

פרשת וארה

The Parasha begins with Hashem responding to the question of Moshe Rabeinu. At the end of last week's Parasha, Moshe asked Hashem "למה הרעתה לעם זהה"- אָדָנִי לְמַה רַעֲתָה לְעֵמֶק הַזָּהָר"-which is a name of Hashem of אָדָנִי (Din) has the same letters as the word (דינא) "why have you been cruel to the nation? Why have you sent me?" Since Hashem had appointed Moshe to be the savior of the Jews, things had gotten worse for them and the work had gotten harder! Moshe, in a sense, was asking Hashem, why are you doing this?! Hashem responds to Moshe in the first Pasuk of the Parasha: "וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶלْ מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶלְךָ אַתָּה חָזֵק" Hashem's name of judgment and the word is used when Hashem speaks "strongly". The name חָזֵק is the name of Hashem of kindness and the word is used when Hashem speaks "gently". Hashem was explaining to Moshe that when things seem harsh and cruel, in reality it is a manifestation of the kindness of Hashem. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים - indicated by the word אֱלֹהִים was telling Moshe I am only kindness -as indicated by the name אֱלֹהִים and the word חָזֵק. What seems like דין is really the חָזֵק-kindness of Hashem!

This is something that we need to believe and internalize. We need to have faith in Hashem, that everything that Hashem does, even things that are seemingly cruel אין, is actually very good for us and in reality Hashem is being kind to us. This requires אמונה.

Where intellect ends אמונה begins. If we knew something to be true, we would not need to believe in it. Only when we see things we don't understand, and to us seems very unfair, that's where אמונה "kicks in", and we need to believe in the kindness of Hashem. Hashem loves us even more than we love ourselves! There is a story with the Baal Shem Tov, בָּעֵל שֵׁם טוֹב, who once witnessed the reunion of a father and son who hadn't seen each other for 40 years. They were embracing and showing tremendous love for one another. The Baal Shem Tov commented, that as much love as they have for one another, that's how much love I have for the "lowest" Jew that's filled with sin and Hashem's love for the "lowest" Jew is infinitely greater than even the Tsadik's love for the Jew! We cannot fit "Hashem's mind" into ours, nor ours into his. Hashem has been running this world for a long time and has a "perfect record"! This is the "אֲבָבָב" of

Judaism. א and ב stand for בטחונ. These principals are the foundation of our religion!

This is something that we need to speak about over and over again in order to ready ourselves in case of difficult times. David Hamelech writes in Tehilim: האמנתי כי - אדבָר “I believe because I spoke about belief”!

This was personified by Rabbi Akivah as mentioned a few weeks ago, with the story when he was denied lodging in a town, and was forced to sleep in a field and his candle was extinguished, his donkey killed, and his rooster eaten. He exclaimed; כל מא – דעבִיד רחמנא לטב עבִיד whatever Hashem does is for the good! In the morning when he awoke, he found out that bandits had destroyed the city he was trying to stay in, and if his candle was lit, donkey brayed, or rooster made noise, he would have been discovered and killed. You see! Exclaimed R' Akivah, “like I told you; everything Hashem does if for the good! He was explaining to his students that the same excitement that they felt- now that they were able to see the end result that Hashem saved their Rabbi- that was the **very same** excitement and content in Hashem that R' Akivah felt the night before, when it seemed everything was going wrong for him! He **knew** that Hashem was being very kind to him.

This was also what R' Akivah was saying - when he was being murdered by the Romans with iron combs - he cried out דין שמע ישראל יה-וה אלקינו יה-וה אחד Even the (kindness) is one with **the only** kindness. When his students saw their rabbi with this attitude even as he was being killed, they asked him; עד כאן!? Until where? How much longer will you hold on? He replied “**כל ימי הצערתי על הדבר הזה**” my whole life I've been working on this- to give my life up for Hashem”. Now we can understand deeper, the students were asking R' Akivah - **עד how** have you reached this level?! How are you able to have this attitude even while being killed?! He responded; don't think this happened overnight - **כל ימי** my **whole life** I've been working painstakingly on this, all to ready myself for this moment!

