

OF LIMITLESS ABILITY

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This weeks parsha, Parshas Vo'ayrah, begins with Hashem telling Moshe that He revealed himself to the Avos as Kel Shakay. The name of Hashem, Havayah, was never realized by them. These possukim reveal much insight into the names of Hashem and their meanings. A name of Hashem doesn't describe His essence in any way. That is a realm that is totally beyond our grasp. Our only connection to Him is through his interaction with this world. His 'names', therefore, describe a certain attribute of His association with us.

Rashi explains these possukim to mean that guarantees were made to the Avos, and they trusted, even though they didn't see the fulfillment of these promises. The name, Hashem, which represents the culmination of those assurances, wasn't shown to them.

The Ramban quotes the Even Ezra who has a very different understanding in these words. Kel Shakay refers to Hashem shaping events within the realm of nature. The gemara Chagiga teaches that when the world was being created it kept on expanding. Hashem limited that olam, that world, with the name Kel Shakay, which means, enough.

The Ohr Gedalyahu points out that the word olam, world, has the same root as 'he'elem', which means hidden. The world is defined as the place where Hashem's presence is hidden. It is an olam in the full sense of the word. During creation, Hashem set a limit on the degree that He would be concealed. He said "diy", enough, to the olam. There is 'nature' wherein He is unseen, but with a perceptive glance, His presence can be discerned. The Ohr Gedalyahu quotes from the Zohar that the name Elokim is comprised of the two words 'elah' and 'mee'. Literally, 'this' and 'who'. All of 'this' that is before our eyes, 'who' brought it here?!

That was the nature of the Avos' divine service. They discovered Hashem from within the world. Avrohom Avinu, at the tender age of three, realized that this palace must have a supervisor. Yitzchak Avinu and Yaakov Avinu also recognized Hashem in the such a way. Hashem too, performed miracles for them, but within the realm of 'normal'.

The name Havayah that is now being shown with Moshe, institutes a completely different way of Hashem running this world. The semblances of nature no longer comprise the parameters wherein He operates. There will be plagues, a splitting of the sea, and ultimately, a clear revelation of Hashem's presence on Har Sinai! Ani Hashem!!! I am Hashem and I am totally limitless in my abilities! Nature is a mere cloak that is easily removed!

The Ramban (Sh'mos 13:16) writes that from these revealed miracles we must learn to appreciate the hidden ones. To reach that cognizance that there is no nature! To see through the haze and recognize the hand that is guiding everything!

From the very outset, when Hashem appeared to Moshe from the burning bush, Moshe refused to speak to Bnei Yisroel or Paroah by himself. Ignoring the reassurances of Hashem that he was capable of handling the mission, he steadfastly deferred to Aharon.

The Ohr HaChaim (6:28) writes that this can explain the usage of the term 'vay'hee', and it was, in regard to Moshe's refusal. The gemara (Megilah) states that this is a term that introduces a tragedy. 'Vay', meaning woe. What catastrophe is being referred to here? He chillingly writes that if Moshe had performed this mitzvah alone, then perhaps he would have entered Eretz Yisroel and we would have avoided all of the travails endured in the midbar. Furthermore, had Moshe entered Eretz Yisroel he would have built the Beis Hamikdash which would have been eternal!

Moshe truly had the ability to do it but felt he was unable. How often do we have the capacity to really accomplish something, yet back away based on false feelings of inadequacy? How often do we create a 'reality' of inability which results in opportunities lost for eternity?

This weeks parsha spans the first seven plagues. One can easily be astonished by Paroah's behavior. One minute he's begging Moshe to remove the plague, promising to release Bnei Yisroel, the next he's standing steadfast in his stubborn refusal to emancipate them. Our astonishment only grows when we reach the seventh plague, the fierce hail-fire storm.

Moshe warns of the impending onslaught. All cattle and slaves must be brought in from the fields or face certain death. The Torah tells that all those who feared Hashem brought in their property. However, many left them out in the fields! How could intelligent thinking people not heed Moshe's warning? How could they knowingly allow their property to be destroyed?

Rav Chaim Shmuelovitz zt"l sheds light on this paradox. The possuk tells that those who left their belongings outside, didn't 'som lev' to the word of Hashem. They didn't take it to heart! Their knowledge remained in the intellectual sphere but never penetrate their hearts! They knew, but they didn't act on that knowledge.

Suddenly, the actions of Paroah and the Mitzrim no longer seem astonishing but rather quite familiar! It's so easy to know but so difficult to do! How many of us realize that certain things must be added to our schedules, yet never quite do it! How many of us could use resounding arguments and easily convince others of the importance of acts that we ourselves are remiss in! (How many of us could write convincing parsha sheets and yet fall far short in living up to those very ideals!) Yes, it's easy to mock Paroah until we realize that Paroah lives on in each and every one of us!

May Hashem grant us the perception to recognize that it is His presence, His light that permeates all that surround us in this olam. May this light enable us to see and realize all that we can accomplish.

May we then merit to not only know what we can do, but rather, to roll up our sleeves and actually accomplish.

Good Shabbos.

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