

## פרשת כי תשא

It would seem to be unavoidable – how can we not discuss the episode of the *Eigel HaZahav* when we come to Parshas Ki Siso? Just like we happily learn about the wonderful national events that occurred to Israel in Sefer Sh'mos, the Exodus, *Mattan Torah* and building the Mishkan, so we cannot escape relating to that traumatic national event that changed the lives of our people throughout history.

The Torah makes it quite clear that the historical impact of *Eigel HaZahav* was not limited to the particular time and place when and where the event occurred.

It is true, of course, that we can identify the location of that terrible sin and its date.

The location is the encampment of Israel at Sinai and the date is the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz in the year 2448, the year of the Exodus.

It was on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz that the Golden Calf was built and on the 17<sup>th</sup> when Moshe Rabbenu descended from Mt. Sinai and broke the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

But, even though the event per se was limited to that day, its repercussions are ongoing.

Though Moshe Rabbenu was able to receive repentance for Israel at that time, the reprieve was not complete. The event left an indelible mark on our history.

And thus we read in our Parshas Ki Siso (Perek 32/P'sukim 30-35):

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרַת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטֵאתֶם חֲטָאתֶם חֲטָאתֶם גְּדֹלָה וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה אֶל ה' אֹלֵי אֲכַפְרָה בְּעַד חֲטֹאתֵיכֶם: וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אָנָּה חֲטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֲטָאתָ גְדֹלָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהִי זָהָב: וְעַתָּה אִם תִּשָּׂא חֲטֹאתֵם וְאִם אֵין מַחְנִי נָא מִסִּפְרֵךָ אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה מִי אֲשֶׁר חֲטָא לִי אֲמַחֲנוּ מִסִּפְרֵי: וְעַתָּה לֶךָ נַחֵה אֶת הָעָם אֶל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לֶךָ הִנֵּה מִלְאָכִי יֵלֶךְ לִפְנֶיךָ וּבִיּוֹם פְּקֻדֵי וּפְקֻדֹתַי עֲלֵהֶם חֲטֹאתֵם: וַיִּגַּף ה' אֶת הָעָם עַל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֶת הָעֵגֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱהָרֹן:

It was on the morrow and Moshe said to the people, 'you have sinned a great sin and now I will go up to G-d, perhaps I will atone for your sins. Moshe returned to Hashem and he said, 'Please, this people have sinned a great sin and they made for themselves gods of gold. And now, if You will forgive their sin; and if not, erase me please from Your book that you wrote.' Hashem said to Moshe, 'He who has sinned to me – him I will erase from My book.

And now, go and lead the people to where I spoke to you; behold My angel will go before you and on the day that I Hashem will visit upon you, I will visit upon you their sin. Hashem brought a plague against the people because they made the calf that Aharon made.

Rashi writes:

וביום פקדי וגו' - עתה שמעתי אליך מלכלותם יחד, ותמיד תמיד כשאפקוד עליהם עונותיהם ופקדתי עליהם מעט מן העון הזה עם שאר העונות, ואין פורענות באה על ישראל שאין בה קצת מפרעון עון העגל:

*And on the day that I Hashem will visit upon you* – Now, I Hashem have listened to you, Moshe, and have refrained from destroying them altogether. But, always, always, when I will visit upon them punishment for their sins, I will visit upon them a little from this sin with their other sins. There is no punishment that will come upon Israel without a small amount of punishment from the sin of the Golden Calf.

The assumption is that Israel will never be completely without sin and thus the punishment that comes from a particular sin will be enhanced because it will include punishment for the *Eigel HaZahav* as well.<sup>1</sup>

However, as much as it behooves us to remember the punishment of the *Eigel*, we must, at the same time, not forget that the aftermath of the sin of the *Eigel* was uniquely special and heartwarming, *davka* because of the gravity of the sin of the calf that preceded it.

It is not for naught that Moshe Rabbenu spent the 40 days following the sin of the *Eigel* on Mt. Sinai seeking to expiate that sin. Moshe was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days to receive the Torah and the idolatrous act of the *Eigel HaZahav* undid the entirety of those 40 days, as it were. All that Moshe Rabbenu had accomplished, all that he received became undone and unraveled during those 40 days. One day of fasting

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is very clear that we are incapable of measuring the proportionality of a sin and its punishment because we cannot fathom G-d's ways, we may note here that even if it may not seem that the Divine punishment fits the crime, i.e. it is too severe, we are to remember it is not for this sin alone that punishment is being meted out.

