
פרשת וישלח

פרק לה פסוק יא

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֶ-לֵהִים אֲנִי א-ל שְׂדֵי פָרָה וְרִבְיָה גֹזֵי וְקִהַל גֹּזִים יִהְיֶה מִמֶּנּוּ וּמְלָכִים מִחֲלָצֶיךָ יֵצְאוּ:

רש"י

אֲנִי אֶל שְׂדֵי. שְׂאֲנִי כְּדֵי לְבָרֶךְ, שְׂהַבְרָכֹת שְׂלִי [שְׂהַבְרָכֹת שְׂלִי דֵי לְמַתְבָּרְכִין¹]:

I am sufficiently able to give blessings for blessings come from Me [for the blessings that come from Me are sufficient for those who are being blessed].

מושג

אני א-ל שדי: שְׂאֲנִי כְּדֵי לְבָרֶךְ

Translation:

I am sufficiently able to give blessings.

Explanation:

The name מאלקים is used to describe Hashem when He relates to us in מדת הדין. The name שקל is a variation of this מדת הדין (א-ל) in that it also refers to Hashem as שקל but adds the adjective² שדי, meaning that Hashem has the sufficient power to bless and that His blessings are sufficient to those who are being blessed.

Hashem included within the natural process a system of reward and punishment for every action. This system is exact and unforgiving, akin in the physical world to one placing their hand in fire which inevitably results in their skin being burnt. This is מדת הדין. One might have mistakenly thought that abundant blessings are not included within this system, a mistake which the name א-ל שדי comes to correct. It teaches that even within the מדת הדין (א-ל), there is שדי, a sufficient power in Hashem's design of nature to provide abundant blessings.

Hashem's relationship to the Avos was through מדת הדין. In our Pasuk Hashem is informing Yaakov that even though He relates to the Avos with a strict and exacting reward and punishment, within that system there are provisions for sufficient blessings³.

Looking in the Pasuk:

We have previously seen Hashem referred to as either י-הוה or מאלקים, understood as מדת הדין and מדת הרחמים respectively. The Midrash which Rashi quotes here, as he has done previously when this name is used, comes to explain the significance of the rather unique name א-ל שדי.

¹ A slightly different variation of the Rashi is quoted in most Chumashim. This second variation fits better with the idea we are developing in this Musag.

² See notes #1

³ See notes #2

NOTES

1. Our explanation here comes to explain the name א-שדי when used in conjunction with the name א-ל. In fact every time the name א-שדי is used in the Torah it is always used thus: א-ל שדי. The one exception is found in (כד:טז) where א-שדי is used without the א-ל and perhaps the best known is the Pasuk in Tehilim (צא:א) 'ישב בסתר עליו בצל שדי יתלונן'. When used alone the name of א-שדי is not used as an adjective, to define the name א-ל as we find here, but as a noun which reflects on a certain characteristic of Hashem. The commentators explain it as a term of strength, affording protection. Most probably, the placing of the name א-שדי on a מזוזה⁴ reflects this meaning, and is not connected to the name when used as א-ל שדי.

2. Rashi comes to explain the meaning attached to this name of Hashem: שדי. Rashi, on the Pasuk (א) 'אני אל שדי', א-ל שדי, which is the first time this name of Hashem is used, quotes the Midrash Rabbah, which teaches that whenever the name of א-שדי is mentioned it should be taken to mean that Hashem's power is די, sufficiently powerful to do all that He wills:

אני אל שדי. אני הוא שיש די בא-להותי לכל בריה, לפיכך "התהלך לפני" ואהיה לך לא-לוא ולפטרוך.

Rashi continues to explain that this is the meaning of this name of Hashem in every place in the Torah, with slight variations according to the context:

וכן כל מקום שהוא במקרא, פרושו כן, די שול, והפל לפי הענין.

Indeed the next time the name א-שדי is used, in (כח:ג), Rashi explains this name in the above vein:

ואל שדי. מי שדי בברכותיו למתברכין מפיו בברך אותה:

What requires explanation is why would Hashem repeatedly feel a need to reinsure the Avos that He is sufficiently powerful? And, why does Hashem dedicate one of His names to this attribute?

The answer may be found in the Machzor Vitri⁵, in his comments explaining the תפילה of כל נשמת כל חי. In this section, he explains the name of שדי, especially as pertains to the Pasuk in Sefer Shmos (ו) 'וארא אל אברהם אל יצחק ואל יעקב בא-ל שדי ושמי י-הוה לא נודעת להם':

The Machzor Vitri writes:

כך נקרא שמו ה' (י-הוה) להודיע לבאי עולם שהוא מנהיגם וסובלם ומגלגלים במדת רחמים. שה' הוא מדת רחמים. ה"ד (זה מה שכתוב) וארא אל אברהם באל שדי. (שמות ו). בשם של גבורה לפי מדת הדין. ושמי ה' במידתי של שם זה לא הייתי נודע להם. שלא נגליתי להם במדה זו שאני מגלה לך. אלא ייסרתי ודקדקתי עמהם עד כחוט השערה. במדתו של אלקים. הדין והמשפט והחרץ והשורה. זש"ה וידבר אלהים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני י"י (שם). במדה זו שאני נגלה לך. שכן בגאולת בניי צריכה מדת רחמים.

