall relent... when He sees that the enemy progresses and no one (feels that they) will be saved or assisted.*” (Deuteronomy 32:36).

The Talmud in Sanhedrin explains that this *posuk* refers to the time of Israel’s redemption. The Talmud asks, “when is that time?” One of the various answers is derived from this verse. “The Moshiach will not come until the Jews have abandoned hope of redemption as it states: ‘He shall relent... when He sees that the enemy progresses and no one (feels that they) will be saved or assisted.’ ”

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory in *Emes L’Yaakov*, his classic commentary on the Torah, asks, “How is it possible that a prerequisite for the actual deliverance will be the total abandonment of a very basic tenet of Judaism — hope for redemption? What does the Talmud mean when it says that the Moshiach will not arrive until the Jewish people “lose all hope of redemption”

Rabbi Yaakov Rubin, the Brizdovitz Rav in Brooklyn is known for his wisdom and warmth in nurturing many Russian immigrants in this country. One of the families that he endeared was an amazing family of Russian immigrants who, despite Communist rule and oppression remained strongly committed to Judaism even behind the iron curtain. In fact, the Rav hosted the family for a Sheva Berachos festivity for this family’s daughter and her new groom. During the meal the Rav rose to speak. He praised the incredible perseverance of this family and during the course of his speech he discussed the Divine providence that helped them get out of Russia. “Boruch Hashem,” concluded the Rav “The Ribbono Shel Olam (Almighty) helped them and they got out of Russia...” Suddenly a booming voice in a Russian accent interrupted. It was the father of the bride. “Der Ribbono Shel Olam hut NIT GEHULFEN! THE RIBBONO SHEL OLAM DID NOT HELP US!” The Rav froze and stammered... “I mean, with the assistance of the Almighty...” Again the voice boomed: “THE RIBBONO SHEL OLAM DID NOT ASSIST US!” Eyes darted from the Rav and back to the man. The Rav was stammering, the man was glowering. Suddenly the Russian man smiled widely as he spoke softly. “Listen carefully. Der Ribbono Shel Olam did not help us! Der Ribbono Shel Olam did not assist us! He did EVERYTHING!”

Rav Yaakov explains: The Talmud does not mean that Moshiach will not arrive until we have abandoned hope of any redemption. It means that Moshiach will not arrive until we have abandoned hope of other types of redemption! As long as we rely on ourselves, our machinations and own abilities to get out of our troubles, then we are proclaiming self-reliance. If we rely on our own expertise and political abilities to extract us from dire situations, if we think that all answers will be configured by mortal diplomacy; then Moshiach will lock himself in his proverbial room — and wait. Only when we realize that redemption is in His hands and truly only in His hands will Hashem send us the true redemption!

The Ability to Listen

By Rabbi Berel Wein z'tl

The first word in this week's glorious parsha, though addressed by Moshe to the heavens, really sums up the Torah and its demands upon us. Haazinu means to listen, to pay attention, to concentrate, if you will. The Torah often emphasizes the value of listening. The entire Torah in fact is based on listening – after the commitment of naaseh, appears the equally important and vital commitment of nishma.

It is apparently not sufficient to merely do but one must also have the ability to listen and understand. The Mishna tells us that there is an echo of Sinai that may be heard every day of our lives. Many Jews do not hear that echo of holiness and purpose simply because they do not listen for it. The voice of Sinai, like the voice of Haazinu itself, is an inner voice that emanates from our souls and conscience. It instinctively tells us what is right and what is wrong, what we should do and what we should avoid doing.

But the inner voice, persistent as it may be, can easily be ignored and tuned out. If we are not willing to hear it out and truly listen to its message it eventually becomes fainter and fainter until even if we now wish to listen to it, its lack of strength prevents our hearing it. Therefore, at all costs in life, we have to concentrate on listening, on hearing the echo of Sinai within us and then acting accordingly to its bidding and advice.

Listening may often be difficult. We are innately averse to hearing criticism of ourselves and our behavior, especially if it is of the “constructive” sort. But being able to hear what others say about us, to listen carefully, even if one feels the words and accusations to be unjustified, is the mark of holiness and commitment to self-improvement.

Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant, the great founder of the mussar movement of nineteenth century Lithuania, once interpreted a verse in psalms thusly: The verse reads “that when people who seek to do me harm rise up against me, let my ears hear them.” The plain and simple explanation is that when people can arise to harm me, let me have advance warning so that I can prevent their plans from actualizing.