The great Tsadikim had this mentality; they processed things through the knowledge that Hashem is perfectly kind in **all** situations. There is a story with the בעל-Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, he noticed a funeral procession going by and he smiled. His students asked why are you smiling? He answered; everyone out there is crying and wishing the man in the coffin would “come back”! But the man in the coffin is “thinking”; no way! Why would I want to go back there! I am in שמים next to Hashem, why would I want to go back down there?!

There is a story with R' Nochum from Mias, when he was told by his students about the holocaust in Germany he commented “the same Hashem who wanted his children on this world, now wants them back with him in שמים! His students initially thought that this sounded cruel and insensitive, but when the time came that R' Nochum was on his death bed he heard his wife crying, he told his students to tell her to stop crying because the same Hashem, who wanted me down here, now wants me upstairs next to him! When the students heard this they realized that their Rabbi was not insensitive, he just had a clear picture of Hashem’s goodness.

We need to know that when something befalls us even though it seems harsh, not only is it good for us in the future, but in reality the **event itself** is to our benefit! As illustrated in the story of R' Moshe Scherer, who benefited the Jews in many ways through his political connections in the U.S. Government. On one occasion there was a specific bill that was going to be passed that was detrimental to the Jews. Rabbi Scherer fought and lobbied the entire senate and finally won them over to change the bill to the Jews benefit. His friends asked him, where did you draw the strength to take on the entire U.S. senate?! He explained, that as a child his mother had taught him that whenever things seem terribly bleak and it seems like it can’t get any worse, **right then** you will see your salvation! His mother told him, that when he was a baby he had contracted a dangerously high fever. His parents were extremely poor and could not afford the medication to treat his illness. His mother gathered all the pennies she had and placed them in a bag. She went to the pharmacy and placed the bag of pennies on the table and said; this is all I have! Will you please have mercy and give me the medicine, even though this is not nearly enough to pay for it?! The worker in the pharmacy had compassion on her and gave her the vile of medicine to save her son. In her excitement and haste she tripped and fell, and the glass vile containing the medicine fell to the ground and shattered. She was devastated; she had just lost her chance to save her sons life! How would she go back to the pharmacy and explain what happened?! As it is, she didn’t have enough for the medication the first time! With a broken heart she returned to the pharmacy, and this time she met the pharmacy owner. She cried to him, explaining what had just happened to her, and showed him the broken pieces of glass from the medicine vile that had shattered. She begged him for another vile. When the pharmacy owner examined the broken vile he asked; who gave this to you?! Your worker, she responded. He told her; your son’s life was just saved!! This worker that gave you the vile is new at this job. What he gave you was actually poison! Had your son taken it he surely would have died! Your G-d must truly love you! Then he gave her the proper medication to save her son. From this story, R'

Scherer's mother had taught him that the tragedy **is the salvation!** Never give up hope! For the kindness of Hashem is **always** at work.

This past week has been a very difficult one to see the mercy of Hashem, with the tragic passing of Moseis Saba and his wife, son, and daughter in law. We must however remember -as difficult as it may be- that even though we can't understand the ways of Hashem, we must believe that it is truly out of the mercy of Hashem that this happened. The passing of the Saba's was followed by a devastating earthquake in Haiti that has killed tens of thousands. Who knows what tragedy was averted through the deaths of these four "Korbanot"?

The Rabbi explained to us last week the depth behind why we use the name **המקום** instead of a different name of Hashem. Maybe now we can say that the **place** will be a consolation to them for whatever it is that their passing may have saved the community from.

Hashem is perfect in his ways and is always kind to us. May we be Zocheh to always see clearly the goodness of Hashem, through שמות and good tidings. Amen.