We are receiving an additional measure of punishment for the national sin of the *Eigel*.

and prayer served as an act of repentance for each of the first forty days when the Shechinah was uniquely palpable.

And then, after expiation was reached, there had to be a further 40 days to receive the Torah again.

G-d had said that he would obliterate those first 40 days due the sin of the Golden Calf and obliterate the people who were supposed to receive the bounty of those days. That is what we read in G-d's words to Moshe even before his descent as those first 40 days came to their abrupt conclusion (Perek 32/Posuk 10):

וְעַתָּה הַנִּיחָה לִּי יַיִחַר אַפִּי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלֵם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל:

And now, leave Me alone and My anger will rage against them and I will obliterate them and I will make you, Moshe, into a great nation.

So after these disastrous words, and other harsh words uttered by Hashem and by Moshe, nonetheless, there was no obliteration. Moshe Rabbenu's prayers not only removed that threat, but through his *teshuva* on behalf of the people, he received new insights into the nature of Divinity.

Thus, Moshe said (Perek 33/Posuk 13):

וְעַתָּה אִם נָא מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת דְּרָכְךָ וְאִדְעָךְ לְמַעַן אֶמְצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְרָאָה כִּי עַמְּךָ הִגּוּי הַזֶּה:

And now, if I Moshe have found favor in Your eyes, inform me, please, of Your ways and I will know You in order for me to find favor in Your eyes; see, Hashem, that this nation is Your People.

There is no repetition in this verse. Moshe says, 'I have found favor in Your eyes' this far, I now want to find even greater favor in Your eyes.

How will Moshe Rabbenu know that he has found even greater favor in the eyes of Hashem? If Hashem answers him and reveals to him an additional insight into Divine actions, that will be an act of love that indicates beyond any doubt that Moshe is being graced by Hashem.

But Moshe was not speaking for himself only. Note the end of the verse:

וְרָאָה כִּי עַמְּךָ הִגּוּי הַזֶּה:

See, Hashem, that this nation is Your People.

What a turn from Hashem's earlier statement. Hashem said, as He sent Moshe away from Him at the time of the sin of the *Eigel* (Perek 32/Posuk 7):

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵּךְ יֵרַד כִּי שָׁחַת עַמְּךָ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

Hashem spoke to Moshe, 'Go, go down because your people have acted destructively, those whom you took up from the Land of Egypt.

Your people, Hashem said. He Yisborach disassociated Himself from them. And now, Moshe Rabbenu said to Hashem:

וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי עָמַךְ הִגְוִי הַזֶּה:

See, Hashem, that this nation is Your People.

Moshe Rabbenu has brought the people back to Hashem. Once again, we are His People!

And of course this is what Chazal teach us (Yalkut Shimoni Parshas B'reishis 20):

במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין צדיקים גמורים אינן עומדין.

In the place where penitents stand, [even] those who are completely righteous are unable to stand there.

Let us see just one example of the benevolence that met Israel during this time.

The answer to this request of Moshe Rabbenu – for Hashem to show him His ways – was the *שלש עשרה מידות של רחמים*, the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy that teach us how to understand G-d's ways and how to see His kindness. We read (Perek 34/P'sukim 5-7):

וַיֵּרַד ה' בְּעֵנָן וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שֵׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה': וַיַּעֲבֹר ה' עַל פְּנֵיו וַיִּקְרָא ה' ה' א... ל רחום וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת: נִצֵּר חֶסֶד לְאֵלִפִּים נִשְׂא עֹן וְפָשַׁע וְחִטָּאָה וְנִקְהָה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד עֹן אֲבוֹת עַל בְּנֵים וְעַל בְּנֵי בְנֵים עַל שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל רַבְעִים:

Hashem went down in the cloud and He stood with him there and He called in the Name of Hashem. Hashem passed by his face and He<sup>2</sup> called:

Hashem, Hashem, G-d Who is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and with much kindness and truth. He keeps kindness for thousands, He forgives iniquity, negligence and sin and cleans away sin;

<sup>3</sup>He does not clean away sin; He remembers the sins of the fathers on children upon grandchildren on the third generation and on the fourth generation.

