

Bais Yaacov Bnos Malka Newsletter

לעילוי נשמת יצחק עקיבא בן אהרן ז"ל

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Parshas Ki Tisa

פרשת כי תשא

אדר תשפ"ד



Near and Far

In *Parshas Ki Tisa*, Moshe makes two requests of *Hashem*. First, he asks, “הודעני נא את דרכיך,” “Please show me Your ways” (*Shemos* 33:13). Later, he asks, “הראני נא את כבודך,” “Please show me Your glory” (33:18). It is unclear exactly how *Hashem* responds to these two questions. Rabbeinu Bechayei explains that *Hashem* responded yes to the first question, but no to the second. As far as understanding *Hashem*’s ways and how He governs the world, Moshe Rabbeinu reached the greatest heights that a human being can achieve. Moshe had the deepest possible understanding of *Hashem*’s ways. However, his second request was to understand the essence of *Hashem*, and that is impossible, even for Moshe Rabbeinu.

This distinction is reflected in the grammatical construct of our *brachos*. All of the *brachos* begin in the second-person. We speak directly to *Hashem* and say “ברוך אתה ה’,” “Blessed are You, *Hashem*.” However, as the *bracha* continues, we switch to the third-person, speaking **about** *Hashem* instead of **to** Him. Thus, we conclude “שהכל נהיה בדברו,” “Everything is made by **His** word,” or “אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו,” “Who sanctified us through **His** *mitzvos* and commanded us.” What is the reason for this switch?

The standard explanation is that the *brachos* reflect two ways that a Jew tries to understand and relate to *Hashem*. On the one hand, we think about *Hashem*’s actions, which we can witness and understand. *Hashem* helps things grow; He causes the laws of nature to continue to function properly, and He is the One who allows us to think and walk and talk. In our *brachos*, we speak to *Hashem* in the second-person to reflect the fact that we are thanking *Hashem* and relating to *Hashem*’s actions, which we understand and relate to on some level. However, we cannot possibly understand *Hashem*’s essence. It is completely beyond human comprehension. In fact, when the Rambam describes *Hashem* in the *Moreh Nevuchim*, he does not describe what *Hashem* is, but rather what He is **not**. It is impossible for us to understand and describe what *Hashem* is, His essence. In order to express this, we switch to the third-person in our *brachos*. When one speaks in third person, it sounds like what you’re speaking about is not there in front of you. That is the message we express by switching to third-person in our *brachos*. *Hashem*’s essence is always hidden from us. According to this view, the third-person reflects the awe and respect we have for *Hashem*. When one speaks to royalty, the custom is to speak in third-person. When a person speaks to her *Rav*, she’ll often speak in the third-person as well: “What does the *Rav* think about this?” The third-person symbolizes distance, being hidden. In fact, in Hebrew, the term for third-person is “*nistar*,” hidden.

Rav Soloveitchik *ztz"l* develops a different angle on the switch in the *brachos* from second to third-person based on the comments of the Ramban. Until now, we have developed the approach of the *Rishonim* that focuses on our **understanding** of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. The second-person reflects our understanding of *Hashem*, whereas the third-person represents that *Hashem's* essence remains completely hidden from us. In contrast, the Ramban's approach, as explained by the Rav, focuses on our **relationship** with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. On the one hand, the gap is infinite; at the same time, we are very close. Other religions, *lehavdil*, blur the distinction between man and God, but in *Yahadus* there is no confusion. We believe that *Hashem* is Omnipotent, above time, and boundless, but despite the infinite gap between Him and us, *Hashem* allows us and commands us to have a relationship with Him.

Rabbeinu Bechayei points out that the idea of going back and forth between second and third-person, between You and He, is also found in *Tehillim*, specifically in *Ashrei*. In this *tefilla*, some of the *pesukim* talk about *Hashem* in the third-person, while others refer to Him in the second-person. For example, we say, “בכל יום אברכך ואהללה שמך לעולם ועד,” “Every day I will bless **You** and I will praise **Your** name forever,” but we also say “גדול ה' ומהלל מאד ולגדלתו אין חקר,” “*Hashem* is great and exceedingly praised, and **His** greatness has no measure.” We say, “זכר רב טובך יביעו וצדקתך ירננו,” “They will express the greatness of **Your** goodness and they will celebrate **Your** righteousness,” but we also say, “טוב ה' לכל ורחמיו על כל מעשיו,” “*Hashem* is good to all and **His** mercies are upon all of **His** creations.” Thus, the source for *Chazal's* formulation of the *brachos* is found already in *Sefer Tehillim*.

Rabbeinu Bechayei further explains that *Ashrei* itself hints to us that this is the appropriate way to speak to and praise *Hashem*. The *posuk* concludes, “וחסידך יברוכה.” We would usually write this as “וחסידך יברוך.” Rabbeinu Bechayei writes that the strange “כה” ending is used so that we can read the word as “כה יברכו,” “This is how you should bless.” How should we bless *Hashem*? The next two *pesukim* tell us: “כבוד מלכותך יאמרו וגבורתך ידברו,” “The glory of **Your** kingdom they will relate and they will speak of **Your** might,” and “להודיע לבני האדם גבורתו וכבוד הדר מלכותו,” “To recount to people **His** might and the glory of **His** kingdom.” First, praise *Hashem* in the second-person, and then praise Him in the third-person!

This is an important *yesod* in *avodas Hashem*. On the one hand, we have to recognize that *Hashem's* essence is beyond our comprehension. At the same time, we have to talk to *Hashem* directly and thank Him for everything that He does for us. We have to relate to *Hashem* as best as we can. This *yesod* is reflected in the striking grammatical construct of many of our *brachos*.

Have a wonderful and peaceful Shabbos!

Chana Ginsburg

The Dvar Torah has been adapted from the sefarim of Rav Beinsh Ginsburg



Kita Bet started the week off by sharing their thoughts on and experiences of Shabbos, as well as their hopes for the coming week.



Working hard in groups!



Kita Daled is 'Marbim B'simcha in Adar'! The girls are working on weekly activities that encourage positive speech and fosters unity. They also beautifully decorated and began their Purim notebooks!





Kita Alef completed learning the Tzeyre and Segol! They had a beautiful party on Purim Katan to celebrate. Each girl made their own smiley face and balloon out of the two tzlilim. They dressed up and enjoyed learning in the spirit of Adar and Simcha.



