

Hashem spoke to Moshe and said to him, “I am Hashem.” (6:2)

We relate to Hashem through various Names which are attached to His Attributes. *Elokim* represents *Din*, Strict Justice, while Hashem represents *Rachamim*, Mercy. Thus, when the *pasuk* begins with the Name *Elokim*, we know that *Middas HaDin*, the Attribute of Strict Justice, comes into play, and that what Hashem is about to say or do will reflect *Din*. The *Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 6:1)* notes that *Middas HaDin* wanted to harm Moshe *Rabbeinu* for the manner in which he complained about the Jews’ enslavement. He was a powerful advocate, but one does not accuse Hashem of not acting justly (so to speak).

The *Midrash* cites another leader who felt that he could take the law into his own hands: Shlomo *Hamelech*. The Torah writes that a king may not have too many wives, because they will turn him away from Hashem. Shlomo had good intentions, feeling that the more wives he had from diverse backgrounds and kingdoms, the greater his opportunity to reach out to the world community and influence them. His intentions aside, he was transgressing a prohibitive *mitzvah* of the Torah. The letter *yud* of the word *yarbeh* (*Lo yarbeh lo nashim*, “He should not have too many wives”) came before Hashem and complained: “Master of the World! Did You not say that not one letter of the Torah will ever be eliminated? But now, Shlomo (by marrying many wives) is standing up and eliminating me!” Hashem replied, “A thousand like Shlomo will be eliminated, but I will not eliminate even your point (of the *yud*).”

Obviously, the dialogue between the *yud* and Hashem is beyond us, but the lesson is clear: The Torah is immutable; its Divine Author is immutable; and we, Hashem’s People, are immutable, because we will never forget the Torah. The fact that *Chazal* place it in *Parashas Vaeira* which deals with the *geulah*, redemption, from Egypt (despite the parallel between Shlomo and Moshe) illustrates the connection between *geulah* and the lesson we derive from Shlomo *Hamelech*’s failed attempt at amending the Torah.

Horav Shlomo Friefeld, zl, explains that *Chazal* intimate to us that *chochmah*, secular wisdom, regardless with how much one is blessed, is far superseded by Torah knowledge and by the *chochmah* one derives from the Torah he learns. Shlomo *Hamelech* was the *chochom m’kol adam*, wisest of men, yet he erred in thinking he could make changes in the Torah, because he was different than others. His error was in assuming that the roots of *geulah* lie in *chochmah*. One who is wise rises above enslavement. It does not affect him. This was his mistake. Only Torah giants have the ability to transcend physical bondage. If one relies on his *chochmah* to generate change – he will fail. He will never experience *geulah*.

The Torah delineates four *leshonos*, terms, of redemption, four levels, four forms: *v’Hitzalti*, I will save you; *v’Hotzeisi*, I will take you out; *v’Goalti*, I will redeem you; *v’Lokachti*, I will take you. Corresponding to these terms, we commemorate the redemption process by drinking four cups of

wine on *Pesach* night. An *adam gadol*, great scholar, once explained that the four terms depicting the *geulah* relate to the four *yesodos*, elements, from which man is comprised. In his *Sefer Kedushah*, *Horav Chaim Vital*, *z"l* (premier *talmid* of the *Arizal*), writes that man is made up of four *yesodos*: fire, wind, earth and water. He adds that these elements serve as the roots of our *middos*, character traits. (For example: Anger and arrogance are derived from the fire element of the human being. Forbidden speech comes from our wind. Desires come from our water, while sadness and laziness are derived from our earth.) Thus, every time we use a *middah* inappropriately, we seem to have too much “fire,” or “water,” etc. Thus, this *adam gadol* asserts that the only way for us to achieve true *geulah* is to rise above the four *yesodos* from which we were created. The only way to achieve this epic result is through *limud haTorah*, studying the Torah diligently and incorporating its *mitzvos* and lessons into our psyches.

Chochmah, secular wisdom and its byproducts, do not cohere with Torah. For example, wisdom might dictate a certain way or suggest that “archaic” restrictions do not apply to modern convention. It is about time that we loosen or even throw off the fetters of *shtetl* family life and become more in tune with the times, more cosmopolitan. Torah disagrees, because Torah knows better. The secularists amended the Torah over two hundred years ago – well, actually they banished the Torah to the ash heap of history. This was followed by their rejection of religion and even the Creator. Things have changed, and the religion that was taboo is suddenly in vogue; the Holy Land may not be holy, but it is definitely a place to visit and with which to identify. Sadly, their return is too late, because so many of them have been lost due to intermarriage and two centuries of assimilation. They thought *chochmah* was greater than Torah. How wrong they were.

Shlomo *Hamelech*, the wisest of all men, thought he was benefiting the Jewish People by amending one *mitzvah*. His rationale might have been wise – but it was counterintuitive to the Torah.