But Rabbi Yisrael put a different twist on it. He said that when people who are my critics, who do not especially like me and vice versa, come to say things against me, give me the strength of character and fortitude to hear them out. Maybe there will be a point or two that is correct in their criticism and that therefore I can correct neglected faults and gain from the experience.

The key to self-improvement is therefore clearly the ability to listen – to others and to our inner voice of Sinai as well. Moshe's great words of the parsha to listen are spoken not only to the heavens but to us as well, in order to lift earthly beings towards a heavenly direction and way of life.

The Missing Puzzle Pieces

by Rabbi Eli Scheller

The Rock! – perfect is His work, for all His paths are justice; a God of faith without iniquity, righteous and fair is He. (32:4)

Few people need to be convinced that God created the world. However, situations may occur that are difficult to comprehend and leave even believers with many questions. There is a higher level of belief in God: not only did He create the world, but He is intimately involved in its day-to-day running. Hashem presses all the buttons and causes all events to occur, right down to the last detail.

It is for this reason that the Torah put the first commandment in the context of the exodus: “*I am your God who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.*” Even though it would have been logical for God to identify himself as the Creator of the universe, a more all-inclusive title than that of engineer of the exodus, God was teaching us that He is also deeply involved in our everyday lives, intervening to pluck us out of Egypt.

A guest in a village did not understand why the more important members of the shul sat at the back, while the beggars and paupers sat at the front. When he questioned the shul president about it he was told, “You are confused because you are here for only one Shabbos. If you would be here every Shabbos you would understand that we have a procedure of alternating places which, over the course of a year, is fair to everybody.”

The Chofetz Chaim uses this parable to demonstrate that our questions and doubts over God's supervision of the world are due to our lack of understanding. God's management of this world is based on considerations of a 6,000 year time period. We are in this world for a sum total of 70, 80, or maybe 90 years. How can we expect to know the answers when we are missing parts of the puzzle?

“May my teaching drop like the rain, may my utterance flow like the dew; like storm upon vegetation and like droplets upon the grass” (32:2)

Moshe compared the Torah to rain. There are two possible understandings of this analogy. The first is that just as the world cannot function properly without rain, the study of Torah and its fulfillment are also vital for the world's survival. Chazal tell us that the Torah was the blueprint for this world. Without Torah, the world cannot continue. That is why Chazal refer to the first 2000 years of world history, before Avraham Avinu, as תרוהו, emptiness. Until Avraham came and was the first to recognize Hashem on his own, the world was deficient. R' Bunim of Peshischa gives a second explanation of the comparison of Torah to rain. Just as the benefit of rain is not immediately noticeable but eventually becomes apparent as the crops grow, the benefit of Torah study does not show itself in the short term. One can learn Torah for a few hours and feel as if he has not accomplished much. But just like rain, it makes that impact and, over time, it will bear fruit. If a person continues to make an effort in his Avodas Hashem, he may not see an immediate difference in himself. But if he looks back and compares himself to the way he was a year ago, he will see a different person. A similar idea is reiterated at the end of the parsha. The posuk (32:47) says that Torah "is not an empty thing from you." Rashi explains that the study and fulfillment of the Torah do not go unrewarded. It may not be noticeable and sometimes it may not even come in this world, but there is a reward waiting for every time a person follows the Torah. That is why the posuk continues that the Torah is "your life." Torah provides life to those who fulfill it and this reward is guaranteed.

“The deeds of the Rock are perfect for all His ways are just; a faithful G-d without injustice, He is righteous and upright” (32:4)

According to the Kli Yakar, the perfection of Hashem's creations refers to the concept that people are born perfect, without any inborn weaknesses. Every person has the ability to choose good over evil. While some might try to excuse their indiscretions by claiming that Hashem created them with natural tendencies to sin, this is completely untrue. If we did not have complete freedom of choice, Hashem could not hold us accountable for our actions. From the fact that His method of dealing with us is characterized by justice, we understand that we are created in a perfect state. Nobody is born with any shortcomings that hamper his abilities to serve Hashem. The awareness that we have the ability to accomplish great things should encourage us to aim ever higher in our service of Hashem.

