

Parshas Ha'Azinu – Shabbat Shuvah  
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Rabbi Berel Wein comments that The Gaon of Vilna (5487-5557) was asked the question: “How long will we suffer in exile?” His succinct answer was: “We are holding by KiTeitze.”

Apparently, The Goan saw a direct correspondence between the passage of the verses in the Torah and the passage of years in world history. Parshat Ki teitze represents verse numbers 5450-5560 in the Torah.

There are 5845 verses in the Torah. The second to last Parsha, Ha'Azinu, has 52 verses, or verse number 5753 to 5804. (The last Parsha, V'Zot HaBeracha, has 41 verses, or verse numbers 5805 to 5845.)

By this calculation, we are living through Parshat Ha'Azinu. Ha'Azinu encapsulates Jewish history, and rebukes the Jewish people for not living up to our potential to carry the Torah, and for allowing seduction by alien deities. “They provoked Me with a non-god, angered Me with their vanities; so I shall provoke them with a non-people, with a vile nation shall I anger them.” (Deut. 32:21) No imagination is needed to know that we are living through this prophecy!

The Haftorah this year for Ha'Azinu begins with the glorious stirring: “Return, O Israel, to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled through your iniquity.” May we, the Jewish people, deeply internalize this admonition, so that we will merit another prophesy in Ha'Azinu: “O nations sing the praises of His people, for He will avenge the blood of his servants.” (Deut. 32:43)

We look longingly for the forthcoming blessed years corresponding to Vezot Haberachah. Our Siddur tells us every morning: “May You shine a new light on Zion, and may we all speedily merit its light.” May Klal Yisroel soon enter this new period, and justify The Gaon's perspective on our place in Jewish History. May we all be sealed for a good New Year.