

פרשת ויקרא

There is a Pasuk in this week's Haftarah that says:
"אני ראשון ואני אחרון ומבלעדי אין אלקים" - "so says Hashem I am the first and I am the last and aside from me there is no G-d".

Simply understood, the Pasuk is telling us that Hashem is the supreme G-d that created the world with no assistance. There is no one that preceded Hashem, nor anyone that was born from him.

On a deeper level, this Pasuk is alluding to the kindness of Hashem, and that even when things seem to be very difficult for a person it is all truly a manifestation of Hashem's kindness.

Hashem's name of mercy is י-ה-ו-ה. There are two other holy names that are associated with י-ה-ו-ה. One name contains the letters that precede י-ה-ו-ה and one name contains the letters that follow י-ה-ו-ה.

The letters that precede י-ה-ו-ה are ט-ד-ה-ד and the letters that follow י-ה-ו-ה are כ-ו-ז-ו. These two names are considered as if they "hide" in front and in back of י-ה-ו-ה. They are the letters that are the closest to י-ה-ו-ה, and they represent the times when we have difficulty understanding the judgment of Hashem and when the י-ה-ו-ה (mercy) of Hashem is not apparent. At these times, the י-ה-ו-ה is hidden and that is when the names כ-ו-ז-ו and ט-ד-ה-ד are "operating".

The numerical value of כ-ו-ז-ו is 39 and the numerical value of ט-ד-ה-ד is 22, together they equal 61. 61 is the numerical value of the word אני. We now understand a deeper understanding of the Pasuk "אני ראשון ואני אחרון". ראשון (first) refers to what precedes, and אחרון (last) refers to what follows. אני=61 (the two "hidden" names) is what comes *before* and *after* the name of Hashem. Even though at these times we can't clearly see the mercy of Hashem, we must remember; "מבלעדי אין אלקים" - there is *no other* G-d, and everything that happens is only from Hashem in his mercy.

With this we also understand the depth behind a Pasuk in Tehilim that we recite during Hallel; "זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה ה' נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמַחַה בּוֹ" - "this is the day Hashem made, be glad and rejoice in it". The word הַיּוֹם equals 61. The Pasuk is telling us: "זֶה הַיּוֹם" this 61 (הַיּוֹם) - when we see hardships and suffering and the "hidden" names of Hashem ט-ד-ה-ד and כ-ו-ז-ו (which equal 61) are "operating" - "עָשָׂה ה'" is really done by י-ה-ו-ה ! It is all out of Hashem's kindness in his master plan that spans all of eternity that only he can understand. Therefore, "נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמַחַה בּוֹ" - be glad and rejoice *in it!* Rejoice in the kindness of י-ה-ו-ה and be happy with *this very difficulty* that you are going through!!

This also explains a Pasuk in Parashat Ki Tavoh. In that Parasha there are many curses and the Jews are warned not to stray from the proper path. At the end of all the curses the Pasuk says "וְהִשִּׁיבְךָ ה' מִצָּרִים בְּאֵינִיּוֹת בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי לְךָ לֹא תִּשָּׁבֵר" - "Hashem will return you to Egypt in ships on the way of which I said to you, you shall never again see it!" Why would this Pasuk be the culmination of all the curses?? Why is it necessary for the Pasuk to describe to us *how* we would go back to Egypt - on *boats*?! Let it just say that we would return to Egypt?! The curses consisted of many graphic gruesome curses, why would returning to Egypt be the pinnacle??

The explanation is based on the concealment of י-ה-ו-ה and mercy of Hashem. When a person has Hashem, they have everything. They know that Hashem is running every aspect of the world, and he is all merciful. This soothes a person and gives him tranquility.

There was once two Jewish ladies in a hospital waiting room, both waiting for their loved ones to come out of their surgeries. One lady was religious and was reading Tehilim, the other was not religious and was nervously fumbling through some magazines. After a while the non religious lady told the religious lady "I'm so jealous of you!" look how calm you are, reading your Tehilim, you have something to hold onto"!! I feel lost with no one to rely on!!