What was being taught to Moshe Rabbenu? Was this a lesson of philosophy? Was Moshe Rabbenu receiving intellectual information to understand Divinity? Was this a revelation so that Rabi Yehuda HaLevi and Rambam and others could author their masterful Sefarim on Jewish Thought?

We learn in Masseches Rosh Hashanah (17 b):

ויעבר ה' על פניו ויקרא, אמר רבי יוחנן: אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרו, מלמד שנתעטף הקדוש ברוך הוא כשליח צבור, והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה. אמר לו: כל זמן שישראל חוטאין - יעשו לפני כסדר הזה, ואני מוחל להם.

*He passed over his face and He called* – Rabi Yochanon said, ‘Were this verse not to have been written, it would have been impossible to say it. This teaches us that Hashem wrapped Himself up as *Shliach Tzibbur* and He showed Moshe the order of prayer. Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Whenever

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<sup>2</sup> In this translation we are following the opinions that Hashem spoke and taught these words about Himself to Moshe. There are commentaries who hold that it was Moshe who called out these Thirteen Attributes.

<sup>3</sup> Although these words are a continuation of the verse, we separated them because they are not part of the Thirteen Attributes.

Israel will sin, they should follow this order of prayer and I Hashem will forgive them'.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, one need not belabor the point that this gift of prayer and repentance was extraordinary. However, to appreciate the extraordinary nature of this gift to an even greater degree we will first look at an earlier verse.

As we saw above, Moshe Rabbenu prefaced his requests before Hashem with his hope that he had found חן in the 'eyes of Hashem'. That request, to find חן-'favor' in the eyes of Hashem is repeated numerous times in that section, with each of the requests that Moshe Rabbenu makes – particularly to gain greater understanding of 'Hashem's ways'.

And thus we read the Divine response (Perek 33/Posuk 19):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶעֱבִיר כָּל טוֹבִי עַל פְּנֵיךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם ה' לְפָנֶיךָ וַחֲנַנְתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אָחַן  
וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אָרַחֵם:

Hashem said, 'I will pass all of My goodness<sup>5</sup> over your face and I will call the Name of Hashem before you; I will give favor to those whom I Hashem will favor and will be merciful upon those whom I will be merciful.

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<sup>4</sup> Although it is certainly appropriate and necessary to understand why the recitation of these words would lead to Divine forgiveness, that is not the subject of our discussion here and we will leave that understanding for another opportunity.

We will note that certainly this is not a magic formula that by uttering words Divine forgiveness is an automatic result; this is not a pagan superstition!

<sup>5</sup> Rabbenu Bachye writes here:

באותה שעה הראה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה כל אוצרות מתן שכן של צדיקים, כל אחד ואחד לפי מעשיו, והוא שואל: האוצר הזה של מי הוא, והוא אומר לו: של בעלי התורה, והאוצר זה של מי הוא, של מכבדיהם. ואחר כך הראה לו אוצר גדול מזה, אמר לו: רבונו של עולם האוצר הגדול הזה של מי הוא, אמר לו: מי שיש לו מעשים טובים אני נותן לו מאוצריו, ומי שאין לו, בחנם אני עושה ונותן לו מזה, שנאמר: וחנותי את אשר אחון.

At that time, Hashem showed Moshe all of the treasures of the rewards of the righteous, each one according to his deeds. Moshe asked, 'For whom is this treasure?' and Hashem answered, 'For those are masters of Torah.' Moshe asked, 'For whom is this?' and Hashem answered, 'For those who honor masters of Torah.' Then Hashem showed Moshe an even greater treasure and Moshe said, 'Master of the Universe, this very large treasure is for whom?'

Rashi writes:

ויאמר אני אעביר וגו' - הגיעה שעה, שתראה בכבודי מה שארשה אותך לראות, לפי שאני רוצה וצריך ללמדך סדר תפלה, שכשנצרכת לבקש רחמים על ישראל, הזכרת לי זכות אבות, כסבור אתה, שאם תמה זכות אבות אין עוד תקוה, אני אעביר כל מדת טובי לפניך על הצור, ואתה צפון במערה:

*Hashem said, I will cause to pass etc.* – The time has come that you will see the level of My Glory that I will allow you to see. This is because I want and need to teach you the order of prayer so that when you will need to seek mercy for Israel, you will remind Me of the merit of the *Ovos*.

