Eitz Chayim Hee: A Torah Commentary for Environmental Learning and Action

Hebrew/English Source Sheet

Torah Portion of Ha’azinu

“Give Ear, O Heavens, and I Will Speak, and May the Earth Hear the Words of my Mouth”

By Rabbi Yuval Cherlow

The sources are presented in the order they appear in the commentary.

Deuteronomy 32:1

Listen, O heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth!

Commentary of Rashi, Deuteronomy 32:1

- **Listen, O heavens** - that I am warning Israel, and you shall be witnesses in this matter, for I have already told Israel that you will be witnesses. And so is [the clause] “And let the earth hear” [to be similarly understood]. Now why did [Moses] call upon heaven and earth to be witnesses [for warning Israel]? Moses said: “I am [just] flesh and blood. Tomorrow I will die. If Israel says, ‘We never accepted the covenant,’ who will come and refute them?” Therefore, he called upon heaven and earth as witnesses for Israel-witnesses that endure forever. Furthermore, if they [Israel] act meritoriously, the witnesses will come and reward them: “The vine will give its fruit, the earth will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew” (Zech. 8:12). And if [Israel] acts sinfully, the hand of the witnesses will be upon them first [to inflict punishment upon them]: “And He will close off the heaven that there will be no rain, and the soil will not give its produce” (Deut. 11:17), and then [the verse continues]: “and you will perish quickly”-through [the attacks of] the nations. — [Sifrei 32:1]
Commentary of Ibn Ezra Deuteronomy 32:1

"Ha’azinu- I already explained in the Sifrei that the word Ha’azinu is from the word “ozen” (ear), meaning to say ‘turn an ear.’ And I already informed you, that the wise one teaches, ‘heavens’ is referring to the angels. And ‘earth’ is referring to the people who live on the Earth. Or [it refers to] the testimony of rain which falls from the heavens and the Earth giving forth its produce. In my opinion, the main point is that they [the Heavens and Earth] are eternal, similar to “hear, O mountains” (Micah 6:2), and “the stone of Joshua” (Joshua 24:27), where it says that is ‘heard’. And I already hinted to you that the human soul is a mediator between the high and the low, representing all in the image of it chambers. And to understand also what presides in those chambers, “one who lifts up the lowly and low ers the lofty.” (translation Sareet Benayahu)

Ramban Deuteronomy 32:1

“Give ear, ye heavens” - By way of the plain meaning of Scripture, the words of Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra are correct that the Scripture designates as witnesses all things which exist and endure. Similarly- “Hear o ye mountains, the Eternals controversy ” (micah 6:2) So also with reference to the stone that Yehoshua set up (after he made the covenant with the people) for there it is written: “for it hath heard...” And by way of the Truth (the mystic teachings of the Kabalah) the reference here is to the first (higher) heavens and earth mentioned in Genesis, for it is they that shall enter the covenant with Israel.Therefore, he states that the heavens should give ear and listen to the conditions and how he will apply them. (translation from Ramban-Commentary on the Torah. Shilo Publishing House)
Rashbam Genesis 37:  
Yakov settled- Eisav went to another land from before Yakov his brother, but Yakov settled near his father in the land of his living because he had the status of the first-born. (translation by Gideon Aronovich)

Deuteronomy 32:1  
And Jeshurun became fat and rebelled; you grew fat, thick and rotund; [Israel] forsook the God Who made them, and spurned the [Mighty] Rock of their salvation.

Missing Source:  
English translation for Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Deuteronomy 32:1

All English Translations from Judaica Press, available online at www.chabad.org