

SONGS TO LIVE BY

A Devotional Meditation on Ha'azinu (Give Ear)

Deuteronomy 32:1-52; 2 Samuel 22:1-51; Acts 15:13-21;

Romans 11:16-29, 12:1-2; Revelation 15:1-4

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The year I retired from the Army was also the year our youngest daughter graduated from high school. During a conversation about our transitions, she made a profound statement about intergenerational communication. She said, “Just when I started to understand what you did, you stopped doing it.”

I had tried to acquaint my daughters with my work as a soldier and intelligence specialist, but many things got lost in translation. They had other priorities in their formative years. While I would have enjoyed having one or both of my children follow my career path, it was more important to their mother and I that they follow the paths our Creator established for them. The counsel we offered focused on helping them understand who they are and what roles they would fill as children of God in this world. The subject of military or government service seldom entered our conversations. It was the reality that shaped our family dynamics, but no one other than myself had a need to understand the details of that reality.

Thinking about intergenerational communication reminds me how it worked with my father. His service in World War II was a significant part of his youth, but it never dominated his life as military service dominated mine. That's what I asked him about, though, because his two years of wartime service captivated my young mind to a far greater degree than his career as an insurance agent. I wish now that I had asked him more about that. I would have learned from such conversations what dreams he had as a youth, why he decided on a career in insurance, his approach to marriage and fatherhood, and how he coped with the stresses of life. I would also have asked him to tell me more about his father and mother, and their parents, and how they made their way through life. I would have asked the same of my mother. I could have gained much wisdom from them that I could pass on to my children and their children.

This is a scriptural principle we first learn from Moses:

Remember the days of antiquity,
understand the years across generations.
Ask your father and he will tell you,
your elders and they will say to you.
When *Elyon* [the Most High] gave nations their heritage,
when He separated the sons of man,



Guitar lessons. Photo by Holly Webster, July 5, 2012, [via Flickr](#).

He set boundaries for the people
by the number of *Bnei-Yisrael* [the children of Israel].
But *ADONAI*'s portion is His people—
Jacob is the share of His inheritance.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9 TLV

This is in the opening lines of the Song of Moses, the composition God gave him to teach to Israel for their remembrance through the ages. The Song was necessary because God knew His Chosen People would wander from the Covenant He established with them, and that His judgment would eventually cause them to be dispersed into all nations. The Song of Moses helps them remember not only why the judgment happened, but who they are, and what God will do to glorify His Name by bringing them back into national existence in the land He promised them.

As with everything else in Torah, this has a direct bearing not only on the Jewish nation, but also on Christians who profess allegiance to Yeshua, our Jewish Messiah. In fact, it's something that unites the two parts of God's Covenant people at the end of days, according to what Yeshua revealed to John:

Then I saw another great and wonderful sign in heaven: seven angels who have seven plagues—the last ones, for with them God's wrath is finished. And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had overcome the beast and his image and the number of his name standing by the sea of glass, holding the harps of God. And they are singing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and wonderful are Your deeds,
ADONAI Elohei-Tzva'ot [LORD God Almighty].
Just and true are Your ways,
O King of the nations!
Who shall not fear and glorify Your name, O Lord?
For You alone are Holy.
All the nations shall come and worship before You,
for Your righteous acts have been revealed!

Revelation 15:1-4 TLV

This revelation is only now becoming known to those who are paying attention. For too long, one part of God's Covenant people concentrated on the Song of Moses, while the other concentrated on the Song of the Lamb. We need both. It's the Lamb Who has brought us into relationship with our Creator through His atoning work on the cross, and it's Moses who teaches us how we are to live according to our Creator's righteous standards. It's a mystery yet to be completely revealed, but we know enough to understand that Christians and Jews are in a covenant relationship not only with our Redeemer, but with one another. How we walk out that relationship is something we will be learning until Messiah's Kingdom is fully established.

Which brings us back to the applicability of the Song of Moses in our present reality. Consider the intergenerational aspect of the song. The hearers receive instruction to ask their fathers and elders about the days of antiquity. That means younger people have the responsibility to ask their elders why things are the way they are. What happens, though,

if the elders don't know the answers? What if they are clueless, not only about antiquity, but about anything beyond their present generation in their cultural corner of the earth? What if the instructions God gave Moses for the Covenant people of Israel and all who would join that Covenant never enter the minds of the elders? How would they know what to advise the younger ones, or even where to go for answers?

This is why Paul tells believers from the nations that we should not boast against the holy root of the olive tree of Israel from which we are nourished. It's also what James means when he advises these same believers from the nations to go to the synagogue each Shabbat and hear the teachings of Moses so they may be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

This requires some hard and humbling effort on our part. First, we must commit to learning the whole Word of God by studying it ourselves, and by discussing it with others. We are blessed to live in a time when resources are available to accommodate many different learning styles, so we have less excuse not to learn what our God says. The question is whether we're willing to commit, and follow through with that commitment throughout our lives.

The second part of this is that it's not an individual thing. We can't learn in a vacuum and expect spiritual transformation. We also can't expect to drop everything and devote ourselves entirely to studying the Bible. There are children to raise, households to run, jobs to be done, and a million urgent requirements that we must attend to each day. That's why this process is communal and intergenerational. Parents of young children may not have all the answers, nor be able to carve out time to find them, but grandparents and other elders in the community can help meet that need. If they don't know, maybe they will be better equipped to find the answers and offer wise counsel.

We should begin this process now, while we are thinking about it, before the urgent requirements of daily life distract us once again. That's how Israel went astray in antiquity: the urgent crowded out the holy, and in time God's people forgot what holy meant. They became just another nation following their noses toward what seemed good at the time.

Are we making the same shortsighted error? Let's ask now, while our wise and godly elders are here. If we don't, then by the time we understand what they are doing, they will no longer be here to do it.