That is because you might think that the merit of the *Ovos* has ceased and if so there will no longer be any hope for Israel. Thus I will cause the attributes of My goodness to pass before you on the rock and you will be hidden in the cave.

וקראתי בשם ה' לפניך - ללמדך סדר בקשת רחמים אף אם תכלה זכות אבות, וכסדר זה שאתה רואה אותי מעוטף וקרא י"ג מדות הוי מלמד את ישראל לעשות כן, ועל ידי שיזכירו לפני רחום וחנון יהיו נענין כי רחמי לא כלים:

*I will proclaim the Name of Hashem before you* – to teach you the order of seeking Divine mercy, even if *Z'chus Ovos* will be no longer function. And it is this order when you see Me enwrapped [like the *Sh'liach Tzibbur*] and reciting the 13 Attributes of Hashem's mercy, you, Moshe, will teach Israel to do the same. When Israel will mention My mercy and compassion, they will be answered because My mercy is never finished.

וחנתי את אשר אחן - אותן פעמים שארצה לחון:

*I will show compassion when I will be compassionate* – Those times when I will wish to be compassionate.

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Hashem said, 'For the one who has good deeds, I give this treasure and the one who does not, I give him from this, even if he does not deserve it.' This is as it says, "I will be compassionate upon the ones whom I Hashem will be compassionate.

ורחמתי - עת שאחפוץ לרחם. עד כאן לא הבטיחו אלא עתים אענה עתים לא אענה,  
אבל בשעת מעשה אמר לו (שמות לד/י<sup>6</sup>) הנה אנכי כורת ברית, הבטיחו שאינן  
חוזרות ריקם:

*I will be merciful* – at the time that I Hashem will wish to be merciful.

Until this point, Hashem only promised Moshe that there will be times when He will answer the prayers and times when He will not answer. But at the time of the event [of the revelation of those 13 Attributes of Mercy] when He said, 'Behold I Hashem am making a covenant', He promised Moshe that their prayers will never have an empty response.

It is this final piece of Rashi that catches our eye. When Hashem informed Moshe Rabbenu with the words:

וְחִנֵּיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶחֶן וְרַחֲמֵתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם:

I will give favor to those whom I Hashem favor and will be merciful upon those whom I will be merciful

Moshe understood that there was much that HaKodosh Boruch Hu was keeping hidden from him. It is true that Hashem is merciful and compassionate – but only when He chooses to be and when is that? We cannot know.

Then immediately, when He reveals His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy to Moshe, Hashem informs Moshe that this formula always works to some degree:

הבטיחו שאינן חוזרות ריקם:

Their prayers will never have an empty response.

Now this instance is far different than the episode in our Parsha, and similar ones in other Parshos, where Hashem recanted His decree of destruction and 'changed His mind'.

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<sup>6</sup> This verse follows the 13 Attributes of Mercy and reads in its entirety:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' הִנֵּה אֲנִי כֹרֵת בְּרִית נֶגֶד כָּל עַמְּךָ אֲעֲשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִבְרְאוּ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הַגּוֹיִם  
וְרָאָה כָּל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אֲתָה בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת מַעֲשֵׂה ה' כִּי נוֹרָא הוּא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ:

Hashem said, 'Behold I am making a covenant; before all of your people I will do wonders that were never created in the whole of the land and in any of the nations of the world; this people whom you are in their midst will see the Act of G-d which is awesome that I am doing with you.'

We read earlier in our Parshas Ki Siso (Perek 32/Posuk 14):

וַיִּנָּחֵם ה' עַל הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת לְעַמּוֹ:

Hashem 'changed His mind' regarding the bad that He spoke to do to His<sup>7</sup> People.

Here a process occurred. Hashem meant what He said when He told Moshe that He was going to destroy Israel and now He 'changed His mind'<sup>8</sup>.

There was a starting point of impending destruction and the finishing point when that decision was reversed.

However, in the instance of the revelation of His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy there was no point and counterpoint, no dispute whatsoever. That means that Hashem deliberately understated what He was going to do and then demonstrated that His words were an understatement by the action that He performed.

How is this to be understood?

In fact, this is a Mishnah in the first Perek of Masseches Ovos where we read (Mishnah 15):

שַׁמַּי אֹמֵר עֲשֵׂה תוֹרַתְךָ קִבֵּעַ אִמּוֹר מֵעַט וְעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה וְהוּי מִקְבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם  
בְּסִבְר פָּנִים יְפוֹת:

Shammai says, 'Make your Torah study permanent; say little and do much; greet everyone with a nice demeanor.

