

DOES HASHEM PRAY? (DAVEN)

Parshas Yisro - Meshpotim

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

One essay for these two parshios, this week's Yisro and next week's Mishpotim, may be deemed appropriate. One **א** letter, in the Torah, spells the connection. It is the letter "ר", "וואלה המשפטים", and these are the ordinances... Rashi expounds the intent of the connection. The laws in Mishpotim, dealing with civic matters between man and man, are given at Sinai just as the Ten Commandments and all requirements dealing between man and Hashem. Thus, the place of the Sanhedrin, High Court, should be placed in proximity to the Mizbaiach (altar).

Apparently, it is not only a juxtaposition of social civic law of the Torah and the laws dealing with matters of devotion to Hashem: more; it comes to connect the civic laws to the mizbaiach (altar) in particular, i.e. the statement at the end of Parshas Yisro ... **בכל המקום** (20:21).

We asked in the essay title "Does Hashem Daven?" The very question in the title is bewildering. We all pray to Hashem. Because "L'Hashem Hayeshua" (salvation comes from Hashem) (Tehilim 3:a). The source of all power to help the one in need is Hashem. What is the sense of Hashem Himself praying? To Whom?

The Shemona Esrei (basic Tefila) begins with three introductory **ברכות**, which are not meant to pray or beseech Hashem to respond to our needs. It is, rather, an acknowledgement that He is the Author of all life and all its blessings. It is the harbinger to prayer, to authenticate the source of all goodness. Thus after the third Bracha we begin to beseech Hashem to bestow upon us blessings we need. How can Hashem Himself indulge in prayer? To Whom? It's like the non Baal Tzedaka who takes from one pocket and places it in his other pocket.

The answer, however, to the question in our title, surprisingly, is "yes", a resounding yes. Hashem does pray sometimes, in exceptional cases. Or, at least, prays along with our prayers, before responding to the prayers.

So we learn in the Gemoro (Brochos 7a): "Wherefrom do we know that Hashem prays? From the passage, Hashem saying: "I will bring them to My holy mountain, and I will gladden them in My house of prayer..." (Isaiah 56:7). Apparently Hashem prays, so it is Hashem's house of prayer. The Gemoro queries what is the prayer about? It is as follows: "May My characteristic of mercy overwhelm that of anger."

It is obvious that this prayer in particular needs the assistance from Above, because it negates the original principle of creation "Beraishis Boro Elokim". The intention was to create a world based on strict judgment, (Elokim represents Midas Hadin). When man's behavior is unworthy, harsh judgment is called for. In order to allow man to pray that this principle be ignored, that nevertheless the attribute of mercy should dominate, Hashem Himself assists by joining in such a prayer.

This brings us to a remarkable statement in today's Sidra: In the context of the laws of the MIZBAIACH in the Beth Hamikdosh, Hashem says "Wherever I will pronounce My name ("Azkir es Shemi") I shall come to you and bless you." Rashi interprets "Azkir" "Wherever I permit my name to be mentioned" (as e.g. the Beth Hamikdosh).

The Tzror Hamor, however, quotes a Yerushalmi and Zohar that AZKIR refers to Hashem Himself pronouncing the ineffable Name.

Especially on Yom Kippur, in the Avoda of the Kohain Godol (high priest) when he quotes the Chumosh passage about Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, when we are purified "before Hashem", the ineffable Name is pronounced by Hashem Himself.

The Name is "Yotzei MePi Kohain Godol, emanating through the mouth of the Kohain Godol (see Mishna Yuma 6:2, Tiferes Yisroel 20).

The Sidur Otzar haTefilos, on Yom Kippur Avoda, quotes an opinion that the human faculties of speech do not include the ability to pronounce the ineffable Name correctly. The Shechina assists him to pronounce the Name. Hashem is, thus, involved, participating in our prayer.

Here, then, is apex of the connection "And these are the ordinances... (between man and his fellow man). On Yom Kippur, the Chumosh makes it clear, according to above, that at least a minyan of ten are present in "My house", so called because Hashem Himself prays with us. The ציבור is indispensable. No individual prayer (ביחידות) can reach that level. Here, then is the absolute impact on every davener during תפילה בציבור, when the שליח ציבור repeats the Amidah, to refrain from talking to his neighbor, as happens sometimes. More; to listen attentively, with the consciousness of the presence of Hashem Himself. בכל מקום אשר אזכיר את שמי (according to Tzeror Hamor above) mention My name.

The Azoro (Beth Hamikdosh) was filled to capacity on Yom Kippur when the NAME emerged from the mouth of the Kohain Godol, all standing and listening in utmost awe and reverence. According to Rabban Gamliel (Rosh Hashono 34b) this consciousness is an imperative all year round, at the Chazan's repeat of the Amida (see Mevartenura ibid). The source for this point of view may be the above connection of Tzibur consciousness, MISHPOTIM, to the Yom Kippur Avoda, and the utterance of the name of Hashem.

This insight may explain the proximity in time of the privilege of constructing the Mishkan (Tabernacle) "on the morrow of Yom Kippur" (Rashi 35:1).

