
פרשת וזרא

פרק ו פסוק ב

וידבר אלהים אל-משה ויאמר אליו אני י-הוה:

רש"י

ויאמר אליו אני ה'. נאמן לשלם שכר טוב למתהלכים לפני. ולא לחנם שלחתיך פי אם לקיים דברי שדברתי לאבות הראשונים. ובלשון הזה מצינו שהיא נדרש בכמה מקומות, "אני ה'" נאמן להפגע, כשהוא אומר אצל עונש כגון "והחללת את שם אלהיך אני ה'" (ויקרא יט:יב), וכשהוא אומר אצל קיום מצוות כגון "וישמרתם מצותי ועשיתם אותם אני ה'" (שם כב:לא) נאמן לתן שכר.

מושג

אני ה': נאמן להפגע, כשהוא אומר אצל עונש... וכשהוא אומר אצל קיום מצוות... נאמן לתן שכר.

Translation:

"I am Hashem", "I am trustworthy to exact punishment", when it is said by punishment, and when it is said by fulfilling Mitzvos it means, "I am trustworthy to give reward".

Explanation:

When Hashem rewards us for our good deeds, we trust in Him to reward us in a fashion that is beneficial for us in every way. So too, when Hashem punishes us we trust in Him to punish us in a way that is beneficial for us¹. Since both are for our benefit it is appropriate to use the term 'אני ה', which refers to Hashem in מדת הרחמים, for both.

Looking in the Pasuk:

Chazal were bothered by the fact that the Pasuk switched from ויאמר to וידבר as well as from אלקים to י-הוה. It is well known that דבר is a sterner tone than אמר, and that אלקים often refers to מדת הדין while י-הוה refers to מדת הרחמים. The Pasuk thus begins with the harsh tone of judgement and ends with the softer tone of mercy. Rashi explains that even punishment can be seen as part of G-d's mercy, for even when referring to punishment we use the name י-הוה.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: The words 'אני ה', tell us that Hashem is trustworthy to reward and to punish.

Understand: All Hashem does is for the good and beneficial to man. Even Hashem's punishment is really חסד and can therefore be couched in the term 'אני ה', which is מדת הרחמים. The fact that things got worse after Moshe came to Pharaoh was part of Hashem's plan and thus, in itself, was beneficial to them².

Think: Differences in choices of words, whether as synonymous verbs - such as אמר and וידבר - or in names of Hashem - such as אלקים and י-הוה - focus our attention on the drama being related in the Pasuk.

1 See note #1

2 See note #2

NOTES

1. The Rashi from which this Musag is taken is rather difficult to understand. Rashi is usually known for his brevity, and yet here Rashi spends over 50 words in saying what he could have said in 5, נאמן ליתן שכר³. Also, why does Rashi deem it necessary to explain to me what the words 'אני ה' mean when said in the context of a punishment and what they mean when said in the context of reward? All Rashi should have done is explain to me what they mean here and leave the other explanations for the appropriate Pesukim⁴. And, finally, why does Rashi first comment that Hashem gives טוב שכר to those who go before him, and then explain the words 'אני ה' in the context of punishment and then again explain the words 'אני ה' in the context of reward?

Rashi, however, knew exactly what he was doing, and he never wastes words. If Rashi saw fit to significantly elongate his commentary there was most definitely a reason.

In order to answer all the above questions we must begin by first asking three others:

- How can 'אני ה' be used for both reward and punishment? After all, if 'ה' is used in connection with מדת הרהמים how can it be used for punishment?
- We can easily understand the concept of נאמן לשלם שכר, that Hashem is trustworthy to pay reward. We trust that Hashem will reward us in full for each and every Mitzvah we have done. However, how can we explain the concept of נאמן להפרע? Were we afraid that perhaps Hashem would not punish us in full? What type of trustworthiness is applicable to punishment⁵?
- What in the words 'אני ה' connotes that Hashem in נאמן?

The Gemoroh in (ל:ל) מסכת שבת explains the enigmatic Pasuk in (ג:ז) קהלת: טוב כעס משחוק, טוב כעס משחוק, טוב כעס הקדוש ברוך הוא על הצדיקים בעולם הזה, ייטב לב: משחוק שמשחוק הקדוש ברוך הוא על הרשעים בעולם הזה. The Gemoroh understands to be teaching us that when Hashem punishes צדיקים in this world he is actually doing them a favor because this will allow them to receive full reward in the next world, as the Gemoroh concludes: ולשחוק אמרתי מהולל (שם ב:ב): זה שחוק שמשחוק הקדוש ברוך הוא עם הצדיקים בעולם הבא. Therefore, in truth there is never a true מדת הדין, for in every act of judgement there is an aspect of mercy, much the same way in which a doctor who operates on a sick patient is doing him a great favor. Even though, because of the sickness, the doctor has to inflict great pain now, he is doing an act of kindness that will ensure the patient's health and welfare in the future. In short, Hashem's end game is always the same: to benefit His creation in the long run. At times, due to man's actions, this is achieved through what seems like mercy, and at times through what seems like punishment.

When we say that Hashem is נאמן ליתן שכר, what we mean is that Hashem will only give us a reward that is beneficial for us. This is the idea of שכר טוב למתהלכים that Rashi mentions (נאמן לשלם שכר טוב למתהלכים) reward that is good, that is beneficial. Giving a reward in this world which would reduce reward in the next world is not beneficial at all. In the same vein, we may now understand the concept of נאמן להפרע. We are not saying that we trust that Hashem will punish; that is obvious. What we are saying is that we trust that Hashem will punish in a fashion that is completely beneficial for us. Therefore, 'אני ה' can be used equally for both reward and punishment, for in both Hashem is acting in our best interest, doing the utmost to ensure our welfare.

This is Rashi's understanding of what Hashem was telling Moshe. 'אני ה', all that I do is truly רחמים, giving שכר טוב, even when it seems that my judgement is harsh⁶. Moshe you were not sent for

3 See Rashi on ויקרא כב:לג in which Rashi writes exactly those 5 words.

4 Interestingly enough, on the Pasuk of (ויקרא יט:יב) וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי ה', which Rashi uses here as the example of 'אני ה' said by punishment, Rashi does not even comment on the words 'אני ה' at all! Why mention it here out of context and not mention it in ויקרא in context?

5 In truth we could ask even on the idea of נאמן ליתן שכר: Why would we think that Hashem would not reward in full? Hashem certainly has the ability to pay in full, why would he not do so? Why does He need נאמנות for this?

6 Rashi's words נאמן לשלם שכר טוב למתהלכים לפני are thus referring to the מדת הדין. We may assume that Rashi in his words למתהלכים לפני is referring to the Pasuk in (ז:א) בראשית where Hashem tells Avrohom והיה תמים. Rashi comments on the Pasuk and says: הֲגַה שְׁלֵם כְּכֹל נְסִיווֹתַי. It is, therefore, clear that Rashi in his comments here לשלם does not refer to the נתינת שכר he talks about at the end of his words, but rather is referring to