“The cream of cattle and the milk of sheep, with the fat of lambs and rams of Bashan and he-goats, with fat of wheat, and it would drink the blood of grapes as the finest wine” (32:14)

This posuk describes the blessings that Hashem promises to bestow upon us. The final reference means that wine will be made with the same amount of minimal effort necessary to produce grape juice. Why does Hashem promise to give us such wonderful material blessings? Seforno explains: “With this, they would be supported without any pain. Hashem did all this so that they would have time to study Torah and perform mitzvos.” This is the greatest blessing that Hashem can give the Jewish people. The goal of financial success is to enable a person to increase his dedication to Hashem. Having free time is also a blessing, provided that a person is careful to use it properly.

“You ignored the Rock Who gave birth to you, and forgot Hashem Who brought you forth” (32:18)

The Or HaChayim comments that the literal translation of the posuk is "You weakened Hashem Who gave birth to you." He explains that this refers to a midrash that describes what transpired when Hashem decided to create man. The angels asked Hashem why He wanted to create man. He explained that man would do good deeds and improve the world. Thus, if a person does not act properly, he weakens Hashem's argument for the creation of man and removes the entire purpose behind his creation. In Mussaf on Rosh Hashana, we say "Today is the birthday of the world." Adam was created on Rosh Hashana, but the world itself was in fact brought into existence six days earlier on the 25th of Elul. Why, then, do we commemorate the birthday of the world on Rosh Hashana? R' Gedalia Schorr answers that man fulfills the purpose of creation. The world was finished on Rosh Hashana when Adam was brought to life. The world is directly connected to the behavior of mankind. Therefore, we can truly say that today, Rosh Hashana, is really the birthday of the world. It is important for us to realize the true greatness of man. This whole beautiful world was created for us. In fact, the Mesillas Yesharim writes that when man serves Hashem, the whole world and all of nature is elevated. We must use the world to serve Hashem and not waste even a minute of our time on it.

By Rabbi Mayer Friedman

Pronouncing the Name

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons

Parshat Ha'Azinu includes the verse: *"When I say God's Name, it should be with greatness."* The commentators explain this to mean when we say God's Name, we must concentrate on the great significance of who God is - that He encompasses all of past, present and future. We learn this principle from the high priest in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, who wore a gold plate on his forehead - upon which was written the Name of God. The Talmud says that while wearing this plate, the high priest was required to continuously concentrate on the Name of God written there. So if one is required to concentrate on God's **written** name, then all the more so are we required to concentrate when **pronouncing** God's name.

I have a friend who once counted how many times he said God's name over the course of one day. Between prayers in the synagogue, blessings over food, and Torah study - he pronounced God's name 900 times in one day! Figured over a lifetime, that's about 25 million chances to give proper honor and respect to God!

Which reminds me of a story. A religious man died and went to the Heavenly court for judgment. The court called for any angels to come forth and testify on the man's behalf. Thousands and thousands of angels appeared - angels who had been "created" every time this man did a mitzvah. But then the Heavenly court called for any accusing angels, who were created when this man acted inappropriately. Millions of angels appeared - representing each time the man said God's name without proper concentration.

The Almighty does so much for us, every moment, of every day. We should give Him our full respect and honor, for as it says in this parsha: *"When I say God's Name, it should be with greatness."*

Methinks the Torah Doth Protest Too Much

By Sheldon Stern

In verse 32:5 Moshe asserted that corruption is not the province of Hashem, rather it's in the fabric of His children. Seemingly this point was clear enough but Rashi felt the need to again spell it out for us in no uncertain terms. Moreover, in the previous Posuk our indomitable leader averred that the Rock, i.e. Hashem is perfect. To borrow from the Bard, "Methinks the Parsha doth protest too much."

