

ושמעו לקלך ובאת אתה וזקני ישראל אל־מלך מצרים ואמרתם אליו יהוה אלהי העבריים נקרה עלינו ועתה נלכה־נא דרך שלשת ימים במדבר ונזבחה ליהוה אלהינו (שמות 3:18)

ואחר באו משה ואהרן ויאמרו אל־פרעה כה־אמר יהוה אלהי ישראל שלח את־עמי ויחגו לי במדבר בויאמר פרעה מי יהוה אשר אשמע בקלו לשלח את־ישראל לא ידעתי את־יהוה וגם את־ישראל לא אשלח גויאמרו אלהי העברים נקרא עלינו נלכה נא דרך שלשת ימים במדבר ונזבחה ליהוה אלהינו פן־יפגענו בדבר או בחרב דויאמר אלהם מלך מצרים למה משה ואהרן תפריעו את־העם ממעשיו לכו לסבלתיכם (שמות 4:1-5)

וידבר אלהים אל־משה ויאמר אליו אני יהוה גוארא אל־אברהם אל־יצחק ואל־יעקב באל שדי ושמי יהוה לא נודעתי להם (שמות 2:1-6)

Gd commands Moses to confront Pharaoh and demand that he release the people so they may celebrate before Him in the desert. Gd commands him to mention the Ineffable Name of Gd, that he has just been introduced to, when he confronts Pharaoh. When Moses comes before Pharaoh he initiates his demand by invoking the Ineffable Name of Gd. Pharaoh challenges him as to the identity of this Gd and says I have never heard of this Gd and I have no intention to listen to Him. Moses and Aaron suddenly switch to אלקי העברים. It is interesting to note that Pharaoh does not challenge Moses regarding this name of Gd, instead he increases the workload on the people. Why did Pharaoh react differently to the 2 names of Gd used by Moses and Aaron? If Gd commanded Moses to use the Ineffable Name of Gd before Pharaoh, why did he change to אלקים? Why did Gd use the Ineffable Name versus ש-ד-י?

Ramban says that Pharaoh was familiar with the different deities of the time. Having been acquainted with Joseph, personally or by reputation, he knew of the Hebrew Gd, אלקים, that Joseph worshipped. As Joseph himself noted, את האלקים אני ירא. When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, he used the name אלקים to explain that Gd was showing Pharaoh his plan for the coming plenty and famine and that Gd doubled the dream because He was keen to bring it about very quickly. It was likely common among the cultures of the time to understand Gd in terms of a defining characteristic. In the case of the Gd of the עברים, the defining characteristic may have been meting out justice. Gd punishes those that transgress. That attribute was understood by Pharaoh when Moses mentioned the name of Elokim. In fact, Moses says that one of the reasons they must go is Lest He meet us with plague or the sword. There is a discussion among the commentaries whether Moses was referring to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, or the Jewish People. Either way, this played into Pharaoh's narrative that the vengeful Jewish Gd was no

different than the other gods before whom Pharaoh would not bend or yield. The Ibn Ezra notes something along these lines as well (5:1-2), that Moses and Aaron began with the Ineffable Name and switched to אֱלֹקִים because Pharaoh was likely familiar with the Gd of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who Moses referred to as אֱלֹקֵי הָעִבְרִים.

I would suggest, based on the Ramban, that one of the main purposes for bringing the plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt was to coerce Pharaoh to admit that the Gd of the Jews is unique and all powerful. As the plagues mount, slowly but surely, Pharaoh begins to shift the name he uses for the Gd of the Jews from Elokim to YKV'K. With the plague of hail, he finally admits that he and his people are wicked while the Gd of the Jews, YKV'K, is righteous. Indeed, Gd says that he allowed Pharaoh to withstand the plagues so that where he who previously said "who is YKV'K that I should listen to Him, will testify to the greatness of His name, YKV'K. (See the Ohr HaChaim 9:16 who interprets in a similar way.)

The work load on the people intensifies after Pharaoh's initial refusal to let the people go, saying that he does not recognize the Gd of the Jews. Pharaoh cannot fathom a Gd whose attributes are kindness and mercy. Moses immediately, almost reflexively, protests to Gd that he has only made matters worse; it would have been better for the people if he had never appeared before Pharaoh. He conflates the success of his mission with the requirement that Pharaoh immediately acquiesce to Gd's demand to release the people. From Moses' perspective, his mission was a failure.

Gd tells Moses that his appearance before Pharaoh and Pharaoh's resistance to Moses' message is part of His plan and design. Gd informs Moses of the names through which He appeared to the patriarchs. He tells Moses that until this point, YKV'K, the name of the Gd of mercy and kindness who always keeps His word, has not become known to the Jewish people, let alone others. At Moses' initial encounter with Gd at the burning bush, he asked what name to use for Gd when he informs them that He has seen their suffering and is poised to redeem them. For the people knew only of the name of Gd, אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ, who promises but as of yet has not fulfilled His promise of redemption. Gd informed Moses that the time of fulfillment and recognition of the name YKV'K has arrived. Not only will Pharaoh recognize Gd by his true name of YKV'K, but the Jewish people will as well. They will all testify that the promise of redemption was indeed fulfilled in its entirety, by their release from Egypt but by leaving with great wealth and on their way to the

greatest spiritual wealth, receiving the Torah at Sinai. The exodus from Egypt will have a dual purpose. By attaining their freedom in such a dramatic and public way, the Ineffable Name of Gd, YKV'K, will become known to them and the nations of the world. As the Torah says, שמעו עמים ירגזון, “The nations heard and they trembled”. Pharaoh who mockingly said “who is YKV'K that I should listen to Him” and the Egyptians who chased the Jews into the Red Sea will be forced to exclaim “I shall flee before the Israelites for YKV'K fights for them against Egypt”. They were finally forced to admit in unison that there is but One true Gd, the Gd of Israel with the name YKV'K, who shows mercy to His favored people while punishing those that rise up against them. (We find a similar idea in פרשת קומה ד' ויפוצו אויביך וינוסו משנאיך מפניך, בהעלותך, “Rise up YKV'K and scatter Your enemies”, where Rashi quotes the Midrash that this refers to the enemies of the Jewish people who are by definition the enemies of Gd.)

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