

דרכים בפרשה ואתחנן

R' Mordechai Appel, an
alumnus of Yeshivas Mir
Yerushalayim, is the
author of Derachim
BeParsha



ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך

You shall love your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

One of the most important mitzvos in the Torah is to love Hashem with our entire heart. Not with a quarter, a third or even a half a heart, but rather, with our entire heart. Quoting the Sifri, Rashi writes, **בכל** דבר אחר **בכל** - that your heart should not be at variance (i.e. divided, not whole) with the Hashem (*Hamakom*). At times, a person's outward appearance may give off one impression while on the inside, the person's heart is actually telling a different story. To this the Torah teaches us to be whole with Hashem.

Looking at the possuk, we can question why the Sifri chose the name "Hamakom" to refer to Hashem, and not either Hashem or Elokecha?

The first time that we find in the Torah the word מקום as a direct reference to Hashem is at the beginning of Parshas Vayeitzai. ויפגע במקום וילן שם כי בא השמש ויקח מאבני המקום והוא *He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.* Chazal explain that the word מקום in this possuk does not refer to a physical place but rather it refers to the מקומו של עולם - Hashem. As the midrash explains, i.e. כי הוא מקומו של עולם ואין העולם מקומו, the world is contained with Hashem and *not* the other way around.

It was at that time that Yaakov Avinu instituted *Tefillas Maariv*. ויפגע במקום – he met with Hashem, so he davened to Him.

Why specifically over there did Chazal decide to make this drasha? Rav Shloima of Karlin zt"l offered a beautiful explanation (brought in the Bais Aharon; The Divrei Yoel said the same vort as well) based on the Rashi in our Parsha:

The intent of the word *makom* is not just that one should not be in a *machlokes* with the Hashem. But rather, it refers to a certain mindset. The word *makom* can refer to a *makom ruchni* and a *makom gashmi*. There are many people that perpetually complain about every situation that they find themselves in. Their entire lives seem to be one big complaint with an echoing cry of, "if only". If only I was born in a different place; to

a different family; with a different job; surrounded by different friends etc. If I would be there, things would surely be different and I would have great success. But over here, in "this place", there is no way that I can succeed. Over there, I would be able to serve Hashem better.

To this attitude, Chazal respond: **על** - stop complaining about the place that you are in. Begin to accept the place that Hashem put you in and thrive from there.

Why? I must realize that wherever I am, Hashem is right there and that place is *gebentched*. *If I ascend to Shomayim, You are there; if I descend to Sheol (gehinnom), You are there too.* Wherever one is, no matter the situation, Hashem is right there with them in that place.

(Similarly, the meforshim expound upon Hashem's words to Moshe: **כי המקום** - אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קדש הוא

There is never a mistake as to where a person finds themselves. If Hashem sent the person there, then that is exactly where they are supposed to be, and it is specifically in that place that their success will come.

Yaakov Avinu was running away from Eisav. He surely had a lot to complain about. **ויפגע במקום וילן שם** - the word *shoresh* as מתלונן which means to sleep has the same *shoresh* as *shoresh* which means to complain. Rav Shloima Karliner suggests that although he had so much to complain about, instead, he spent the night there and did not leave the place. How did he deal with it? *Davka* now, he davened to Hashem.

Yaakov took from the stones of the place - at times, our hearts may be devoid of feeling, cold as a hard stone. By davening at that exact place and "seeing" Hashem there, Yaakov was able to take away those stones, thus removing the hardness.

The Sfas Emes adds that this is why he established *maariv*, because even in the darkness he could find Hashem. Furthermore, during the darkness, it became **ערב** - sweet (like *v'harev na*).

I would like to conclude with one last beautiful comment from the Rebbe Rayatz z"l. In Hallel we say, **אנה ה' כי אני** - This is normally translated as: *Please Hashem, for I am Your servant.* But the rebbe pointed out that the word *Ana* in this possuk is spelled with a ה. Accordingly, it can be translated as *where* (like **אנה אילך**). The possuk should now be read as Dovid Hamelech saying, "where Hashem do You want to place me? Wherever it is, I am Your servant so it is fine. I accept it and I shall thrive there.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפּעל