
פרשת שמות

פרק ג פסוק יד

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה אִתְּךָ אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה
שְׁלֹתָנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

רש"י

אֶהְיֶה אִתְּךָ אֶהְיֶה. "אֶהְיֶה" עִמָּם בְּצָרָה זֹאת, "אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה" עִמָּם בְּשִׁעְבוּד שְׂאֵר
מְלַכְיֹת. אָמַר לְפָנָיו, רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מָה אֲנִי מְזַכֵּיר לָהֶם צָרָה אַחֲרָת, דִּימָם בְּצָרָה
זוֹ. אָמַר לוֹ, יָפָה אָמַרְתָּ, "כֹּה תֹאמַר וְגוֹמַר"

מושג

אֶהְיֶה עִמָּם בְּצָרָה זֹאת, אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּם בְּשִׁעְבוּד שְׂאֵר מְלַכְיֹת.

Translation:

I will be with them in this troubling time, as I will be with them in the subjugation of the other nations.

Explanation:

Hashem was reassuring Moshe and the Jewish people that just as he had been with them in this exile, so too He would be with them in their future exiles. The presence of Hashem in our exiles serves to ensure us that Hashem will protect us and also that we will eventually be redeemed for Hashem's sake even if we are not deserving of redemption¹.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Midrash which Rashi quotes is bothered by both the meaning of the name אהיה אשר אהיה and by the change to the name אהיה at the end of the Pasuk. Additionally problematic is why the command כה תאמר לבני ישראל does not appear at the beginning of the Pasuk but only towards the end. The Midrash explains the name and comments that the full אהיה אשר אהיה was meant for Moshe's ears only as the people should only be told אהיה so as not to worry them about future exiles and suffering.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: The meaning of the name אהיה אשר אהיה, and its significance as the secret to both our survival in exile and assurance for eventual redemption.

Understand: Our survival as a people depends on our Torah observance as well as our everlasting connection to Hashem, and, as we are connected to Him so too He is connected to us.

Think: Careful reading of text answers the question of why G-d seems to be changing His name.

¹ See note #1

NOTES

1. Moshe had previously asked Hashem, “With what merit would the Jewish people be redeemed?”². Hashem answered that they would be redeemed in the merit of the future acceptance of the Torah. Moshe asks G-d with which name of G-d should he address the people? It is difficult to understand what Moshe was asking of Hashem, and Hashem’s answer seems to be equally puzzling.

It is also difficult to understand why Hashem would mention now that there would be future exiles. Moshe himself was bothered by this, but Hashem’s seeming retraction needs explanation.

According to the Midrash which Rashi quotes, Hashem does not retract his answer of אהיה אשר אהיה, but rather He explains to Moshe that His intent was "לך אני מודיע להם איני מודיע"; to tell only Moshe this name, but to the people he was to say אהיה.

אהיה אשר אהיה אני נקרא לפי מעשי, ר' יצחק אומר א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה אמור להם אני שהייתי ואני הוא עכשיו ואני הוא לעתיד לבא, לך כתיב אהיה שלשה פעמים, ד"א אהיה אשר אהיה, רבי יעקב ב"ר אבינא בשם רבי הונא דציפורין אמר, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה אמור להם בשעבוד זה אהיה עמם, ובשעבוד הן הולכין, ואהיה עמם, אמר לפניו וכך אומר אני להם דיה לצרה בשעתה, אמר לו לאו כה תאמר לבני ישראל אהיה שלחני אליכם, לך אני מודיע להם איני מודיע (שמות רבה וילנא) פרשת שמות פרשה ג)³

This would explain why at the beginning of the Pasuk, when Hashem reveals the name of אהיה אשר אהיה, it does not say ישראל לבני ישראל, and only towards the end of the Pasuk, when changing the name to אהיה does it say לבני ישראל. However, we still need to understand: “What was bothering Moshe after Hashem had told him they would be redeemed in the merit of the Torah, and why did Hashem mention future exiles?

Perhaps Hashem’s answer regarding the merit earned by the future acceptance of the Torah troubled Moshe. For if their redemption would be dependent on their acceptance of Torah and observance of Mitzvos, how could they possibly be redeemed now when they sat precariously on the 49th level of impurity? Why would the fact that they would change later be of any consequence right now? And, Moshe wondered, what would happen in the future? If exile and redemption are to be dependent on Bnei Yisroel’s actions alone, perhaps the Egyptian exile might end, but to what avail given the assumption that they would sin again? Would their lax observance guarantee never-ending exile?

To this Hashem answered that there was another factor which would hasten the redemption of the Jewish people; אהיה, I am there with you. Hashem reveals to Moshe that the Jewish people are not alone in Egypt, but that Hashem is there with them; עמו אנכי בצרה⁴. While we usually understand the significance of this is that Hashem will be there to protect us, Hashem now explains to Moshe that it is also the reason why no matter what level of impurity the people might fall to, they will still be redeemed. Although not necessarily to free them from exile, but rather to free Hashem.

כב לכן אמר לבית ישראל פה אמר א-דני ו-הנה לא למענכם אני עשה בית ישראל פי אם לשם קדשי אשר חללתם בגוים אשר-באתם שם: כג וקדשתי את-שמי הגדול המחלל בגוים אשר חללתם בתוכם ונדעו הגוים כי-אני ו-הנה נאם א-דני ו-הנה בהקדשי בכם לעיניהם: כד ולקחתי אתכם מן-הגוים וקבצתי אתכם מקל-האצרות והבאתי אתכם אל-אדמתכם: (חזקאל לו)

This, Hashem tells Moshe, is the name you should tell them. That אהיה, I will be with them. Even if they are void of purity and their acceptance of Torah and Mitzvos seems tenuous at best, I will be with them, now and always; אשר אהיה. And, this will be the secret to their eventual redemption both now and always⁵.

2. Questions for further thought:

- Moshe ask what name should I tell the people? Why does the name make a difference?
- Does the name יהוה-יהוה-יהוה have any connection to the more common יהוה-יהוה?

2 See Rashi (פסוק יא) אף אם תשוב אני, מה זכו ישראל שיעשה להם גם ואוציאם ממצרים

3 The Gemoroh in (ט:) provides a more concise version:

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: לך אמור להם לישראל אני הייתי עמכם בשעבוד זה ואני אהיה עמכם בשעבוד מלכותי. אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם דיה לצרה בשעתה. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא לך אמור להם אהיה שלחני אליכם.

4 Which Chazal explain is the message contained in the burning bush vision (see Rashi ב:ג).

5 See the יקר כלי where this idea is developed. He also writes that there is one additional factor that contributes to their redemption independent of their actions; זכות אבות. The יקר כלי thus explains the next Pasuk which highlights the Avos:

טו ויאמר עוד א-להים אלימשה פה תאמר אל-בני ישראל ו-הנה א-להי אבותיכם א-להי אברהם א-להי יצחק וא-להי יעקב שלחני אליכם וכו'