
פרשת מקץ

פרק מג פסוק יד

א-ל שדי יתן לכם רחמים לפני האיש ושלה לכם את-אחיכם אהר ואת-בנימין ואני באשר שכלתי שכלתי:

רש"י

וא-ל שדי: שדי בנתינת רחמיו וכדי הכולת בידו לתן, "יתן לכם רחמים", זהו פשוטו. ומדרשו, מי שאמר לעולם די יאמר די לצרותי, שלא שקטתי מנעורי, צרת לכו, צרת עשו, צרת רחל, צרת דינה, צרת יוסף, צרת שמעון, צרת בנימין:

מושג

מי שאמר לעולם די יאמר די לצרותי.

Translation:

He who told the world "Enough" will say "Enough" to my troubles.

Explanation:

The Midrash Rashi quotes¹ teaches that as Hashem created the world the heaven and earth kept on expanding² until Hashem told them to stop, 7. Yaakov asks Hashem to put a stop to his suffering as well.³ Hashem stopped the expansion of the physical world as the physical hides the spiritual. If the physical world would have continued at it's initial rate of expansion, the spiritual would have been concealed to such an extent that it would be impossible to find. Human suffering also conceals the spiritual, as it makes us feel as if Hashem is hidden from us. Yaakov thus asks Hashem to stop his suffering for the very same reasons He stopped the expansion of the world: to ensure that we see Hashem's presence clearly and find His spirit in all that we do.

Looking in the Pasuk:

Rashi is bothered by the fact that Yaakov refers to Hashem as שדי when asking for His mercy. Rashi explains the name to have two possible meanings. The first, more basic, explanation is taken to mean שדי, that He has sufficient. Yaakov is saying that Hashem has sufficient mercy and sufficient power to apply that mercy. Rashi then quotes the Midrash Tanchuma in which the name שדי is understood as a contraction of the words שדי לעולם די. Yaakov is asking for Hashem to put a stop to his troubles in the same way Hashem put a stop to the expansion of the world. Rashi added the explanation of the Tanchumah since the basic meaning, of Hashem having sufficient mercy and power, seemed difficult to understand in the context of the Pasuk⁴.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Meanings of the name שדי.

Understand: The physical world conceals the spiritual which explains Hashem's 'scolding' the physical world to stop expanding, to stop concealing the spiritual. Human suffering also serves to conceal Hashem, explaining the connection between the worlds expansion and Yaakov's suffering.

Think: Yaakov's use of the name שדי provides deeper understanding of his request and of the meaning of the name itself.

1 See note #1
2 See note #2
3 See note #4
4 See note #3

NOTES

1. Rashi significantly condensed the Midrash (תנחומא י) which states:

מה ראה יעקב לברכם באל שדי? ללמדך שהרבה יסורין עברו על יעקב עד שהיה במעי אמו היה עשו מריב עמו שנאמר ויתרוצצו הבנים (בראשית כה) וכן הוא אומר (עמוס א) על רדפו בחרב אחיו ושחת רחמיו, ברח מפני עשו ללבן והיה שם עשרים שנה בצרות רבות שנאמר (בראשית לא) הייתי ביום אכלני חרב וגו', ואחר שיצא רדף לבן אחריו להרגו שנא' וירדף אחריו דרך שלשת ימים, נמלט ממנו בא עשו בקש עוד להרגו והפסיד עליו כל אותו הדורון עזים מאתים וגו', יצא מעשו באה עליו צרת דינה, יצא מצרת דינה באה עליו צרת רחל, אחר כל הצרות בקש לנוח קמעא באה עליו צרת יוסף והכתוב צווח לא שלותי ולא שקטתי ולא נחתי (איוב ג) אחר כך באה עליו צרת שמעון, אח"כ צרת בנימין, לפיכך היה מתפלל באל שדי ואומר מי שאמר לשמים וארץ די, יאמר ליסורי די, לפי כשברא הקדוש ברוך הוא השמים והארץ היו נמתחין והולכין עד שאמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא די, לפיכך כתיב ואל שדי

2. Interestingly, the idea of an expanding universe is agreed to by modern science as well⁵.

This understanding of the name שדי appears in the Talmud as well. The Gemoroh in (יב.) מסכת חגיגה states:

ואמר רב יהודה אמר רב: בשעה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את העולם היה מרחיב והולך כשתי פקעיות של שתי, עד שגער בו הקדוש ברוך הוא והעמידו, שנאמר עמודי שמים ירופפו ויתמהו מגערתו. והיינו דאמר ריש לקיש: מאי דכתיב (בראשית ל"ה) אני אל שדי אני הוא שאמרתי לעולם די.