Yes, it "doth" but for a very good reason. IMHO very few people really believe it. To demonstrate this let's return to Breishis. Yaakov Avinu was sent by his parents to Rivkah's homeland to find his basherte, and he knew exactly who she was. As John sang, "I'm in love for the first time, and you know it's gonna last, it's a love to last forever, it's a love that has no past." Yaakov understood that he was destined to marry Rachel, but he also knew that his prospective father-in-law was the consummate conniver. So our Patriarch agreed to work seven years and he explicitly said it's for your (Lavan's) younger daughter whose name is Rachel. He dotted all the I's and crossed all the T's, but siz gehelft ehm vi a toten bankes. Lavan still tricked him, arguing that in their locale the younger daughter never married before the older. And the reason he did so is because this was that reprobate's nature. So we see that when one's disposition and basic Yashrus are at loggerheads the former will prevail. Okay, but you'll protest that Lavan was far from a Torah Jew. Dennis Prager has been in the news lately because of his relationship with Charlie Kirk. Several decades ago, Mr. Prager hosted a morning radio program from LA which aired locally on 770 AM. I once heard him say, "As far as I'm concerned there are two types of people, good and bad." At the time I was feeling my yeshivish oats and I considered this to be an oversimplification, if not Kefirah, but the truth is that he was really onto something. Hillel propounded the Golden Rule and it's applicable to everyone, just be a mensch. Therefore, the fact that one washes neigelvasser in the morning, abstains from Cholov Stam etc. does not indicate that he'll treat people vi si daf tze zein. And we can prove this. In Parshas Nitzavim (29:17) Moshe addressed the nation, "Perhaps there is among you, some man or woman, whose heart is turning away from G-d because there's a poisonous weed within." Moshe said perhaps, but he meant that there certainly are such individuals. But how could that be, didn't Klal Yisrael declare, in unison, Naaseh Vnishma? So we all know the Midrash which teaches that Hashem "peddled" the Torah to all the Goyim, but there were no takers. Finally he came to Israel and we were all in. But were we really or was it a case of herd mentality, peer pressure causing the individuals to conform? This is what Moshe feared and he knew that this evil root would fester silently waiting for a chance to express itself. And that's why our Parsha went to such extremes to bring this point across, to wit, that G-d is, in fact, perfect in His deeds and judgments.

But why should the Torah need to go to such great lengths to bring this point home? We have a Posuk that proscribes wearing Shaatzez, Shoin Gezugt Shoin Genug. One would be hard pressed to find an Orthodox Jew who intentionally violates that Lav. Seemingly the same should apply here. If the Torah attests to Hashem's perfection, why should anyone challenge it? And if you'll say that I'm creating a red herring, that is, every frum Jew does accept that Hashem is perfect let me share a story. About 20 years ago I attended a shul in which I'd regularly deliver a Dvar Torah at Shalosh Seudos. One Shabbos I mentioned the Holocaust and the Rabbi went ballistic, demanding that I cease and desist, because the subject was off-limits. He then said, "The Holocaust was one of those times that G-d didn't know what He was doing like when Rabbi Akiva was being killed and the

Malachim disputed Hashem by saying, "Zeh Torah Vezev Shear?" And G-d wasn't able to answer them." Andy Warhol said that in the future everyone will have his fifteen minutes of fame, but Charlie Kirk deserves to remain in the public eye for perpetuity. I mentioned in an earlier essay that the underlying reason for the innovation of Daf Yomi was that it would be Michaper the Chet Hanachash. Charlie's mantra was to "Make America Talk Again." He envisioned a world in which people would air out their differences in a civil manner. This is, my dear readers, the true original sin. It was Adam telling Chavah that you can't even "touch that tree." It was the brothers who assumed that Yosef would kill them once Yaakov was gone and so they fabricated a white lie. It was Dasan and Aviram who told Moshe that they'd sooner have their eyes gouged out than smoke a peace pipe with him. I could go on and on. Charlie wanted to change that narrative, and he paid the ultimate price, because Satan knows that if people are afforded the opportunity to openly express their views, he's a goner.