Rashi there quotes the proof for Shammai's statement of

אִמּוֹר מֵעַט וְעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה

Say little and do much

from Chazal. He writes:

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<sup>7</sup> Here, the narrative of the Torah informs us that concomitant with His 'change of mind', Israel once again qualified to be termed "His People".

<sup>8</sup> This week's D'var Torah is not the forum to attempt to understand 'changes' made by the Immutable G-d.

שכן דרך הצדיקים שכן מצינו באברהם שאמר ואקחה פת לחם וגו' וכתוב ויקח בן בקר רך וטוב וכתוב מהרי שלש סאים קמח וגו':

This is the way of the righteous. This is what we found regarding Avraham who said, 'Take some bread'. And then it says 'He took a young and tender animal' and then it is written, 'Hurry and make cakes with 3 *seah* measures of flour<sup>9</sup>.

If one would have heard the words of Avraham Ovinu and not have seen his deeds that followed, it would be reasonable to assume that the repast that he prepared for his guests would have been meager. It would have been sufficient to remove the pangs of hunger, but not more than that. Of course, for the weary and famished traveler, such hospitality is most welcome and appreciated.

However, when we observe the deeds of Avraham, we see that he prepared a sumptuous feast. Most likely, those nomads had a meal in the house of Avraham far greater than they had ever enjoyed in their own home.

This, therefore, is the source that Chazal found in the Torah as the basis of Shammai's dictum of

אמור מעט ועשה הרבה

Say little and do much.

What is the *hashkafa* behind this famous maxim of Shammai HaZaken?

One answer is that it has a great deal of practicality. An example of that practicality is another Mishnah, this time in Masseches Bava Metzia. We read there (Perek 7/Mishnah 1):

השוכר את הפועלים ואמר להם להשכים ולהעריב מקום שנהגו שלא להשכים ושלא להעריב אינו רשאי לכופן מקום שנהגו לזון יזון לספק במתיקה יספק הכל כמנהג המדינה מעשה ברבי יוחנן בן מתיא שאמר לבנו צא שכור לנו פועלים הלך ופסק להם מזונות וכשבא אצל אביו אמר לו בני אפילו אם אתה עושה להם כסעודת שלמה

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<sup>9</sup> Ramban here tells us the converse:

ורשעים אומרים הרבה ואפילו מעט אינן עושין, כמו עפרון, שבדיבור נתן הכל, ובמעשה לא הניח אפילו דינר אחד מן השווי.

The wicked say much and even a little - they do not do. This is like it was with *Efron* who said that he would give everything to Avraham and in fact he did not even give any discount from the full price.

בשעתו לא יצאת ידי חובתך עמהן שהן בני אברהם יצחק ויעקב אלא עד שלא יתחילו במלאכה צא ואמור להם על מנת שאין לכם עלי אלא פת וקטנית בלבד.

One who hires workers for the day and stipulated<sup>10</sup> that they would come early to work or to stay late – if it was a locale where there wasn't a practice for workers to come early or stay late, he cannot force them. If the practice in that locale was to give meals, he must give meals; if the practice was to give sweets – he should give them. All is according to the practice in that locale.

An event occurred with Rabi Yochanan ben Mas'ia who told his son to hire workers for the day. The son hired them and agreed to give them 'mezonos-food'. When he came and told his father what he did, Rabi Yochanan ben Mas'ia said to him, 'My son, even if you will prepare a gigantic meal as was done for Shlomo HaMelech in his time, you will not live up to your agreement with them because they are the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov<sup>11</sup>. Rather, before they begin their work, go and tell them that the condition is that they cannot expect more than bread and beans.'

Thus, one has to be very careful with one's words so that they do not create false expectations that could lead to an unpleasant experience.

However, if this is the reasoning that Hashem spoke less than what He in fact did, that is untenable. Although a person may not be able to fulfil his word, G-d certainly is able and He does.

The source of 'speaking little and doing much' that is brought from Avraham is obviously relevant. Avraham was flesh and blood as were his guests.

It is important to know at this stage in which we are investigating the change in G-d's promise to Moshe Rabbenu – that He would sometimes be merciful and compassionate and to the realization of that promise that it would be always

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<sup>10</sup> The Gemara discusses the precise nature of the stipulation.

