

“And Elokim spoke to Moshe and He said to him ‘I am Hashem’” Shemos 6:2

Rashi explains that Hashem spoke to Moshe harshly as a rebuttal to Moshe’s questioning Hashem’s actions at the end of last weeks Parsha, “למה הרעתה לעם הזה?” - “Why have You caused harm to this nation?” The Sifsei Chachamim points out that Rashi understood this from the לשון הפסוק of “אלוקים”, which represents מדת הדין - the attribute of strict judgment. Later on, Rashi brings down the Gemara in Sanhedrin (קיא), which explains that the entire pasuk, including the final words ‘ויאמר אליו אני ד’ is part of Hashem’s response to Moshe’s question of למה הרעתה. The Gemara explains that Hashem responded, “חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין” - “Woe is to the one who has lost a precious object and cannot find a replacement.” The אבות, our forefathers, met challenge after challenge; Avraham could not procure a final resting place for Sara until he paid for it a hefty price, Yitzchok was harassed over the wells that he had dug, and Yaakov could not find a campground upon which to pitch his tent for an entry fee less than מאה קשיטה, yet they never once questioned after Hashem’s plan of action, while Moshe asked למה הרעתה.

The Shla HaKadosh learns out from here that a person must be very careful not to deliberate after the ways of Hashem. We can’t know why Hashem makes things happen to us in our lives, be it for the good or seemingly to the contrary. Sometimes what we think may be bad for us, Hashem knows is really for our benefit.

R’ Meir Soleveitchik draws this point out from the pasuk itself. Many מפרשים ask; why did Hashem need to tell Moshe “אני ד’” at the beginning of the Parsha? Hashem had already made His name known to Moshe previously. Why did Hashem repeat this שם here? We may ask as well that the pasuk seems to contradict itself from beginning to end. The pasuk begins with Hashem’s name of אלוקים – representing judgment, and ends with the name of ד’ – representing mercy. We explained earlier that Hashem spoke harshly to Moshe with the name of אלוקים because Moshe asked למה הרעתה. Hashem’s response to Moshe’s question was ‘אני ד’, meaning, how could you attribute a negative trait to Hashem and say למה הרעתה - This name of Hashem represents מדת החסד והרחמים and Hashem is good to all! R’ Meir explains that Moshe was claiming that Hashem had told him to tell the Bnei Yisrael “זה שמי” which is the name of Hashem which embodies מדת הרחמים, meaning that Hashem would interact with the Bnei Yisrael with mercy. But the facts on the ground showed that “מאז שדיבר אם פרעה” the conditions had only worsened for the nation. It appeared that Hashem was using מדת הדין. This is why Hashem answered Moshe that even the manifestation of אלוקים, which represents strict judgment, is still intertwined with mercy. Hashem spoke to Moshe with judgment, ויאמר אליו אני ד’ - even My expression of judgment is merciful.

Hashem always knows what is best for us and wants to do good for us. Even when we may feel that we are being adjudicated with strict judgment, we can rest assured that Hashem is still caring for us with mercy. It is not for us to ascertain why Hashem does what we perceive as “good” or “bad”. Our job is to put forth our best effort just as the Bnei Yisrael toiled in Mitzrayim, and daven that we be זוכה to the גאולה in our days, just as our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt.