

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Shmos 5785

D. Mordechai Schlachter

Moshe asked the most important question of Hashem:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אֲנִי כִּי אֵלֶךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם:

“And Moshe said to the Lord, ‘Who am I, because I will go to Pharaoh, and because I will take Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt.’” (Shmos 3:11).

Who was Moshe that he was worthy to take Bnei Yisroel out of bondage? Yet, the response is merely that Hashem will be with Moshe, and the sign is that they will serve Hashem on Har Sinai. How does that answer the question? How is a future event a sign?

To understand the actual question and answer it is important to read the previous pesukim. The Torah, unlike any other document, does not merely change pronouns for reader or writer convenience. When referring to Hashem, the Torah will not change from YKVY to Elokim merely so as not to overuse one name more than another. Every use of YKVK and Elokim is specific.

When Hashem came to save Bnei Yisroel from bondage, the pasuk says, “And the Lord (Elokim) heard the groans, and the Lord recalled His covenant with Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov.” (Ibid 2:24). Yet, it then says, Hashem (YKVK) has taken note of Bnei Yisroel. (Ibid 3:16). Which is it? These terms keep changing throughout this parsha. It behooves one to go through and take note of which “personality” of Hashem—so to speak—is presented. Obviously, Hashem is one. Even Elokim, which may be mistaken as plural because of the “im” is singular. This is proven by the pasuk saying, “And the Lord saw Bnei Yisroel and the Lord knew.” (Ibid 2:25). Both “saw” and “knew” are singular. Thus, Elokim is singular. The Torah writes Elokim when Hashem deals between Himself and Creation. The first perek of Bereishis only uses that term. Then, after man is created, the Torah uses the word YKVK to signify His relationship with mankind.

The groans of Bnei Yisroel went up to Elokim. (Shmos 2:23). Further, in pesukim 24 and 25, the Torah is teaching that it was Hashem in his Elokim guise—that of dealing between Himself and Creation—that recalled the covenant and saw Bnei Yisroel and knew it was time. This seems to be a diversion of the norm because when Hashem appeared to Avraham (Bereishis 12:7, 17:1, 18:1), Yitzchok (ibid 26:2), and Yaakov (ibid 28:12), to make the covenants it was always “Hashem.” Why, then, was it Elokim that recalled the covenants? Note, though, that it was Elokim “that appeared to Yaakov further, when he came from Padam Aram, and He blessed him.” (Ibid 35:9). Elokim added the name Yisroel to Yaakov’s name. (Ibid 35:10).

“And Hashem saw that [Moshe] turned to see, and Elokim called to him.” (Shmos 3:4). Hashem saw Moshe’s action, but Elokim called. Then, after telling Moshe he is the

Lord of his fathers, it is Hashem who then says, “I have surely seen the deprivation of My People, and have I have heard its cries because of its taskmasters.” (Ibid 3:7). Now it is YKVK that heard the cries. “And I have come down to save it from the hands of Egypt, to bring it up from that land to the Land...flowing with milk and honey...” (Ibid 3:8). YKVK has come down to save the nation. “And now go, I will send you to Pharaoh, and bring out My People, Bnei Yisroel, from Egypt.” (Ibid 3:10).

This is when “Moshe asked, to **הָאֱלֹהִים** God” – to Hashem, generally; “the “prefix makes it the proper noun. “Who is Anochi?” In verse 6 Hashem said, “I am – Anochi.” Moshe was asking, “Which Anochi?” Will it be Elokim, the Creator, the Master of the World, or will it be Hashem, YKVK, the Father of mankind? Is Bnei Yisroel going out because Elokim heard the cries and recalled the bris avos? Or is Hashem taking the nation out as a father who has noted their suffering? This was the most important question that Moshe could ask. The fact that he discerned the difference and knew what was happening, that it was Elokim that appeared to him but YKVK that told him to go save Bnei Yisroel, he was fit for leadership. He not only noticed the burning thornbush – that it was alit in flames and yet not being consumed – but he also did not take for granted that Hashem was appearing to him in the both guises, as Creator / Master and as Father of Mankind. Moshe proved himself to be the astute leader who would not take events for granted. He would discern the truth before he judged and acted. This uniquely qualified him as leader and to take Bnei Yisroel out.

Hashem then responded in ibid 3:12: “Ekye is with you.” This is the same name He proclaims to be, “Ekye asher ekye.” (Ibid 3:14). The response continues: “And this is the sign for you.” It was a sign for Moshe alone. “Because Anochi is sending you, that you shall take out the people from Egypt to serve God, on this Mountain.” Anochi is both “the Lord of your fathers” (ibid 3:6) and “Hashem” (ibid 4:11). Hashem gives Moshe a sign that he will be successful, and his mission has a purpose, so that the nation will serve Hashem on the very same Mountain. And it was “Anochi, Hashem, your Lord” who gave the utterances on Har Sinai. (Ibid 20:2). Both YKVK and Elokim. Why the back and forth?

The Torah is teaching that Bnei Yisroel did not earn their way. For various reasons (I’ve written previously) they did not merit geula. It was the Creator who had to take them out because of the Promise He made with the avos. Perhaps, Bnei Yisroel deserved to rot in bondage. However, the Master of the World knew it was time to fulfill the Promise of the covenants and destiny. It was the Creator that made Yaakov into Yisroel – the father of a People. Destiny was set for Hashem to have His People. However, YKVK had to come down to deal with Egypt. There had to be mercy, tolerance, and justice meted out to mankind. The Ten Strikes were not all Egypt deserved, but much less.

Even though it was undeserved, Hashem assured Moshe that the People’s service on Har Sinai would earn them the achdus and merits to be Hashem’s People and to be saved. That is why they left Goshen (despite it being promised to Avraham). Bnei Yisroel were only getting a fraction of the Promise Hashem made to Avraham. The full Promise will be fulfilled in the (near) future.