Now let's look at what that Rabbi said. We'll start with his comment regarding Rabbi Akiva. The Gemara in Berachos relates that our foremost Tanna expounded the verses of Shema to derive that one must love Hashem even when his life is being taken. Rabbi Akiva was "obsessed" with the question as to whether he could properly perform that Mitzvah. Hashem thus set the grandest stage for His prize pupil and he passed the test with flying colors. If Moshe wanted to die like his brother for Rabbi Akiva this was nirvana. But wasn't this an excruciatingly painful way to leave his mortal coil. The Brisker Rav was scheduled for surgery in the late 19th century. Ether had recently been introduced as a general anesthetic, but the Rav declined that option. Instead he closed his eyes started thinking about a certain Sugya and then gave the doctors the go ahead to operate. Now if a contemporary Rabbi could have such Hasmadah how much more so for the man who Moshe felt was more deserving than him to be the exponent of the Torah? Fine, but what about the question that the Malachim asked? It was, indeed, a valid question, but Hashem chose not to answer it, because, as we see, He was more concerned with complying with Rabbi Akiva's wishes than with public opinion. But that leaves us with the elephant in the room. Surely there's no way to explain the Shoah as an act of kindness and justice. This past Lag B'Omer I heard a Dvar Torah which may not make complete sense of what happened but it's mind opening. The Gemara teaches that Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students died because they didn't display the necessary respect to each other. That's always been hard for me to digest because his *raison d'etre* was, "Veahavta Lireiacha Komocha." It stands to reason that his students would emulate their illustrious mentor. So the Rabbi explained that these 24,000 Talmidim were actually gilgulim of the 24,000 who perished because of Bilaam's advice. I don't recall how he made the connection, but it was rock solid. Similarly, we can theorize that so many of those who were killed in Europe were never intended to live out full lives. The Kabbalists explain that in order for Moshiach to come a certain number of Neshamas must come down to this world, and so the loss of our Kedoshim in Europe may very well have hastened our Ultimate Redemption. Admittedly, I'm just guessing, but such conjecture is far more palatable than that Rabbi rejecting a basic principle of the Torah. And why did he do so? It's because he was taught that everything Hashem does is good, and obviously the loss of six million isn't good. and so as Sir Paul sang, "That was your(his) first mistake." Yes his first mistake was proposing that G-d can err, but far worse was the Rabbi's refusal to consider my position. This takes us back to Charlie Kirk. A week ago I was on line and a fellow called me a cross between Candace Owens and Tucker Carlson. Why? Because he didn't like what I said and he wanted to stifle any further discussion. The Lubavicher Rebbe, near the end of his life, famously said, "I've done all I can to bring Moshiach, now I give it over to you(his Chassidim.)" Charlie Kirk did all he could to get people with opposing viewpoints to talk to each other. Now it's our responsibility to continue his revolution.

But still some will ask, "Dr. Stern, you can't whitewash everything that Hashem does. What about the hostages?" The first chapter of Bava Kamma begins with a Mishna which enumerates the four categories of damagers. The second Perek starts in a similar fashion. Ravina told Rava that there's an apparent contradiction between those two Mishnayot. To resolve the difficulty Rava made a change in the text of the first Mishna. Ravina told him that we still have a problem with the second Mishna. The Gemara then related that Rava jokingly answered, "I explained my Mishna, now you explain yours." As the saying goes, "Many a true word is spoken in jest." The Hebrew letters comprising Mishnah and Neshama are the same. I think that Rava, with his flippant remark, was presenting an essential truth, "Each of us is responsible for our own Neshamah." Yes, we grieve for those who have been killed and we empathize with those in captivity, but we don't really know anything about them. As Tom Petty wrote, "You don't know how it feels, you don't know how it feels to be me." When I look back at my life, I can honestly say that Hashem has been exceedingly fair and kind to me. Yes I've had my share of scary moments, but that's mostly due to the fact that I'm quite neurotic and I'm always afraid that Hashem won't extricate me from the next mess I made. Let me share a story which I've never revealed to anyone. I started at Rabbi Friedman's Yeshiva in 1990. I was 33 and single at the time. There was an older married man who took it upon himself to fix up the unmarrieds, there were about a dozen of us. He gave me the number of a certain Shadchante. I called her and she was very nasty on the phone, but invited me to come to her home on Shabbos for an interview. I told Rabbi Friedman about our exchange but he urged me, against my better judgment, to go. I listened to him because had I refused he would have assumed that I'm one of those perennial singles who isn't really interested in getting married. Unfortunately, people make assessments about others and very often they don't judge Lkaf Zchus. So I went and it was one of the worst experiences in my life. She began the encounter by saying that she disliked me when we initially spoke on the phone, something I tried to convey to Rabbi Friedman. Anyway, she interrogated me like she had been trained by the Gestapo. One question was, "Before you became religious isn't it true that you had unkosher relationships?" You get the point. At the end of that ordeal she told me that she had a very sweet Persian girl who would be a good match and I should call her tomorrow for the number. I said to myself that if it works out I'll forget about that abuse. So I called her the next day and she told me, "I disliked you from the first time I spoke to you. I have serious questions about you and I'd never fix you up with anyone."

