

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Va'era

Siman #73

The juxtaposition of the parashah and "And since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed this people," etc., followed by "And God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord.'" This can be explained based on what is written elsewhere, that the Holy One, blessed be He, needed to contract His radiance and light in the creation of the worlds so they could receive it and not be nullified in their existence, as mentioned there. Even though the attribute of contraction (tzimtzum) is referred to as "din" (judgment), which limits the flow of kindness—whose nature is to expand—and judgment restrains it, like the water within a vessel, where the vessel limits the water and does not allow it to spread, it might seem that contraction is entirely an aspect of judgment. However, in truth, it is kindness. For in every aspect of all the worlds, goodness, which is kindness, must be interwoven, as "the world is built with kindness." Even though it is judgment, without the contraction, the worlds would be nullified.

It is known that the attribute of judgment is referred to as "Elokim," and within it, kindness is interwoven, represented by the name "El" within it, as it is stated, "The kindness of El," (Tehillim/Psalms 52:3) etc. And this is what is stated: 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield,' etc. It is known that the name Havayah is called a sun, and thus, 'For the sun and a shield' is analogous to 'the Lord God.' That is, just as it is impossible to gaze at the sun due to the intensity of its radiance without the shield and barrier that separates and protects from the sun's light, enabling one to benefit from its light, so too is the name Havayah, blessed be He. Its light is exceedingly great due to the intensity of its brilliance—the light of kindness and mercy within it. Without a barrier to separate its great light, the worlds would not be able to receive it. Therefore, it was necessary to contract and limit it through the name Elokim, which acts as the shield, as mentioned.

This is also what the sages, of blessed memory, said: 'In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will take the sun out of its sheath. The wicked will be scorched by it, and the righteous will be healed by it.' This alludes to the aforementioned concept. That is, in the future, the name Havayah will be taken out of its sheath, which is the name Elokim, within which it is presently clothed. At that time, the strength of the righteous will be very great, fulfilling the verse, 'Your eyes shall see your Teacher.' They will be able to receive its brilliance, great mercy, and abundant kindness and be healed by it. But this will not be the case for the wicked, who will instead be scorched, as the prophet states, 'The Lord will go forth like a mighty warrior.' That is, Havayah, though it is complete mercy, when it emerges from its sheath and garment, will enact vengeance like a mighty warrior (another version: 'When the name Havayah is taken out of its sheath, it will clothe itself in vengeance like a mighty warrior'), as an attribute of judgment, and it will exact retribution from the nations."

[NOTE: Perhaps one can say Hashem is here now, albeit hidden within "nature". It's our merit now to search him out now before the time comes and He reveals Himself. "Know Hashem in all your ways – בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו יִדְעֵהוּ" Proverbs 3:6:

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Va'era

And this may bring context to Psalms 94:1: "אֱ-לֹהֵי נִקְמָת יְהוָה אֱ-לֹהֵי נִקְמָת הוֹפִיעַ" God of vengeance, O Lord, God of vengeance, reveal Yourself!" When Hashem does reveal Himself in the time to come soon, for those what were always searching will have joy and with their eye they will SEE our teacher. But for those where lost in the lure of the shield, will be "burnt" and "vengeance" will be upon them, meaning they will feel regret for not seeing/searching for the truth that was lying beneath the shield, and this will cause great pain and embarrassment. **END NOTE]**

Therefore, Pharaoh, the wicked one, said, "Who is the Lord?"—meaning, he rejected this Name and did not believe that the name Havayah had been revealed. However, in truth, in the end, the name Havayah, blessed be He, was indeed revealed, as it is stated, "And the Lord struck all the firstborn," etc. Similarly, it will be in the future, speedily in our days, Amen, as it is written, "As in the days of your exodus from the land of Egypt, I will show you wonders," etc. This means that what was hidden will be revealed, such as the attribute of judgment, and He will exact retribution from the nations. The name Havayah, blessed be He, will be wondrously revealed, and then "I will show you"—it will be fully unveiled.

