

## The hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d. (29:28)

People sin. This is a fact of life. Some sin publicly, such as the fellow who has the temerity to show his disregard for the Torah and *mitzvos*. Some sin privately, often the result of spiritual lapses, personal and internal conflict. Public sins affect society, creating a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name. Such sin requires public repentance in order to expiate the assault on the spiritual, moral compass of the community. Private acts of spiritual betrayal are no different than societal betrayal. We have an obligation to serve Hashem by upholding His *mitzvos*. To violate our Heavenly trust indicates a serious flaw in our spiritual integrity. Although our sinful behavior is quite possibly known to only a few, the sinner must answer to Hashem for his breach in observance and can return only after he has carried out the strictures of *teshuvah gemurah*, complete *teshuvah*.

*Rashi* explains the above *pasuk* as referring to the hidden sins which people have committed. When an individual commits a sin, it is a personal rebellion which does not impugn the integrity of the community. Thus, Hashem will not hold the greater community culpable for this man's sin. The sin is a matter between him and Hashem. Sins committed publicly, often with the sanction of the community by virtue of their indifference, however, require communal expiation. When a person sins publicly, the community must assume part of the blame.

*Horav Avraham Pam, zl* (cited by Rabbi Sholom Smith in Messages from *Rav Pam*), renders this *pasuk* homiletically, allowing for another perspective concerning the meaning of *nistaros*, hidden things. It is impossible for a human being to comprehend Hashem's actions. We, as His creations, are unable to scrutinize what He does and why. Even someone like Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who had reached the apex of spirituality, was unable to delve into the depths of Hashem's actions. Indeed, when Hashem sent Moshe to redeem the Jews from Egypt, Pharaoh responded negatively and increased the work load of his Jewish slaves. Moshe questioned Hashem, crying out in agony: "Why?"

The *Maggid Meisharim* (commentary to *Parashas Vaeira*) explains that Hashem's response to Moshe was that His ways do not always conform to human logic. In other words, His ways are different. We act either with mercy or strict judgment. Hashem acts with both mercy and strict judgment – simultaneously. This is beyond the ken of mortal man.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* cites the *nevuah*, prophecy, in *Zecharyah* (14:7), which alludes to the period prior to the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*: "It will be a unique day; it will be known as *Yom Hashem*, Hashem's day, neither day nor night, but it will happen that toward evening there will be light."

*Metzudas David* explains that the period before *Moshiach's* arrival will be one of great ambiguity and incongruity. People will be unable to discern whether it is day or night, good or bad, a time of Heavenly mercy or strict justice. In some instances, it will be as bright as day, and, in others, pitch dark as night. We will be unsure whether it is safe or dangerous.

*Rav Pam* explains that this concept underscores -- and equally serves as a guiding principle for -- that to which we have been witness in the annals of the past almost eight decades. On the one hand, we have survived an unapparelled display of Hashem's wrath – as the Holocaust in which six million of our brothers and sisters were brutally murdered decimated European Jewry. On the other hand, the subsequent renaissance of Torah study, both in America and in the Holy Land, is unprecedented. This, in addition to the expansion of the *Yishuv* in *Eretz Yisrael*, is certainly miraculous. The flipside is the constant attacks we have sustained from our enemies, both within and without. The fact that so many lost souls have returned to religious observance is clearly a sign of Hashem's mercy, while the daily *tzaros*, troubles, illnesses, and tragedies that have almost become part of the fabric of our lives is, on the surface, not a manifestation of Divine mercy. It seems that the *Middas HaDin*, attribute of Strict Justice, is coming into play. Can these contradictions be reconciled? Not by mortal man. The mere fact that we see them as contradictions bespeaks the enigma that confronts us. Clearly, a Heavenly perspective is necessary to clarify the dichotomy. This is the meaning of *Ha'nistaros l'Hashem Elokeinu*; “The hidden things are from Hashem, our G-d.” When *Moshiach* arrives, we will then – and only then – understand.