

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה'

MEKOR

SHEMOS 6:2

And G-d spoke to Moshe, and He said to him, "I am Hashem."

MEANING

RASHI, IBN EZRA

Hashem spoke harshly to Moshe in reprimand for challenging Hashem's decision to send him on his mission. *Am Yisrael* already expressed their belief in "Elokim" - a conceptual "First Cause" which had brought the laws of nature into being. Here, Hashem wanted to introduce them to the idea that He is a personal G-d, and that He intended to bend the laws of nature to redeem His precious nation.

MESSAGE

MEI HASHILOACH

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה: *Elokim*, the trait of Severity and Strict-Judgementt, reproaches Moshe for his inappropriate outburst. But this reprimand is only on the level of his name, "Moshe"; an external element of human identity from which misdeeds derive. **וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו** : Immediately after conveying this necessary message, Hashem, the essential trait of Loving-Kindness, speaks "אֵלָיו", to the very essence of his being that far transcends his name, a place within which is forever distant from sin. **אֲנִי ה'**: He whispers soft words of comfort and hope, reminding Moshe that the bond of their love runs far deeper than any mistake could ever reach.

A FOUNDATIONAL UNIFICATION

IN THE BEGINNING of *Parshas Va'eira*, Hashem tells Moshe about His covenant with the Avos, and His promise to give them the land of Canaan in which they had sojourned ("אשר גרו בה"). In a short teaching that spans only seven lines, the holy *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* reveals an incredible deep allusion hidden in the words of this *pasuk* which treats the foundational goal of our spiritual strivings.

The tzaddikim teach that Hashem's primary name, referred to as the "שם", is just that - the Name of Existence. All stages of existence, from the loftiest spiritual realms of the creative chain all the way down to the center of our physical world, are wrapped up into the four letters of this essential Name. On a general level, the "י" of Hashem's Name corresponds to the spiritual world of **אצילות**. It represents the premise of existence, the gift of His love and G-dliness which Hashem desires to bestow upon us. The first "ה" of Hashem's name corresponds to the spiritual world of **בריאה**, and its numerical value of five represents the "hand of the Giver" with its five fingers, a hand that grasps the gift to be given. The letter "ו" corresponds to the spiritual world of **יצירה** and represents the outstretched arm of the Giver. Finally, the last letter, "ה", corresponds to the world of **עשיה**, the spiritual counterpart of our physical world, and corresponds to the hand of the receiver ready to accept the gift of existence.

The first two letters of Hashem's Name - the gift being given and the hand in which it is held - always remain bound together. However, the outstretched arm does not always find a worthy recipient to whom to give. Because the final letter relates to our experience of independent human consciousness, it is easy to perceive the **עולם העשיה** as existing as a separate entity, disjointed from the spiritual realms above. When we fall into the trap of forgetting that, at its core, our world is defined by its receptive nature, relying entirely upon Hashem's life-giving energy, like the moon reflects the light of the sun, the vessel stands incomplete and

we do not merit to receive what is so graciously being offered.

The *mekubalim* teach that in a certain deep way, the entire purpose of the Torah and mitzvos is to enable a Jew (and by extension, the world at large), to develop and live with the humbling awareness that our world is only the final link in a spiritual chain through which Hashem is sustaining every particle of existence - to rectify the consciousness of our role as ultimate receivers, bringing the "ה" and "ו" together, connecting the hand the receiver with the outstretched arm of the Giver, and unifying Hashem's Name.

This foundational unification was the primary effort of our forefathers, the *Avos Hakedoshim*. The *Degel* sees this reflected in the words Hashem speaks to Moshe Rabbeinu in the beginning of our *parsha*. The tzaddik teaches that the words "גרו בה" (גרו ו' בה) can be read as "גרו ו' בה" to cause the letters "ו" and "ה" of Hashem's name to dwell together. This was the *avodah* of the *Avos* and all the tzaddikim throughout the generations - to live with the consciousness of dependency on Hashem, letting go of the egoic mind and our illusion of control to look beyond the façade of our natural world and become ready vessels for the loving energy of our Creator. When we understand the overarching purpose of our engagement with avodas Hashem, it becomes easier to keep our eye on the goal of transforming our lives into the fitting vessel for Hashem's presence and allowing the unity of Hashem's Name to manifest within our lives.

