
פרשת וישב

פרק לט פסוק ג

וַיֵּרָא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי י-הוָה אֵתוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה י-הוָה מִצְּלִים בְּיָדוֹ:

רש"י ומושג

כִּי ה' אֵתוֹ. שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם שָׁגוּר בְּכַף

Translation:

The name of Heaven was fluent in his mouth.

Explanation:

Yosef was always heard whispering to himself to the extent that Potifar thought he was using witchcraft. Yosef informed his master that his whispering was actually him praying, asking Hashem for assistance in everything he did. Yosef realized that any and all success that he could achieve would only be with the help of Hashem. His constant recognition of the true source of all and every success led to Hashem blessing his actions in extraordinary ways.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The words וירא כי ה' אֵתוֹ, are difficult to understand as Potifar probably did not see Hashem. Rashi therefore uses the Tanchumah to explain that Potifar did not 'see' Hashem but the word וירא here is to mean he understood that Yosef's words were a prayer to Hashem for assistance. This fluency, continues the Pasuk, was the reason Hashem blessed Yosef in everything that he did.

NOTES

Rashi's comments that the words ה' אתו mean that Yosef constantly would use the name of Hashem¹. One could wonder if so why does it not say ה' איתו כי?

However, upon reading the מדרש תנחומא (ח) from which Rashi takes his commentary the answer is clear:

וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו וגו', וכי פוטיפר רשע היה רואה שהקב"ה עמו ומה הוא כי ה' אתו, אלא שלא היה שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא זו מפיו. היה נכנס לשמשו והוא היה מלחש ואומר רבון העולם אתה הוא בטחוני אתה הוא פטרוני תנני לחן ולחסד ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני כל רואי ובעיני פוטיפר אדוני, ופוטיפר אומר לו מה אתה מלחש שמא כשפים אתה עושה לי? והוא משיבו לא אלא אני מתפלל שאמצא חן בעיניך, לפיכך כתיב וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו. ומה וכל אשר הוא עושה ה' מצליח בידו היה מוזג לרבו קונדיטין והוא אומר לו מה מזגת לי הוא אומר קונדיטין אומר לו פסינתון אני רוצה והיה פסינתון הוא אומר יין אני רוצה והיה יין הוא אומר יין מבושל אני רוצה והיה מבושל, וכן על המים, וכן על כל דבר ודבר שנאמר וכל אשר הוא עושה ה' מצליח בידו:

According to the Tanchumah the words ה' אתו refer to the fact that Yosef constantly would whisper a prayer to Hashem to help him succeed. When his master suspected him of trying to use witchcraft against him, Yosef revealed to him the intent of his words. In this sense the words in the Pasuk וירא אדוניו should be translated as 'his master understood that Yosef's words were prayers to Hashem'. For this reason the Pasuk says וירא, meaning he 'saw' i.e. understood².

The Tanchumah continues to explain the second half of the Pasuk - וכל אשר הוא עושה ה' מצליח - to mean that Hashem would miraculously help Yosef to provide his master with all he wanted. According to this understanding, the first and second parts of the Pasuk are completely separate issues. The first part refers to his master coming to understand that Yosef constantly prayed to Hashem. The second half of the Pasuk teaches that Yosef's actions were miraculous, Hashem helping him succeed by changing the very nature of things. It is not even necessary to say that his Master realized the connection between Yosef's prayers and his success³.

There, however, seems to be a different understanding of the Pasuk found in the Midrash Rabbah⁴: ר"ה בשם ר' אחא אמר מלחש ונכנס מלחש ויוצא, הוה אמר ליה מזוג רותחין והיו רותחין, פושרין והיו פושרין, אמר מה יוסף תבן לעפרים אתה מכניס? ... עד היכן א"ר חייא עד שראה שכונה עומדת על גביו, היינו הוא דכתיב וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו.

According to the Rabbah, when hearing Yosef whispering and turning water hot or cold, his master thought he was using witchcraft to succeed. However, when his master saw the Shechinah standing over Yosef he knew that Yosef's success was due to Divine intervention. The words ה' איתו refer to this sighting of Hashem, making the words וירא אדוניו easily understandable. According to the Rabbah, the first and second half of the Pasuk are connected, as the words וירא אדוניו most certainly reflect on the end of the Pasuk: Potifar saw that Hashem stood over Yosef, thus understanding why וירא אדוניו. כל אשר הוא עושה ה' מצליח.

We might assume that Rashi chose to understand like the Tanchumah and not like the Rabbah, because, as the Tanchumah itself points out, it would be strange to explain that Hashem appeared to Yosef's master⁵. However, I believe there is another more compelling reason. For according to the Rabbah the second half of the Pasuk should have been written first. It should have told us that Yosef was very successful in miraculous ways, and then it should have told us that his master realized that this was because Hashem was standing over him, exactly how the Rabbah relates the

¹ See the Ramban who rejects Rashi's understanding and instead explains the Pasuk (as does the Targum) to mean simply that Potifar realized that Yosef's extraordinary success was the result of Divine assistance, much the same way Avimelech saw Hashem assisting (כו:כה) אברהם. The שפתי חכמים explains why Rashi did not agree.

² The word וירא can be translated as understood. See Rashi on במדבר כב:ב

³ That is to say that the words וירא אדוניו do not necessarily go on the second half of the Pasuk.

⁴ See Ramban who quotes this Midrash.

⁵ The Ramban explains that Hashem appeared to Potifar, either in a vision or in a dream, in honor of the Tzaddik, Yosef.

story. But according to the Tanchumah, the two parts of the Pasuk relate different ideas, and are readily understandable in the order written, exactly as taught in the Tanchumah itself.

According to the Tanchumah we might ask what is the connection between the two parts of the Pasuk? Why would the Torah connect Yosef's constant mentioning of Hashem's name and his ability to effect miracles?

The גור אריה answers that the two are connected in that the reason Yosef was given Divine assistance was a result of his constant mentioning of Hashem's name:

רוצה לומר כי שם שמים היה שגור בפיו, ומפני זה "כל אשר עשה ה' מצליח בידו"

The logic behind the connection is that Hashem constantly wishes to bless us. Hashem's only condition is that we recognize that these blessings indeed come from Hashem. This, in truth, is the meaning behind ברכות that we make. We are not blessing the food nor blessing G-d, we are acknowledging that He is the source of all blessing, thus earning his blessing. If the name of Hashem was so fluent in Yosef's mouth, that even Potifar recognized his constant prayers, then surely Yosef was to be worthy of extraordinary Divine blessing.

Questions for Further Thought:

- a. Do you think Yosef carried over this trait to the house of פרעה as well?
- b. Why do you think this trait is mentioned by Yosef and not by the אבות?