

Note, in Parashat Mishpatim (23:20), HaShem says to Moshe, “*HINEI ANOCHI SHOLEI’ACH MALACH LEFANECHA*” [*Behold, I send an angel before you to protect you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared*”]. Moshe was willing to accept the fact that an angel of G-d will be leading them. Yet in our parasha Moshe is very adamant on this point and says, (33:15) “*VAYOMER EILAV, IM EIN PANECHA HOLCHIM AL TAALEINU MIZEH*”, [*“If your Presence does not go, do not take us forth from here”*]. Moshe insisted that G-d Himself accompany the Jewish people personally and NOT send an angel instead. **Why does Moshe react differently in each instance?**

Rav Soloveitchik suggested that there is a basic difference between the two instances. In parashat Mishpatim, the Israelites had not sinned. Therefore, Moshe felt that an angel could guide them to their destination. But in Ki Tissa, when the Israelites committed a grave sin, Moshe felt that they needed G-d to lead them. The reason for this is that angels who epitomize the attribute of *Middat Hadin*, (strict judgement), cannot relate to the idea of *teshuvah*, which is rooted in the attribute of *Middat Ha-Rachamim* (mercy).*****

In parashat Mishpatim, G-d warns Moshe about this nature of angels, (23:21) “Beware of him, obey him and do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive...”. In Ki Tissa, G-d taught Moshe about the thirteen attributes of mercy which emphasizes HaShem’s compassion toward sinners. That is why Moshe insisted that G-d, and not an angel, guide our people after the sin of the Golden Calf.

What we derive from this is that we have to emulate both aspects of HaKadosh Baruch-Hu who combines both the *Middat HaDin* and the *Middat HaRachamim*. When it comes to setting rules for ourselves and judging ourselves, we have to aspire and demand the highest moral and ethical behavior without any deviations-for that the *Middat Hadin* requires. However, when judging others we dare not act as angels but we must follow *VEHALACHT BIDRACHAV* (Devarim 28:9) emulate the attributes of G-d’s mercy.

For example, what I observe in Shul. When it comes to showing Kavod (honor) for Tefillah and Bet Haknesset we must and should demand the highest rules for ourselves but not to insult or show anger to others who are lax in the rules and talk during Tefillah . To them we should not apply *Middat Hadin*, but kindness and compassion, for most likely, they know not better. Educating them nicely, friendly and compassionately-might help. That is true when dealing with our spouse, our children, our friends and neighbors. Act like HaShem, but not like an angel. Moshe didn’t want an angel as a guide and neither do people we associate with. Wear the “hat of an angel”-for yourself, but the “hat of HaShem” for **all** others. This is true for any faults we see in others. Be as hard as you want on yourself but-criticizing others is an art and skill. There are many Halachot on how to do it, but the bottom line is-it must be done with sensitivity and compassion.

Shabbat Shalom from Deerfield Beach, Fla.
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