<sup>11</sup> Rabi Yochanan ben Mas'ia held that an open-ended promise of a meal has no inherent limitations and that it was possible that the workers, who had to be treated with respect because of their pedigree, could have potentially expected a banquet. Therefore the prospective employer had to specify what his offer was.

functional, that that was not the only time that we find such 'behavior' performed by HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

In his commentary, Mogen Ovov, to the Mishnah in Ovov, the *Rashbatz* writes:

אמור מעט ועשה הרבה זו מדה עליונית היא, שהקדוש ברוך הוא אמר מעט, שלא אמר אלא 'דן אנכי' [בראשית טו/יד<sup>12</sup>], שהן שתי אותיות, "דן", והביא עליהם כמה מכות וגאלם בכ"ח תיבות שהן ע"ב אותיות שהם בפסוק "או הנסה א...ל'קים לבא לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי" - עד "מוראים גדולים" [דברים ד/לד<sup>13</sup>]. כמו שאמרו בילמדנו פרשת וירא אליו [תנחומא סימן ד וישא עיניו].

*Say little and do much* – this a very high-level attribute because Hashem said little. <sup>14</sup>Regarding the *Bris Bein HaBorim* – He only said, 'I will *dan*-judge' the nation that will afflict Israel. The punishment was *דן*, two letters. But, He brought upon them many plagues and redeemed them with 28 words that contain 72 letters – as we see in the verse, 'Was there a mighty being who attempted to come and to take one nation from the midst of another nation'...until the words "great awesome deeds"

This is like what the Midrash Tanchuma says regarding Avraham Ovinu and the guests in Parsha Vayera.

However, there is a justification for this application of

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<sup>12</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְגַם אֶת הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ דָן אֲנִי וְאַחֲרַי כִּן יֵצְאוּ בְרִכְשׁ גְּדוֹלִים:  
And also the nation that will force them to work – I Hashem will judge them;  
afterwards Israel shall go out with great possessions.

<sup>13</sup> The entire verse reads:

אוּ הֲנִסָּה אֱלֹהִים לְבֹא לְקַחַת לּוֹ גּוֹי מִקְרֵב גּוֹי בְּמִסְתַּת בְּאִתּוֹת וּבְמוֹפְתִים וּבְמַלְחָמָה וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזְרוּעַ  
נְטוּיָה וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדוֹלִים כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָכֶם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְעֵינֵינוּ:  
Or did a mighty power attempt to come and to take a nation from the midst of  
a nation with marvels and signs and wondrous phenomena and war and with  
a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with greatly awesome acts – as all  
that Hashem your G-d did for you in Egypt before your eyes.

<sup>14</sup> Rabbenu Yona here cites this explanation in the name of Rabbenu Sa'adia Gaon.

As the *meforshim* teach us, the very nature of identity of the persecutor of Israel was hidden in that covenant that Hashem made with Avraham Ovinu. Since there is בחירה חופשית, free-will, Hashem did not decree upon any particular nation to take up the cudgel of persecutor of Israel. Additionally, as other commentators point out, ברית בין הבתרים only discussed a limited persecution whereas when that prophecy was fulfilled by the Egyptians – the level of affliction and persecution that they imposed upon our ancestors went far beyond what Hashem decreed in the covenant. Therefore, it could be that based on what Hashem said a ‘two-letter’ punishment would have been sufficient. After the Egyptians did what they did, a much stiffer punishment was required.

And thus we return to our Parshas Ki Siso and the upgrading of Hashem’s Word when He said that the application of compassion and mercy would be ‘sometimes’ and the action of the revelation of His Attributes of Mercy when He said that those prayers would always be efficacious, to some degree at least.

It is understood, as we wrote above and as we understand intuitively, that whatever rationale exists for human beings to speak less and do more is irrelevant for רבון העולמים. In fact, vis a vis HaKodosh Boruch Hu, ‘speaking’ and ‘doing’ are constructs that we assign to Him so that we can get some grasp on how He interacts with us.

Thus, it is evident that HaKodosh Boruch Hu Himself wanted to teach us the message of

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as an independent concept, not connected to any particular event in which I could ascribe a reason as to why in that event ‘speaking little’ and ‘doing much more’ was essential.