She then slammed the phone on me." Two days later I came back to the Yeshiva and the "broker" was "licking his chops." I spoke to Mrs. (I don't remember her name) and she hated your guts. She said you're total garbage." I didn't say a word to Rabbi Friedman, not because of Loshan Hora, but because I knew he'd take that lady's side, since she's respected in the Yeshivish world and I'm a nobody. A few weeks later I met another shadchan, who was a professor at CUNY. He treated me royally and set me up with, you guessed it, a very sweet Persian girl, and you know the rest. Was it the same girl? I never told my wife the story because I didn't want her to know what had happened with the first Shadchan(don't worry, she doesn't read anything I write) but Asia sang "Only Time Will Tell." Dylan wrote, "We all see the same things, we just start out from a different point of view." The professor saw a pleasant Orthodox dentist and said it would be a layup to marry me off. That *itch(you can fill in the first letter either one would fit) came to a very different conclusion. But it's because of such incidents, and there have been so many, that I believe in Hashem. It's not that everything has gone smoothly in my life, not at all. But even in the dark times He shows Himself and that means everything to me.

In 2007, I was attending that above mentioned shul and they commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Six Day War. The President said, "The Six Day War is the only miracle I've ever witnessed in my life." I was dumbfounded by that statement, but it verifies what Dovid Hamelech wrote in Ashrei, "Korov Hashem Lichol Korov." We're still in the middle of the Tshuvah season, but I don't believe that repentance is what Tshuvah is all about, because I've never seen anyone admit that he was wrong, and this is the sine qua non of contrition. Instead, I would ask anyone reading this to close his/her eyes and ask himself if he's ever had an experience in which Hashem made His presence felt to him. If not, he should cry out for what he's missing. George wrote, "My Sweet L-rd." "Really want to see you, really want to be with you, really want to see you L-rd." Or as Paul sang, "Got to Get You Into My Life." But the question is whether people really want to develop a close relationship with Hashem. I'll illustrate with a final story. My first account was a non-Observant Jew named Arnie, Arnie the accountant, nice alliteration. Arnie used to come to my office four times a year to prepare estimated taxes for me. On one occasion he arrived in a foul mood. He explained, "The market did a 180 on me. No one could see it coming. And then he added, "I don't deserve this, I've never cheated anyone." Arnie had a solid practice but his real money was in stocks and now they turned on him." My reaction was that Hashem took back the money he made while working on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim, but from Arnie's perspective he was honest, and I'll affirm that he was, and so his denouement was unfair. George Costanza(Seinfeld) said, "I believe in G-d for the bad stuff." Let's apply that here. Jimi Hendrix had a song called Manic Depression."Manic Depression is searching my soul, I know what I want, but I don't know how to go about getting it." Arnie also knew what he wanted and he knew exactly how to get it. He had some magical number in his head and when he got there he was going to quit working, buy a yacht and spend the rest of his life sailing the seven seas. I kid you not. And he was so close, but then the dot com bubble burst. So the only thing that stood in the way of Arnie's dream was Hashem and he pulled the rug out from under him. So yes Arnie believed in G-d for the bad stuff. But why are we discussing some Mechallel Shabbos? The answer is that inzerrer frummer Yidden are no different. When SMR got out of jail he was hailed as a conquering hero. Why? His release validated all the religious Jews who believe that the only way to make it is by stealing. Okay you might end up in prison, but think how much money you'll make in the meantime. So one can Daven for Deveikus to Hashem, but the real way is, as Jimmy Buffet sang, "Changes in Latitude changes in Attitude." The only way to come close to Hashem is by becoming one with the Torah, leaving no stone unturned. Ringo said, "It Don't Come Easy." Nothing worthwhile ever does. So the choice is simple, we can mend our ways and Hashem will reciprocate by showing us His affection, or we can continue to do Mitzvochs so that He'll leave us to become, as the Eagles sang in Hotel California, "Prisoners of our own devices." Several years after the President made his "no miracle" comment I wrote the following:

Golden Stage

Sometimes I hear the people say
That there are no miracles today
G-d doesn't listen when He hears us pray
But I'm telling you they're wrong
Because I've seen the hand of G-d in my life
I've been delivered from the edge of a knife
He has shielded me when troubles are rife
And now I write this song
Now I write this song
We all turn Mizrach when we start to pray (Chorus)
Words of Torah which we must obey
We're all connected in a special way
And we'll be together on the Golden Stage
Now we're scattered all around
Bruised and battered lost and found
Tired and lonely on the run
This endless journey has only just begun
2000 years of history has past
Our enemies long gone
But we are standing fast