



Parshat Va'era D'var Torah

By Elez Bell

At the end of Parshat Shmot, Moshe goes to Pharaoh with G-d's demand that the Jews be freed, but Pharaoh makes the Jews' work even harder. With great empathy, Moshe asks G-d why the Jews had to suffer more. G-d rebukes Moshe for his lack of trust and says that He will take them out of Egypt very soon. Here is the first pasuk of Va'era:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה':

G-d spoke to Moshe, and He said to him, I am the Lord.

The Da'at Zekeinim, a medieval commentary, has the following question and answer:

מהו אני ה'? כלומר "אף אל פי שאמרתי לך 'ראה נתתיך אלהים לפרעה' לא אתה אלהי כי אם לפרעה אך אני ה' גם לך."

What is the meaning of "I am the Lord"? What he means to say is, "even though I said to you, 'see I appointed you as a lord over Pharaoh', you are not my lord, only Pharaoh's lord. But I am your Lord."

The Da'at Zekeinim wonders why G-d tells Moshe who He is, if Moshe already knows very well that He is G-d. Moshe had spoken to G-d before (at the burning bush and on his way to Egypt). The Da'at Zekeinim answers that although Moshe was appointed as a master over Pharaoh, G-d is reminding him that he should not think that he is master over G-d. G-d is still master over him.

This is very hard to understand. How could Moshe think that he was a master over G-d? Why would G-d have to remind him?

A possible answer is that the way you act has a very powerful effect on what you think. For example, saying that you really started the fight when the other person was being blamed is not only an honest action, it also makes you a more honest person in the future. Even acting as a good or bad character in a play can affect your real personality. Since Moshe had to act as a master over Pharaoh, he started to feel ever so slightly that he was in control of the situation and needed a reminder from G-d to correct himself.

We can take away from this that if we want to become better people, we first need to act like better people. Many people hesitate to do mitzvot because they don't feel kind, compassionate, or connected to G-d. Really, if we do those mitzvot, they will help us become more kind, compassionate, and connected to G-d.