This is hinted at in the verse where Moses said, "And since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name," referring to the name Havayah, blessed be He, "he has harmed this people." Pharaoh paid no attention to or gave regard to this Name, claiming it was still concealed, as mentioned. Therefore, the verse immediately follows with, "And God (Elokim) spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord.'" This means that Pharaoh does not understand the wonders I will perform within him, for I will take the sun out of its sheath, and it will scorch them, as mentioned. Even now, "I am the Lord," but it remains concealed, as explained.

This is what is expressed in the preceding verse, "Now you will see"—the name Havayah revealed, and the wicked will receive their retribution, both as punishment and as healing, as our sages of blessed memory said: "He struck the Egyptians and healed Israel." For when the name Havayah is revealed, the righteous are healed, as noted. And the fact that it appears concealed now is entirely for the sake of sustaining the world.

This is the meaning of "And I appeared to the forefathers as El Shaddai, but by My name Havayah, I was not known to them." It is known that the attribute of contraction (tzimtzum) is called "Shaddai," as He said to His world, "Enough"—meaning, He limited the attribute of kindness to prevent it from spreading excessively. Even though this is an aspect of judgment, it is called "El Shaddai" because kindness (El) is interwoven within it. This itself is an act of kindness, as through the contraction, His light can be received. "And My name Havayah," which is the name of ultimate revelation, "I was not known to them"—meaning, it could not be revealed in their days, as it was still clothed within the name Elokim, which represents judgment and contraction. "I am Havayah"—I was, I am, and I will be, and I have the power to be revealed and to exact retribution upon them.

Additionally, it seems to me that the verse "And God (Elokim) spoke... I am Havayah" means that the attribute called *Elokim*, which represents judgment, is itself the attribute of mercy, which

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Va'era

is the name Havayah, blessed be He. This is the meaning of "I am Havayah." It was impossible to bestow blessings upon Israel without the attribute of *Elokim*, which embodies contraction (*tzimtzum*).

Thus, it is written, "And I will redeem you from your labor"—meaning, from the labor itself, which represents the attribute of judgment, redemption will come to them. This aligns with what our sages of blessed memory said, that the difficulty of the enslavement completed the 400 years of sojourning in a land not theirs. This hints at the aforementioned idea, that through the attribute of judgment, clarity and illumination came to them, as in "For the Lord is a sun and shield," as mentioned. Not only that, but through this, they merited prophetic vision face to face, as our sages said: "A maidservant saw at the sea what even the prophets did not see," because they were able to endure the radiance. This is the essence of divine blessing: its beginning is harsh judgment (associated with the 42-letter Name), but its end is gentle.

It is possible to say that this is why Pharaoh said, "*Who (י) is the Lord?*"—because Pharaoh's grasp was limited to the two letters י of the name *Elokim*, as explained in the writings of the Ari, of blessed memory. He could not comprehend beyond this, only the two letters י of *Elokim*. Therefore, he said, "*Who (י) is the Lord?*"—indicating that Havayah was still clothed within *Elokim*.

This also resolves the difficulty raised in *Sefer HaPelia*, where it states that "Moses is numerically equivalent to 'El Shaddai,' which he utilized." This seems challenging, as the verse explicitly states, "And I appeared to the forefathers as El Shaddai, but by My name Havayah, I was not known to them." However, to Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him, the name Havayah, blessed be He, was revealed. Why then does it say that Moses utilized *El Shaddai*?

Based on the above, it can be understood. The term *Shaddai*—"He who said to His world, 'Enough'"—raises a question: why is it called *Shaddai* and not simply *Dai* (Enough)? This can be explained based on the statement of our sages, of blessed memory, that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world with the attribute of Abraham (kindness), as it is written, *behibaram* (which hints at "with Abraham"). However, He saw that the world could not endure with just this attribute and combined it with the attribute of Isaac (judgment). Even then, the world could not endure until Jacob came, as explained elsewhere in detail. It follows that even with Jacob's arrival, the attributes of Abraham (kindness) and Isaac (judgment) were still necessary. It is known that the creation of the world was with the attribute of kindness and love, as it is written, "The world is built with kindness." Likewise, in all human actions and everything in the world, the attribute of kindness must be present. However, "there is no city without a ruler," and there must also be the awe of the king, representing the attribute of fear—Isaac's fear.

