

Vayelech 5786

Rashi on Deuteronomy 31:28

I WILL CALL THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AS WITNESSES AGAINST THEM — But if you ask, “Behold he has already above (Deuteronomy 30:19) called heaven and earth as witnesses: “I call [the heaven and the earth] as witnesses this day against you etc.”?! Then I reply: There he said this to the Israelites (he told them that He would do this), but now he intends to say (Deuteronomy 32:1) “Give ear, O ye heavens, [and I will speak; and hear earth] etc.”, thus calling them as witnesses.

Chizkuni on Deuteronomy 31:28

“And I will appoint as witnesses against them Heaven and Earth.” Here Moses actually appointed Heaven and Earth as witnesses, while earlier (in verse 30.19) he merely told the Jewish people that these would be witnesses against them.

Rashi on Deuteronomy 32:1

Moses asks the heavens and the earth to lend their ears to what he is about to say. This is a direct continuation of the last verse in the previous portion, Vayelech, in which he had announced this poem/song to the people. He now calls on the eternal heaven and earth to act as witnesses to what he had to say, seeing that he, as a mortal, cannot do so anymore.

Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 32:1

I have previously informed you that the Gaon says that the meaning of *heavens* is the angels and the meaning of the *earth* is the people of the earth. On the other hand, its meaning might be that the rain that comes down from heaven and the fruit which the earth produces are called to bear witness. I believe that the correct interpretation is that Moses called heaven and earth to witness because they last forever.

Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:2

What constitutes Teshuvah? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart, never to commit them again as [Isaiah 55:7] states “May the wicked abandon his ways....” Similarly, he must regret the past as [Jeremiah 31:19] states: “After I returned, I regretted.”

[He must reach the level where] He who knows the hidden will testify concerning him that he will never return to this sin again as [Hoshea 14:4] states: “We will no longer say to the work of our hands: ‘You are our gods.’”

He must verbally confess and state these matters which he resolved in his heart.

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It is from the roots of the commandment of this appointed time [that it] was from the kindnesses of God upon His creations that He remembers them and views their deeds one day each and every year; so that the iniquities should not mount so greatly, and there be room for atonement. He is abundantly kind and leans towards kindness; and since they are [resultantly] few, He forgives them.