Believing in Hashem enables us to weather any storm. However, someone whose belief in Hashem is weak cannot cope with the challenges of life. Who suffers more than a non believer?!

מצרים represents the exile of the Jews. It represents a time when the Jews could not see the hand of Hashem. During the Egyptian exile the Jews were beaten and dying. Babies were killed daily. Hashem's kindness was concealed. This represents a time when Hashem's name of י-ה-ו-ה was hidden, and the "surrounding" name of ט-ד-ה-ד and כ-ו-ז-ו were evident. This was a time of 61-אני (the names of כ-ו-ז-ו and ט-ד-ה-ד combined). מצרים epitomized this lack of clarity, and the concealment of י-ה-ו-ה and therefore epitomizes אני and the names כ-ו-ז-ו and ט-ד-ה-ד. The time the Jews spent in מצרים can be called a time of "אניות", when אני was "in force". The word אניות is the same word as אניות (boats) used in the Pasuk. We now understand the gravity of what the Pasuk is saying. Hashem is threatening us that he would return us to Egypt - a time of concealment of the kindness of Hashem - specifically in באניות-boats. When Hashem's kindness is hidden and the אני is "in force"!!

The goal in Egypt was to realize that the "אני" was really י-ה-ו-ה. This is why the Pasuk says (regarding the Jews in Egypt): "וידעתם כי אני י-ה-ו-ה" "They should know that "אני" (which seems like harshness) is really Hashem in his kindness – represented by the name י-ה-ו-ה.

Not having Emunah in Hashem ח"ו is the ultimate curse. If we believe in Hashem's kindness we can handle anything, but if we don't believe and we become blinded by אני, it makes anything unbearable!! The return to Egypt in boats represents the ultimate concealment of the kindness of Hashem!

שעשה לי כל צרכי

We must always remember that Hashem loves us, and is completely merciful with us constantly. With this we can analyze one of the daily Berachot that we say every morning "שעשה לי כל צרכי"-"who has done for me all my needs". This is one of the Berachot Hashachar, when we thank Hashem for the various functions that he blesses us with (פוקח עורים - he opens our eyes, ממתיר אסורים - he enables us to walk around etc...). The rabbis explain, that this Berachah of "שעשה לי כל צרכי" is the Berachah in which we thank Hashem for providing us with shoes.

The question is asked; why does the Berachah of “who has done all my needs” specifically thank Hashem for shoes?? Do shoes sum up *all* of our needs?! Also, when we analyze further we find that this Berachah is the only Berachah that we make in past tense (שעשה-that he *did* all my needs), every other Berachah is said in present terms מתיר אסורים – “frees the bound ones”, זוקף כפופים -*straightens* the bent, etc... Is there a connection between shoes, and the unique format of this blessing??

To explain we must first understand the deeper symbolism of shoes. Shoes represent a person’s firm stability on the ground. They are worn on the feet which uphold the person. The Gemarah says: "בא חבקוק והעמידין על אחת", Habakkuk came and *stood up* the religion on one concept; "צדיק באמונתו יחיה"-"a religious man will live by his faith". Emunah is the foundation of our religion; it is like the feet that we stand on which supports and upholds us.

Shoes represent what we wear on our feet, and therefore represent Emunah and faith in Hashem. This explains why the Berachah of "שעשה לי כל צרכי" is thanking Hashem for shoes. Shoes represent Emunah, and when we have Emunah we realize that Hashem is constantly taking care of us, and providing for our every need. Everything that Hashem does to us is for the good. Shoes are the perfect thing to thank Hashem for when we sum it all up and say that “you’ve done everything for me”! This is only realized through Emunah-faith, which shoes represent.

With this we can understand one of the requirements of the Korban Pesah. The Torah instructed the Jews to eat the Korban Pesah (Shemot chapter 12 Pasuk 11); "וככה תאכלו אתו מתניכם חגרים נעליכם ברגליכם"-"so shall you eat it; with your belt girded and shoes on your feet".

Why would the Torah command that the Pesah be eaten with “shoes on your feet”?

We now understand that leaving Egypt, was leaving the environment of lack of Emunah. It was time to prepare for accepting the Emunah, and to see the hand of Hashem. This was the time for the Jews to “put their shoes on”, and get ready to accept the Emunah in Hashem.

