

Ibn Kaspi to Exodus 6:13 asks how Mosheh Rabbeinu could presume to challenge his own fitness to be G-d's messenger of redemption – if G-d chose him, should not that demonstrate his fitness? He answers not by reducing Mosheh's protestations to formal rhetoric, nor admitting that Mosheh was genuinely ambivalent about obeying G-d, but rather by asserting that Mosheh wanted only to make sure that he had heard properly.

Ibn Kaspi's comments here are part of his general thesis, which I think among the most important and creative theses in medieval parshanut, that what Tanakh superficially describes as repeated, and significantly redundant, prophetic episodes actually represent a prophet gradually teasing deeper and deeper meanings out of a core epiphany.

A second important idea contained in this section is that while one can have absolute confidence and faith in the fact of Revelation, one cannot have the same confidence about the meaning of Revelation. (Another way of framing this might be to say that the principle "The Torah is not in Heaven" grants authority at the expense of certainty.) Even Moshe Rabbeinu, at least before reaching the incomparable level of Sinai, wondered whether he had understood G-d aright when the Divine command failed to conform to what he saw as required by practical reason. This seems to me to have at least potentially important implications for the role that practical reason, as well as ethical intuition, should play in our own readings of the masoret. May we, by emulating Mosheh's humility, succeed at least in being the Zushya's that represent our full potential.

Said Yosef:

Regarding this episode, running from the initiation of Mosheh's prophecy to this point, there are two questions

1. How could Mosheh at all doubt (*yeharher achar*) a command of Hashem to him, to the point that after G-d spoke he would ?dissemble? (*y'shaneh*) and be afraid, not once or twice, but **seven** times?! This is nothing but, G-d-forbid, weakness of faith in Him the Blessed!
2. Behold Hashem the Blessed is the complete and perfect intellect who is always active, so how can his ?assumptions? (*hanachotav*) change to the point that Mosheh seems to be the superior adviser giving advice one-to-one to Him the Blessed, first in the matter of Aharon being the spokesperson to Israel, and then also to Par'oh? Why would Hashem not say: "Have you been made adviser to the king?!"

The answers:

1. G-d forbid that Mosheh's withdrawals and fear arose from doubting Hashem the Blessed – rather, they arose from self-questioning, lest he be misunderstanding what Hashem is saying to him. Because His the Blessed's words are short and sealed-in, fine and difficult, for this is appropriate to Him - indeed so are the words of all the wise! including the Divine Blessed, and a servant standing before the Divine does not have permission to ask for multiple explanations of every word as if he were standing before his friend. Therefore, when Mosheh the servant of Hashem heard the word of Hashem, he would constantly question his own intellect and understanding, to the point that he was trembling and afraid of his own error, and all this is of the essence of his wisdom,
as Scripture writes: "The wise is in fear and then turns away from evil etc.", and the inverse "But the fool is impatient and trusts" (Proverbs 14:16), and similarly "but the clever one will understand to his benefit" (Proverbs 14:15),
and Hashem the Blessed does not choose his servants from the idiots, for He has no liking for fools, but rather from among the wise who investigate the innerness of things and their reasons, with all their causes and the causes of their causes to the ultimate end. This is not weakness of faith in Hashem the Blessed, but rather its opposite, by which I mean the extreme of strength in faith in Him,
which is the intent of "Tamim tiyeh im Hashem Elokekha," (Devarim 18:13) . . .
There is no doubt that Mosheh, had he reached his ultimate completion that he reached in the narrative of Ki Tisa,
where it says regarding him "and Hashem spoke to Mosheh face to face", and similarly "and you will see my back",
that he would not have experienced any of these terrors . . .
2. G-d forbid that Mosheh was advising Hashem the Blessed, rather he was advising himself, and the suggestions he gave himself were from Hashem to him, for "Hashem will give wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and comprehension" (Mishlei 2:6), and there is no doubt that Hashem knew before Mosheh came before him that, since Mosheh was slightly less than an angel, he would need Aharon as spokesperson to Israel and also to Pharaoh. Indeed nothing emerged from the mouth of Hashem that required the negative of this, for anyone who knows the craft of logic, and Hashem the Blessed is the incomparable Master of that craft . . .

אמר יוסף:

יש בזה המאורע, מתחלת נבואת משה עד היום, שתי שאלות:

1. איך יהרהר משה כלל אחר מצות השם בצוותו לו לעשות דבר, עד שחרי דברו ישנה ויפחד, וזה לא אחת ולא שתיים בלבד, אבל שבע פעמים עד הנה?! אין זה כי אם חס ושלום חולשת האמונה בו יתברך!
2. הנה השם יתברך הוא השכל הגמור השלם וכן תמיד בפעל, ואיך ישתנו הנחותיו עש שמשה כאלו הוא יועץ יותר שלם נותן עצות הגונות אחת לאחת לו יתברך, והוא תחלה בהיות אהרן מליץ לישראל, ושנית גם לפרעה, ולמה לא ענה השם "הליועץ למלך נתנוך?!" (דברי הימים ב:כה:טז)

התשובה לראשונה:

1. חלילה שיהיה נזורות משה ופחדו מצד שיהרהר בשם יתברך, אבל מצד היותו מהרהר בעצמו ובנפשו שמא אינו מבין מה שיאמר השם לו, כי דבריו יתברך קצרים וסתומים דקים וקשים, כי כן ראוי לו – והלא כן הם דברי כל חכם! אף כי הא-ל יתברך, ואין רשות לעבד העומד לפני הא-ל שיבקש ממנו על כל מלה ומלה פרוש ופרושים, כאלו הוא מדבר עם חברו. לכן היה משה עבד ה', כשמעו דבר השם, חושד תמיד שכלו והבנתו, עד שהיה חרד ומתפחד משגגת עצמו, וכל זה מעצם חכמתו, כמו שכתוב "חכם ירא וסר מרע כו", והפכו "וכסיל מתעבר ובוטח" (משלי יד:טז),

וכן "וערום יבין לאישורו" (משלי יד:טו),

והשם יתברך לא יעשה עבדיו מהשוטים, כי אין לו חפץ בכסילים, אבל מן החכמים החוקרים להבין תוכות דברים ובטעמיהם בכל סבותיהם וסבות סבותיהם בתכלית, וזה אינו חולשת האמונה בשם יתברך אבל הפכו, רצוני הפלגת חוזק האמונה בו,

אשר זה הכונה באמרו "תמים תהיה עם השם אל-היך" (דברים יח:ג) . . .

אין ספק שמשה, אלו היה בתכלית שלמותו שהגיע אליו בספור הכתוב בכי תשא שאמר עליו "ודבר השם עם משה פנים אל פנים",

וכן "וראית את אחוריי", לא הגיעו לו אלו החרדות אף לא אחת . . .

חלילה שיהיה משה יועץ לשם יתברך, אלא יועץ לעצמו, ועצותיו אשר ממנו לעצמו מאת השם הם לו, כי "השם יתן חכמה; מפיו דעת ותבונה" (משלי ב:ו), ואין ספק שהשם יתברך ידע טרם בא משה למניו כי לחסרון משה מעט מאל-הים יצטרך שיהיה אהרן מליץ לישראל וגם לפרעה, והנה מעולם לא יצא מפי השם דבר מחיב שלילה זה אצל מי שידע מלאכת ההגיון, והשם יתברך הוא בעל

המלאכה ההיא אין כמוהו . . .