

האזינו

HEAVEN AND EARTH BEAR WITNESS

האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי

Let the heavens listen and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth (*Devarim 32:1*).

Moshe *Rabbeinu* proclaimed his mortality and declared that he would be unable to bear eternal witness in case *Klal Yisrael* should sin. Moshe sought the aid of heaven and earth, which are not subject to death, to agree to bear witness against *Klal Yisrael* should they commit iniquity (*Targum Yonasan, ibid.*).

This is reminiscent of the narrative (*Avodah Zarah 3•*) in which the nations of the world concede to Hashem that they sinned, but countered their admission with the defense that *Klal Yisrael* also violated their commandments. Hashem responded on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*: “I will bear witness that *Klal Yisrael* observed the entire Torah.” The nations argued: “How can a father bear witness for his own son?” Hashem then called upon heaven and earth to testify on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. The nations then retorted that the very existence of the heavens and the earth are contingent upon *Klal Yisrael*'s observance of the Torah. For should *Klal Yisrael* reject the Torah, the entire universe would self-destruct, and so it is unlikely that heaven and earth would bear witness to their own detriment. Hashem then suggested that a single witness representing each generation would step forward from among the nations, who would testify that there indeed existed at least one Jewish *tzaddik* in each generation. End of debate.

Two questions present themselves: First, if heaven and earth were inappropriate witnesses for Hashem, how could Moshe rely on them as witnesses? Secondly, the contention of the nations was that

Klal Yisrael did not observe the Torah. If so, how does the existence of a sole *tzaddik* refute the nations' argument? It only certifies that there was a single righteous individual in each generation, not that *Klal Yisrael*, as a whole, was righteous.

The *Siach Yitzchak* (*Avodah Zarah* 3•) offers a novel solution to the above problem by referring to the statement in the *Gemara*:

אפילו בשביל צדיק אחד העולם מתקיים

The world exists due to the merit of even a single *tzaddik* (*Yoma* 38:).

The implication is that in every single generation there lives a single *tzaddik* in whose virtue the world is benevolently permitted to continue existing. The nations attest to the presence of such an individual, and heaven and earth are assured of continued viability; thus heaven and earth were no longer considered to be partial witnesses and could be called upon to testify on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*.

Moshe, in his call to heaven and earth, associates the heaven with *dibur* (ואדברה) — from the root “to speak” — and the earth with *amirah* (אמרי פי) — from the root “to say.” The world was created with the *Asarah Ma'amaros* — Ten Utterances (“Let there be light,” etc.) — while the Torah was given with the *Aseres Hadibros* — Ten Commandments (*Abarbanel, Shemos* 20). *Dibur* represents the internal, while *amirah* represents the external. The world is the lattice work, the matrix, the body; while the Torah is the soul, the key to understanding the power of Hashem. A world bereft of Torah is an empty shell without the chick. The *dibur* is charged with assigning life to the *amirah*. In calling upon the heaven and earth as witnesses, Hashem and Moshe are affirming the role of *Klal Yisrael* in carrying out the *dibur* to justify the *amirah*.

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