THE TORAH AND MITZVOS ARE INTENDED TO ENABLE US TO ATTAIN AN ELEVATED CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH PERCEIVES ALL OF LIFE AS A VESSEL FOR THE LIFE-GIVING PRESENCE OF HASHEM, UNIFYING HIS NAME.

- Rebbe Ephraim of Sudlykov zy"ta

וְשִׁמְתִי פְדֹת בֵּין עַמִּי וּבֵין עַמְּךָ לְמָחָר יִהְיֶה הָאֵת הַזֶּה:

"And I will make a **division** between My people and your people - this sign shall come about tomorrow."

שמות
ח"ט

In *Havdala* on *Motzei Shabbos*, we close by blessing Hashem, describing Him as follows:
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'... הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים ... בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל:
 Rav Solovetchik points out a fundamental difference between the phrases:

בין אור לחשך
 Division between light and dark

בין קדש לחול
 Division between holy and profane

Perceptible to all.
 Clear, and easily sensed (even by animals).

Imperceptible to the naked eye.
 Requires special intuition/'sight' with one's heart.

בין ישראל לעמים
 Division between *Am Yisrael* and other nations

Perceptibility of this division is **dependent on us** -- the quality of our **behavior** and the level of **adherence** to Torah and mitzvos.

When we **adhere** to Torah and mitzvos, the difference between Jews and other nations clear as light and dark.

When we **abandon** Hashem, the evidence of any difference disappears. Holy and profane become tragically merged.

The Rav continues: **"Yet as mired in sin as the Jew may be, deep in the Jewish soul there remains something holy and mysterious, which can neither be erased nor destroyed."**

- Bnei Yisrael lived in Mitzrayim at a time when both they and the Egyptians worshipped idols (*Vayikra Rabba* 23).
- Their external lives and behavior were barely distinguishable from those of the Egyptians.
- Yet, as noted by the *pasuk* above, **Hashem made a division, regardless of the external similarities.**
- Hashem never lost sight of the **difference in penimiyus** that remained between the two nations; He focused on the purity in the soul, despite the profanity surrounding it, and saved His people. We, too, must identify with the incorruptible and indestructible part of our being, and draw strength from it to bolster our loyalty to Hashem and maintain belief in ourselves.

Rav Pincus: An interesting characteristic of divisions is that they appear in **two forms** with **paradoxical** goals --



Divisions that promote **distance**



Divisions that allow for **closeness**

E.g., guarded borders between countries.

E.g., a doctor wearing gloves to have contact with a patient.

- Bright lines to separate ourselves from the ways of other nations. Part of what has sustained us throughout human history is **holding firm** to our identity and uniqueness, **not compromising**, and **building walls** where necessary.
- As *Tehillim* 147:13 says: כִּי-חֲזִיק בְּרִיחֵי שַׁעֲרֶיךָ בְּרֹךְ בְּנֵיךָ בְּקִרְבָּךְ "When the bars of our gates are strong (i.e. when we carefully monitor what enters our homes), the children within are blessed."
- The demand of קְדוּשָׁה often requires distance or complete avoidance of certain societal norms or trends.

- Subtle divisions that allow us to be engaged in society, while still upholding our core values.
- They also play a huge role in our personal and religious lives, **fostering stronger bonds** between spouses (i.e., separation during *niddah* that leads to greater intimacy), and between created and Creator (i.e., not entering parts of the Mikdash, or abstaining from worldly pleasure for an infinitely greater feeling of being an **עבד נאמן**).
- Respecting boundaries is an indication that the relationship is something truly important.