

On the verse כביכול, אנכי ד' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, Rashi compares the appearance, of Gd at Sinai and at the Reed Sea. Gd appeared at Sinai as a great warrior and at the Reed Sea He appeared as a wise old teacher. Rashi cautions us that we should not say that there are two deities. The term אנכי identifies one, to the exclusion of all others. One refers to himself as אנכי to single out his personality in time of crisis or difficulty. For example, Gd told Abraham that his reward will be great. Abraham replied ד' אלקים מה תתן לי ואנכי הולך עירי. In using the word אנכי instead of אני, Abraham said that I am singled out, I am your one true Servant to whom You promised great rewards. Yet that same person, אנכי, is in great despair. Moses said מי אנכי כי אלך אל פרעה, the emphasis is on אנכי, who am I that You selected me to be Your representative to Pharaoh. On the other hand, when the Torah says הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים אני ד' the emphasis is on the הוצאתי not the אני. You are beholden to Me because I took you out of Egypt. In the Decalogue Gd tells the Jewish People אנכי, I am the same one that took you out of Egypt. There is only One. Indeed, I am your Gd, to the exclusion of all else. Similarly, אנכי מנחמכם, I, to the exclusion of all others, am your comforter.

Why did the Jews question the identity of Gd at Sinai? Because Gd's appearance was not uniform. He appeared to them in Egypt differently than at the Reed Sea. One does not see God, rather one experiences God through His actions. Gd acts according to the situation. The situation in Egypt was different than the one at Sinai. In Egypt they needed a defender while at Sinai they needed a teacher. This is an important lesson for the Jew that there is no uniform action for all situations. One must be flexible to act in a manner appropriate to the situation at hand. Sometimes the situation calls for rigidity while other times flexibility is in order. Gd is the archetype of moral action, just as Gd acts in a manner commensurate to the situation, so must the Jew. Jews sometimes become hysterical and lose perspective. The modern Jew must know how to act. He can't simply become hysterical or look for anti-Semites in every corner. There should be flexibility to his speech and diplomacy.

The people had doubts regarding the number of deities because of the inconsistent ways they experienced Gd. Also, they heard many voices, as it says וכל העם רואים את הקולות (שמות 20:15), קולות, in plural form. Voices emanated from all 4 directions and from the heaven above and the ground below. Chazal tell us don't say many deities spoke at the same time. There is only one Gd, His voice is all encompassing.

Why did Gd direct His voice from all sides? To demonstrate the universality of Jewish Law. Halacha is not bound to one geographical location. It is obligatory everywhere. Don't say that it applies in the desert but not in a civilized, economically advanced community. Sinai already anticipated the Jewish destiny of Diaspora where Jews would

find themselves dispersed throughout the four corners of the world. Halacha is to accompany them wherever they may find themselves.

Sometimes man wishes to lead a completely spiritual life. While the Torah did not advocate such a life of נזירות, separation, the Torah can accommodate it. This is the voice that was heard from above, from heaven. On the other hand, the Torah can accommodate a life where one wishes to enjoy the benefits of this world within moderation. This was the voice that emanated from the ground. The commandments are flexible and can usually accommodate a frame of reference and pattern of life one wishes to lead.

The Rav remarked that his forebears led a spiritual existence, totally dedicated to Gd. They renounced the pleasures of this world and were never swayed by public opinion. They defied society whenever it adopted a morally contemptible position. They were similar to Moses, who was raised in the house of Pharaoh, yet renounced the pleasures of the palace in order to lead a moral life. However, it is also possible to live a conventional life within society, accepting moral values that society cherishes and still live within the Torah.

In פרשת יתרו, we encounter seemingly contradictory verses about how the Torah was given. One verse says Gd made us hear from the heavens above. Another verse says that Gd descended onto the mountains. Chazal say the Torah emphasizes the heavenly character of the Torah, where Gd wants to raise man to great heights. However, the Torah recognizes that man is frail and has shortcomings. Man can rise to great heights or he can live a normal life within the law. Both paths lead to the attainment of sanctity. That's why at Sinai the voice crowded them from all locations.

There are many approaches to Gd that are not mutually exclusive. The Vilna Gaon's opinion was that Gd can only be approached through the development of the intellect. The greater the intellect and knowledge, the closer man comes to Gd. The Rambam had the same opinion: the greater the knowledge attained by the individual, the greater his love of Gd. The Gaon transmitted this approach to Rav Chaim Volozoner and it became the foundation of the House of Brisk. The Gaon had a difficult time defending his view. The intellect was not as highly prized in his generation as the decisive factor in human advancement as it is today, nor was it appreciated by society as a measure of esteem and individual status. Societal position was based on lineage. However, modern man has rediscovered the intellect. Judaism always was interested in the intellect. The Rambam explains that צלם אלקים is expressed through intellectual pursuits.

On the other hand there are those that reach out to God through their hearts. Many generations of Jews put on תפילין, but how many really understood the meaning behind

the Mitzvah? Many observe the Sabbath, but precious few appreciate the sanctity of the day. Still, the tradition is passed on from generation to generation. Chasidim argued why should a person be excluded from the experience and ecstasy of עבודת ה' if Gd did not bestow upon him the mental capabilities to study? Chasidim developed an alternate approach to serving Gd through prayer and rejoicing with Gd. Both approaches share the obligation to follow the laws. While each path approaches Gd differently, in the final analysis, they worship the same אנוכי, the same Gd.

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