

# CAUSE HASHEM TO BE LOVED BY OTHERS

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

This week we read the parsha of V'eschanon. Amongst the many basic principles of Judaism that are contained in our parsha is the prayer with which we begin and end each day in addition to being the last words that a Jew is supposed to utter on this earth--"Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echod [Hear/Accept Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One][6:4]."

In this proclamation is included three fundamental aspects of Judaism. 1) The very mention of Hashem proclaims the belief in a Supreme Being--the existence of G-d. 2) Elokainu--He is our G-d. The belief in Hashem's active involvement in all that transpires in this world--hashgacha pratis [individualized Providence and supervision]. 3) Echod--he is One. The absolute unity of Hashem.

If this is a pronouncement of one's belief, why does it begin with the words "Shema Yisroel"? Wouldn't the words "ani maamin [I believe]" be a much better opening for the statement of beliefs which follows?

Rav Leib Chasman explains that a person must realize that the Torah was not given just to him. Shema Yisroel! One must do the utmost to spread the idea of Hashem to all of Israel. One who was able to influence others and didn't is held responsible for the errors that their ignorance led them to. We don't live in a vacuum. To quote the Boy Scouts of America, we must leave the area around us cleaner than the way we found it.

Rashi sees in this passuk [verse] a reference to the world at large recognizing Hashem. He explains in the following way: Hashem, who is presently our G-d, will ultimately become One, the G-d of all the nations. As the prophet Zecharya stated: "On that day Hashem will be one and His name will be One [14:9]."

The Kli Yakar brings the Talmud [Pesachim 50A] which offers a fascinating insight into this. In this world, when something 'good' happens we bless Hashem as a Good Being who does good. When something 'bad' happens we bless Hashem as being a just judge. Being that we can have no understanding of Hashem Himself, any name that we give to Hashem is actually a description of the way that He is connecting to us. We therefore have different names for Hashem based on our (mis)perception of Him acting with either compassion or justice. It was and is these seemingly contradictory occurrences in life which (mis)lead many to believe that there are two distinct and separate forces which rule this world. In this world, Hashem's name is not echod--one.

However, in the blinding clarity of the World to Come, one will be able to see that every occurrence

was nothing but an act of compassion. There were no contradictions whatsoever. No separate forces at all. "On that day Hashem will be one and His name will be One [14:9]."

This level was attained even in this world, the world of illusion, by Rabi Akiva, one of the greatest of our Sages. The Talmud [Berachos 61B] relates that the Romans caught Rabi Akiva teaching Torah, an infraction which was punishable by death. The torturous death they decreed upon him was to tear the flesh from his body using combs of steel. As the executioners began their service, Rabi Akiva began his service... He began to recite the Shema Yisroel. His holy neshama [soul] left this world as he pronounced the word "echod". Echod. To Rabi Akiva, even as he was being tortured to death, there were no contradictions. Hashem's name was already Echod.

According to the Kli Yakar, that is the pronouncement of faith that one makes by reciting the Shema Yisroel. Not just the three beliefs mentioned above but also the belief that only good comes from Hashem. That which we perceive as bad is only a misconception and a misunderstanding of what is actually occurring. Hashem echod.

One might wonder, being that the Shema Yisroel is so loaded with affirmations of our faith, why doesn't it have a profound effect on us?

The Chofetz Chaim gives a fabulous parable of a wealthy man who was traveling for a number of weeks and left his servants a detailed list of tasks that he wanted them to accomplish during his absence. In order that not even a single item be neglected, he ordered that the list be read daily.

Upon his return he immediately summoned his servants and asked if they had done as they'd been instructed. They proudly answered that they had. Taking a quick look around, the wealthy man was shocked to see that not a single assignment from his list had actually been performed. He again summoned his servants and angrily asked again if they had followed his instructions. They again unabashedly assured him that they had. They had read the list at least twice a day...

The Rashi quoted above, however, if understood simply, seems to be explaining the Shema Yisroel as saying that ultimately the entire world will accept Hashem's majesty. If so, it follows logically that the continuation of the Shema Yisroel will contain a reference as to the way to spread Hashem's name.

The words immediately following "Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echod" are "V'ahavta ais Hashem Elokecha [And you shall love Hashem, your G-d]."

The Sifri explains: Cause Hashem to be loved by others, as was done by the Patriarch, Avrohom. A hint to this is revealed by the Baal HaTurim who points out that the letters of "v'ahavta" are the same letters as "ha'avot", the Patriarchs.

Avrohom, with his acts of kindness, spread the word of Hashem. People saw him and understood that they were seeing a G-dly individual. An individual who through his connection to Hashem had been transformed.

Every person must ask himself: Am I doing the same? Do the people that encounter me at work, on the road, on the subway, on the street, in my synagogue and in my home walk away with the feeling that they have just met a person who has been transformed through his connection to Hashem? Are we fulfilling the mitzva of "v'ahavta"--Causing Hashem to be loved by others?

My wife recently flew back home to Israel from the States. When I met her at the airport, she told me how there was a whole group of non-Jewish teenagers on the flight who really stood out by their being so respectful and well behaved. Is that what people say about us? Are we a pleasure to fly with? (Maybe don't answer that last question...)

"V'ahavta"--Causing Hashem to be loved by others. That was the way of Avrohom and those are the footsteps which we are commanded to follow. It is those footsteps which will lead toward the culmination of "Hashem echod"--of the whole world recognizing Him--may it happen speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

*This is dedicated in the memory of my wife's grandmother, Nechama bas Moshe Yitzchak, a"h. TNZB"H*

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