This also explains why Hashem instructed Moshe Rabeinu to take off his shoes at the burning bush. "של נעליך מעל רגליך" - "remove the shoes from your feet". Until then, Moshe Rabeinu had lived separately from the Jews. He was not in Egypt, and was not under the Egyptian influence that clouded Emunah. Moshe's Emunah was complete; Hashem informed him that in order to empathize with the Jews and to feel how they felt, he needed to momentarily experience some type of lapse in Emunah. He therefore, instructed Moshe to remove his *shoes*. This signified a momentary "removal" of the Emunah that the shoes represent. Moshe would now be able to feel the pain of the Jews lacking the all important Emunah to keep them strong.

Many times, as we are experiencing hardships we can't seem to understand the kindness of Hashem. However often when some time passes we are able to see in retrospect how perfect Hashem was, and how happy we are that things worked out the way they did.

This is why we say the Berachah of "שעשה לי כל צרכי", the Berachah that represents Emunah in Hashem, and knowing that it's all good in *past tense*. It is very hard for a person to say to Hashem "עושה לי כל צרכי" - "you *do* everything for me" while he is in the midst of hardships. If a person is ill or loses his income etc... How can he praise Hashem with complete sincerity "you do everything for me"?! Therefore we say the Berachah in past tense. We can only praise Hashem whole heartedly when we do so in retrospect. When we look back and say "wow, Hashem you are *perfect!*" This is when it is clear how we must always have Emunah in Hashem.

Emunah and Purim

Purim is the time when we realize that everything that happens - no matter how natural it seems - is ordained by Hashem. This can be seen in the Purim story itself, as well as who was involved. The Gemarah says that the name אסתר comes from the word "אסתר", which is the Persian word for "moon". אסתר represented the לבנה (moon). The word לבנה is numerically 87. What is the significance of 87? If we add the numerical value of the name of ה' of mercy - הו-י-ה (26), together with the "hidden names" of ט-ד-ה-ד and כו-ז-ו (61), they total 87. The moon represents when it becomes clear that the hidden names of Hashem

(61) are really one with the merciful name of Hashem (26). When 26 and 61 combine, we have 87 (לבנה) . אסתר represented the moon, and therefore represented the revelation that it was all from Hashem and all good.

This is why after every month we recite the Birkat Halevanah. We remind ourselves, after a month of hardships in exile that Hashem is all merciful, and is totally kind to us. This is signified by the moon לבנה (87) which as mentioned, stands for הויה joining the other names, and revealing that it's all good. Some have the custom to dance and sing after Birkat Halevanah. All this comes from the joy in knowing that Hashem is our loving father, which only does what is absolutely, best for us. The moon shines at night; the night represents darkness, a time that we can't see the kindness of Hashem. The moon reminds us that no matter what we are going through, we must remember that it is all from Hashem.

The moon only gets its light from the sun. The sun represents daytime when all is clear and Hashem's kindness is evident. The moon only receives its light from the sun, and this shows us that what seems as difficult is really a manifestation of Hashem's kindness. It all comes from the "sun", which stands for the kindness of Hashem.

Esther – whose name stands for the moon- wanted to reveal the י-ה-ו-ה and the kindness of Hashem to the Jews, even through the difficult decrees upon them. This is hinted in the Pasuk where Esther invites the king to her party. "יבוא המלך והמן היום" "let the king and Haman come today" . The first letters of these words spell י-ה-ו-ה. It says that every time the word מלך (king) in the Megillah it is really referring to Hashem himself! Esther was really praying that the king (Hashem) should reveal himself in his kindness with his merciful name of י-ה-ו-ה.

On Purim we read the Megillah. The word מגילה comes from the word לגלות "to reveal". Through the story of the Megillah we reveal to all, that Hashem is in control and does everything for our good. We unravel the Megillah scroll to reveal its writing, and this signifies the revelation that in reality everything is good.

May we always remember that Hashem is watching us, and loves us, and is **only** kind to us. We should in return, be loyal to him, and have אמונה שלמה in him, and in the upcoming redemption. אמן.