It is interesting to note that Rashi, while quoting the Tanchumah, does not use the wording of the Tanchumah, שאמר לשמים וארץ די, but rather chooses to use the wording of the Gemoroh שאמר לעולם די.

3. One could ask; Why would the Midrash think that Yaakov had this in mind when he used this name rather than the simpler meaning, that Hashem has unlimited strength? To answer this we can look at the three other times this name of Hashem is used in Sefer Breishis:

1. פרק יז א ויהי אברהם בן־תשעים שנה ותשע שנים ויבא ה' אל־אברהם ויאמר אליו אֲנִי־אֱלֹהֵי שְׁדֵי הַתְּהֵלֶךְ לְפָנַי וְהָיָה תָמִים: ב וְאֶתְנֶה בְרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאָרְבָּה אוֹתָךְ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד:
2. פרק כח ג וְאֵל־שְׁדֵי יִבְרָךְ וְיַפְרֹךְ וְיַרְבֶּךָ וְהִיִּית לְקַהֵל עַמִּים:
3. פרק לה יא ויאמר לוֹ אֱלֹקִים אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי שְׁדֵי פְרָה וְרִבְיָה גוֹי וְקַהֵל גּוֹיִם וְהָיָה מִמֶּךָ וּמִלְכִים מִמְּלָצִיךָ יִצְחָק:

What is common in the three previous times the word שדי was used? We see that each time the name is used it is in context of Avraham being a great and numerous nation. Therefore the name שדי makes perfect sense in that Hashem is saying that I have sufficient power to make these promises come true. However, in our Pasuk the concept of being a great and numerous nation does not appear. Therefore, the Midrash wonders why the name שדי is used. The Midrash explains that here the name is being used in a different context, the meaning of the One who told the world to stop. Yaakov is using this name to convey the sentiment that he wished for his troubles to end as well.

4. Perhaps the most difficult question is: What connection is there between the fact that Hashem told the world to stop expanding and Yaakov's wish to have Hashem stop his suffering? It surely must be deeper than the fact that in both the word stop appear! The only answer that I have found to

5 This is known as the Big Bang Theory. Wikipedia explains:

The Big Bang theory is the prevailing cosmological model for the birth of the universe. The model postulates that at some moment all of space was contained in a single point from which the universe has been expanding ever since. After the initial expansion, the universe cooled sufficiently to allow the formation of subatomic particles, and later simple atoms. Giant clouds of these primordial elements later coalesced through gravity to form stars and galaxies. The Big Bang theory does not provide any explanation for the initial conditions of the universe; rather, it describes and explains the general evolution of the universe going forward from that point on.

Given that the theory admits to the idea of a beginning of the universe, and debunks the theory of an eternal universe, religious thinkers have welcomed this theory as consistent with the Biblical account of creation and hence a Creator. Robert Jastrow famously commented: For the scientist who has lived by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.

this question is rather complex. It is based on the idea that all that is physical in this world stands as a counter-balance to all that is spiritual. (For this reason the more one focuses on their physical needs the more they will be ignoring their spiritual needs.) If so, the creation of the physical world acted to conceal the spiritual force found in the creation. For this reason we call the world an עולם, from the Shoresh מ.ל.ע, which means to conceal. Thus, as the physical world expanded so did Hashem's concealment. This could result in levels of concealment that would preclude man's ability to find G-d in this world. Hashem, in the words of the Talmud in מסכת חגיגה, 'scolds' the world to stop (or according to modern science, significantly slow) the expansion process. In fact we may now understand the statement made by the Gemoroh and quoted by Rashi די שאמרל לעולם to mean that He told His concealment (לעולם) to stop. According to the above we can now understand the Tanchumah's explanation. For suffering has the same concealing effect, in that it causes G-d to seem distant from us if not completely hidden. Yaakov turns to Hashem and says that just like Hashem stopped the expansion of the world so that He should not be concealed from man, so too Hashem should put a stop to my suffering so that I might feel his presence.

5. Additional questions:

- a. According to the above could we better understand why we put the name שדי on our מזוזות?
- b. Can you find other instances in the Chumash where the name שדי is used, and can you explain why?