And thus, the question is raised as to why it is that our venue was chosen as the location of this Divine message which we are to emulate?

Perhaps we can explain that the context of this message is the reason for its presentation here.

The context is the Divine Attributes of Mercy. Of course, those Divine Attributes are the ultimate perfection; they are Divine.

Man is told to emulate G-d. We read in Parshas R'eh (D'vorim Perek 13/Posuk 5):

אַחֲרַי ה' אֶלֶּלִיקִיכֶם תִּלְכוּ וְאֶתוֹ תִירְאוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבְקוֹלוֹ תִשְׁמְעוּ וְאֶתוֹ תַעֲבֹדוּ  
וְבוֹ תִדְבְּקוּן:

You shall go after Hashem your G-d; you shall fear Him and His commandments you shall guard and you shall listen to His voice; you shall serve Him and to Him you shall cleave.

We learn in Masseches Sotah (14 a):

מאי דכתיב: אחרי ה' א...ל'קיים תלכו? וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה? והלא כבר נאמר: (דברים ד/כד<sup>15</sup>) כי ה' א...ל'קייך אש אוכלה הוא! אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, מה הוא מלביש ערומים, דכתיב: (בראשית ג/כא) ויעש ה' א...ל'קים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם, אף אתה הלבש ערומים; הקדוש ברוך הוא ביקר חולים, דכתיב: (בראשית יח/א<sup>16</sup>) וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא, אף אתה בקר חולים; הקדוש ברוך הוא ניחם אבלים, דכתיב: (בראשית כה/יא<sup>17</sup>) ויהי אחרי מות אברהם ויברך א...ל'קים את יצחק בנו, אף אתה נחם אבלים; הקדוש ברוך הוא קבר מתים, דכתיב: (דברים לד/ו<sup>18</sup>) ויקבר אותו בגיא, אף אתה קבור מתים.

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<sup>15</sup> The entire verse reads:

כִּי ה' אֶלֶּלִיקִיךָ אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָה הוּא אֶלֶּלִיקִיךָ:

Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire; He is a zealous G-d.

<sup>16</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֵינוּ מִמְרָא וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם:

Hashem appeared to Avraham in *Eilonei Mamre* and Avraham was sitting at the opening of his tent in the heat of the day.

<sup>17</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶלֶּלִיקִים אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק עִם בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאֵי:

It was after the death of Avraham and G-d blessed his son Yitzchak and Yitzchak dwelled near the well of *la'chai ro'i*.

<sup>18</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיִּקְבֹּר אֶתוֹ בְּגִי בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב מוֹל בֵּית פְּעוֹר וְלֹא יָדַע אִישׁ אֶת קְבֻרָתוֹ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

Hashem buried Moshe in the valley in the Land of Moav, opposite *Beis P'or* and no one knows his burial place until this day.

What does the Torah write? 'You shall go after Hashem your G-d.' Is it possible for a person to go after the Shechinah? Is it not already written, 'Because Hashem your G-d is a consuming fire'?

But this means to go after the attributes of Hashem. Just like He dresses the unclothed, as it is written, 'Hashem made cloaks of skin for Odom and his wife and He dressed them' – so should you clothe the unclothed.

Hashem visits the sick as it is written, 'Hashem appeared to Avraham in *Eilonei Mamre*' – so should you visit the sick.

Hashem comforts the mourners as it is written, 'It was after the death of Avraham and G-d blessed his son Yitzchak' – so should you comfort the mourners.

Hashem buries the dead as it is written, 'Hashem buried Moshe in the valley' – so should you bury the dead.

What does G-d teach when he demonstrates

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in this context?

I think that the lesson is, particularly in the context of *middos* – we are never to say that we have reached the pinnacle of our abilities or that we have reached the heights of our emulation of G-d.

We are to be modest. We are not to say and not to think that we have accomplished all that there is to accomplish and all that there is to achieve.

We are allowed to speak. We are not to be silent about our accomplishments –but we are to put them into a proper perspective. Not the perspective of self-serving enhancement – but into the perspective of building upon our accomplishments, never to say דינו – it's enough.

Beyond the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy – there is one that comes before them all, an indispensable prerequisite – the personal attribute of *middos*-realization as we use the time allotted to us by the Ribbono Shel Olom to ever-

increase our success in this world so that our everlasting future will be crowned with an ever-increasing closeness to HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock