



Ha'azinu

The Longest and Shortest Words in the Torah

Very few people know what the longest and shortest words in the Torah are. The longest word in the Torah is in the Book of Shemot:

“וּבְמִשְׁאָרוֹתֶיךָ”

“And in your kneading troughs”

This is a reference to what would happen in the plague of frogs, which would enter into every single part of the kitchens in the homes of the Egyptians.

And the shortest word in the Torah? There is a one letter word in the Torah, in Devarim, chapter 32, verse six:

“הֶ לִיהוֹה תִגְמְלוּ זֹאת עִם נָבֵל וְלֹא חָכָם”

“Is this how you are repaying kindness to Hashem? You are a people which is vile and not clever.”

Now, the “הֶ” is separated from the rest of the word “לִיהוֹה”. And indeed, the masoretic note and our entire tradition tells us that that ה is a word on its own.

The Torah is telling us that we shouldn't take Hashem's kindness for granted. And in the event that we don't repay Hashem's kindness to him: It's vile, and you're not clever.

Why use two words: “לֹא חָכָם”? Throughout the the Torah, Hashem tries to be as

concise as possible. In this verse he could have said, “foolish”, which is one word. And I think the reason is as follows: we as a people take enormous pride when it comes to חָכְמָה. We daven 3 times a day for חָכְמָה:

“אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דָּעַת”

“You endow man with wisdom/knowledge.”

We ask Hashem for the blessing of being able to be clever, so that we can use our wisdom to cope well in this world.

And here Hashem is telling us, “לֹא חָכָם” “you are not clever” in the event that you don't show your due appreciation to Almighty God for everything he does for us.

As we stand now approaching Shabbat Shuva between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, let us appropriately reflect on the past year and the extent to which Hashem has blessed us as individuals, as families, as communities, and as a nation.

Baruch Hashem, Am Yisrael Chai. We are thriving, we are doing well despite all the significant challenges that we face.

Let us express our full, heartfelt gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and may he always continue to shower his blessings upon us during the coming year and well beyond.

Shabbat Shalom and Gamar Chatima Tova.