Hashem tells Moshe that until now my relationship with the Avos has been with the name אלקים and א-ל שדי, which have been relationships based on מדת הדין alone. However, in order to redeem them from Egypt the name ה', the name of רחמים, will now be introduced.

The Machzor Vitri is thus teaching us that the name אלקים, which is well known to represent מדת רחמים and the name א-ל שדי, share the same characteristic; they both refer to Hashem relating to us with strict and exacting judgment. For this reason, we may understand the name א-שדי is not used alone but always together with the name א-ל, which refers to מדת הדין. However, if so, how is it different from the name אלקים?

The name א-ל שדי is always used in connection to ברכות⁶. Perhaps the use of this name in these instances is to relay the message that even in מדת הדין plentiful blessings can be found. That is to

⁴ We are all taught that the name א-שדי on a מזוזה represents the words א-ל שדי. I struggled to find a source for this idea. The only source is in the ספר כלבו (a Sefer written anonymously by a Rishon) who mentions that the א-שדי on the מזוזה stands for א-ל שדי. The ספר מהרש"א (ברכות טו:) connects the Pasuk of א-ל שדי, which speaks of the safety we find in the 'protection of א-שדי' to the placing of א-שדי on the מזוזה which protects our homes.

⁵ The Machzor Vitri was authored by Simchah ben Shmuel of Vitry, (died 1105), who was a French Talmudist and a pupil of Rashi. The Vitry Machzor contains decisions and rules concerning religious practices, explanations of prayers and Responsa by Rashi and other Rishonim.

say that the system of **שכר ועונש** which is built into nature, which we know as **מדת הדין**, includes **ברכות** for all those who follow **דרכי ה'**. One might have thought that blessings are always the result of Hashem relating with **מדת הרחמים**: the name **א-ל-שדי** comes to debunk this myth.

Thus the name **א-ל-שדי** is made up of the name **א-ל**, which always connotes power and judgment, and **שדי** which is an adjective relaying the message that even when G-d relates with judgment He has the ability to supply sufficient blessings.

With this explanation we can gain a better understanding of Rashi at the beginning of **פרשת וארא** where he explains the use of the name **א-ל-שדי** and comments:

בא-ל שדי: הבטחתים הרבה ברכות, וכולן אמרתי להם בא-ל שדי. ושמי ה' לא נודעתי להם: לא הודעתי אין כתיב כאן אלא לא נודעתי, לא נכרתי להם במידה אמיתית שלי שעליה אני נקרא שמי ה', נאמן לאמת דברי, שהרי הבטחתים ולא קיימתי.

According to the above we may explain that Hashem is answering what Moshe might be wondering: Why should we believe Your promises now? After all, You promised many blessings to the Avos and they were not fulfilled. To this Hashem explains, that all those blessing were given **בא-ל שדי**, using the relationship of perfect and exacting judgment. Therefore, the fulfillment of those blessings was contingent on the actions of the Avos⁶. However now the promises are being made **בשם ה'**, and since the relationship is now based on **מדת הרחמים**, and not contingent on man's actions, therefore you Moshe can be assured that they will come true.

Question for further thought:

- a. We have explained that Hashem related to the Avos only with **מדת הדין** and not with **מדת הרחמים**. Why do you think this is so?

⁶ See Musagim **מגיד** for a possible exception to this rule. Also see there the meaning of **שומר לעולמו די**, which would also apply to our explanation here, for providing blessings for good deeds is a revelation of Hashem's power over the world.

In addition, the above meaning of the name, **שומר לעולמו די**, was taught in connection to the expansion of the world at the time of creation. Perhaps this might further explain why **שדי** is almost exclusively used when referring to blessings. For every time the word **ברכה** is used it is to be understood as expansion. (For this reason the three letters that make up the Shoshon **כ.ב.כ** are all letters of expansion, 2, 20, 200 and the first child who expands the family unit is called a **בכר**, also sharing those letters.) Expansion, by definition, means working within nature, expanding existing matter. One might have thought that Hashem certainly can change nature through infrequent miracles, but that He does not affect His will through the natural process (which we have explained as being the tool of **מדת הדין**). This mistaken idea, that Hashem set the rules of nature, and then lets it take its course without constant intervention, was widely held by many cultures but conflicts directly with our concept of **פרטיות**. It is precisely this notion that the name **ש-די** comes to correct. Even **ברכה**, working within nature is My domain, says Hashem. Hashem did not simply create the world and then desert it to the forces of nature He created, but rather, He continues to seek our welfare and growth within what seems to be nature (such as blessing families with many children) and is the hidden source of all blessing.

⁷ See **שפת חכמים** אות ה