Jacob serves as the mediator and harmonizer between these attributes, encompassing both. Furthermore, within each of the three attributes, all three are interwoven. For example, when a person loves something, they naturally dislike its opposite, demonstrating an integration of attributes. This is why it is said, "Abraham begot Isaac." Similarly, within fear, love is included.

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Va'era

This is why in *Elokim* (judgment), there is *Ei* (kindness), as there is no thing in the world without a hidden aspect of goodness.

From the two attributes, Abraham (kindness) and Isaac (judgment), Jacob emerged. Jacob is the one who integrates them and redeems them, as explained elsewhere. Thus, in the service of the Creator, blessed be He, one must serve in a way that awakens both love for the Creator and awe of the King, so that the Creator may take pride in us, and it becomes a source of satisfaction to Him. This is referred to as the *Ta'amei HaMitzvot* (reasons for the commandments).

In the *Zohar*, it is written that the letter *Shin* (ש) represents one leg (*k'ra*). This means that the shape of the *Shin* as a *Shin Shurik*—composed of three *Yuds* (י) at its peaks and the three lines—resembles the idea of *Shuruk*. The light of brilliance and abundance flows from *Chochmah* (wisdom), symbolized by the *Yud* (י), through the three lines, which are analogous to three *Vavs* (ו) extending from the three *Yuds* at their tops. These three lines correspond to the three pillars that "stand" upon the leg of Jacob, which represents the lower leg of the *Shin*. This is where the light concentrates and contracts to bestow upon the *Dalet* (ד), which alludes to *Dal* (ל, the poor), enabling it to bear the illumination. This is represented by the letter *Dalet* in the name *Shaddai* (שדי).

The light of *Chochmah* is revealed at the end, represented by the *Yud* (י) in the name *Shaddai*. Thus, the combination of *Shaddai* (שדי) signifies "He who said to His world, 'Enough.'" This name also hints at the concealment and wrapping of the name *Havayah*, blessed be He, within it. This is why it is stated, "And I appeared to the forefathers as *Ei Shaddai*, but by My name *Havayah*, I was not known to them." The forefathers, symbolized by the three pillars mentioned above, accessed the light of *Havayah* through the contraction of the name *Shaddai*.

However, our sages of blessed memory said, "What was said of Moses is greater than [what was said of the forefathers]." For instance, Abraham said, "I am but dust and ashes," while Moses said, "What are we?"—indicating that he reached the attribute of *Ayin* (nothingness). The forefathers had to receive the brilliance of the name *Havayah* through the contraction of the name *Shaddai*, as noted. But Moses reached the level of *Mah* (What) and *Ayin* (nothingness), as it is stated, "And the man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth." His profound humility caused him to utterly contract himself in shame and submission before the Creator, blessed be He, to the point that he did not even recognize his own existence, so great was his humility.

Because of this attribute, Moses was able to directly receive the brilliance of the name *Havayah* in its essence, through a clear and luminous vision (*Aspaklaria Me'irah*).

When it is said that Moses "utilized *Ei Shaddai*," it does not mean in the straightforward sense that he received through the attribute of *Ei Shaddai*. That is not the case, for Moses did not need the brilliance to be contracted since he was capable of enduring it. Rather, this statement provides an explanation for why Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him, merited more than all

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Va'era

other prophets and forefathers to receive the light of the essence of the name Havayah, blessed and exalted be He.

This was because Moses himself "utilized El Shaddai," meaning his very essence mirrored the attribute of El Shaddai, which contracts the light of Havayah, as mentioned. Moses' nature was one of extraordinary humility and self-contraction before the Creator, blessed be He. Therefore, he merited to receive the brilliance of the essential name Havayah because he himself embodied the attribute of El Shaddai. Reflect on this deeply.