



דרכים בפרשה

ואתחנו



ואתחנו אל ה' בעת ההוא לאמר

And I pleaded with HaShem at that time, saying (3:23)

The Midrash tells us of the intensity of Moshe Rabbeinu's tefillah, how Moshe davened feverishly to HaShem that He annul the *gezeira* prohibiting his entry into Eretz Yisroel. This is learned from the *gematria* of the word **ואתחנו** (515). After 515 times of asking for the exact same thing, over and over, relentlessly, HaShem finally asked Moshe to stop.

HaShem's response to Moshe is actually very difficult to understand. Hashem did not simply reject Moshe's request, rather He said to him, **רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה**, "*Enough! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter*".

Why was there such an insistence to cease and desist from davening, so much so that it was actually forbidden for him to add one more word?

The Sefarim (*Chanukas Hatorah*; Rav Elchonon Wasserman in the name of Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin-printed in *Kovetz Shiurim end of Kidushin*) offer a most fascinating approach based upon the *halacha* of **עבד עברי**. In Parshas Mishpatim we learn that a Jewish slave is set free after six years of servitude to his master. If after those years he chooses to remain with his master, he is permitted to do so following the procedure of *retziah* (piercing his ear with an awl), after which he continues to serve his master until the Yovel.

Based on a repetition in the possuk **ואם אמר** **יאמר העבד** - *but if the eved shall say* (Shemos 21:5), the gemara in Masechta Kiddushin (22a) rules that the slave must actually say two times that he loves his master, the wife that was given to him, and the children born during that time, and therefore does not want to go free. We find that Moshe is called a **עבד** and as such, has the status of the **עבד עברי** with all of the *halachos* pertaining to it.

The Midrash tells us that Moshe also expressed a similar desire to remain with his people as they entered Eretz Yisroel when he davened the words of **ואתחנו**. Included in his tefillah were these words, **אהבתי את אדני** - *I love my master*- this refers to his love of HaShem; **את אשתי** - *my wife*- this refers to the Torah; **ואת בני** - *my children*- this refers to Bnai Yisroel, and therefore, **לא אצא חפשי** - *I shall not go free*- refers to Moshe's desire not to be relieved of his job as the leader of Klal Yisroel.

We now understand why HaShem told Moshe to stop asking. HaShem was concerned that if Moshe would continue to repeat it, than HaShem (*kivayachol*) would need to acquiesce because of the *halacha*.

When I was growing up, there was a popular song that we used to sing, which nowadays, I only seem to hear on Simchas Torah. **אנא** **עבדא דקודשא בריך הוא** - This is a proclamation stating that "I am a servant of

HaShem". This would be sung over and over again with great fervor and feelings of incredible *dveikus* to HaShem. But what does the song really mean and what can be gained by actually making such a statement? According to what we have learned, by accepting our role as an **עבד ה'** we can accomplish that Hashem will no longer separate from us, thus enabling our relationship to become a solid one. In such a manor, surely, the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt as well.

One of the difficulties that we face in accepting this role is the feeling that because of the curse of Adam Harishon - **בזעת אפריך - תאכל לחם**, we must fend for ourselves. At times it becomes quite a quagmire to try and support a family while staying in sync, fully connected with HaShem.

Dovid Hamelech writes in Tehillim (23), **ה' רועי לא אחסר בנאות דשא ירביצני על מי מנוחות ינהלני** - *Hashem is my Pastor; I will not lack. He lays me down to green pastures. He leads me to calm waters.*

Rav Chaim Volozhiner zt"l explains this as follows: A shepherd will only bring his flock to graze in a spot that can provide what the sheep need. His job is to see to it that all the needs are looked after. Therefore, Dovid proclaims that if HaShem is the true Shepherd of His children, everything is being looked after. Accordingly, when we come to a place in life that seems rough, we are supposed to have *bitachon* in HaShem that **בנאות דשא ירביצני** - the place we are at is actually a lush green meadow. Even when it does not seem that way, we *know* that HaShem has our best interests in mind and

will only bring us to the perfect spot. And when we feel that we are being uprooted to another location, even though we feel that our current position is fine, or if we perhaps feel that we wish it could have worked out here, we are supposed to believe that **על מי מנוחות ינהלני** - we are actually being led to a place that will be even calmer and better for us.

Practically speaking, to truly be an *Eved Hashem*, one must accept that HaShem, in His role as Master, will look after every one of our needs just as a shepherd would. This is actually what the *halacha* requires of a master. By truly accepting that HaShem runs the world and "opens His hand to sustain" us as a master would, we step into a role as an **עבד ה'**. Now, when we proclaim that, **אנא עבדא דקודשא בריך הוא** - *HaShem, I am Your eved*, it takes on a whole new meaning.

Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l would often quip that many people recite the *shema* whilst busying themselves with having all the *kavanos* of coronating HaShem in the seven heavens and four corners of the world. However, they tend to forget the most important place of full acceptance which is accepting His kingship upon one's self!

If we can accept HaShem fully in every facet of our lives and actually mean it, perhaps we can manage to finally merit the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash this year turning the coming Tisha B'Av into a Yom Tov.

מרדכי אפפעל, Good Shabbos,



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