

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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THE EGYPTIAN ANOCHI

The Aseres Hadibros, which appear for a second time in Parshas Va'eschanan, begin with the words, "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*—I am Hashem your G-d." The Midrash comments that the word Anochi actually derives from the Egyptian language.

This Midrash is perplexing indeed.

We know that the Aseres Hadibros encompass the entire Torah. This is why the Aseres Hadibros consist of 620 letters, corresponding to the 613 *mitzvos deoraysa* and the seven *mitzvos derabanan*.

More specifically, the first two *dibros* include the entire Torah. Expounding on the *possuk* "*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe*," the Gemara states that unlike the other *mitzvos*, we heard these two *dibros* directly from Hashem. (This is the meaning of this *possuk*: The word *Torah* has the numerical value of 611. This is the number of *mitzvos* which *tzivah lanu Moshe*—Moshe commanded us, because the first two *dibros* were heard from Hashem.) Why do these two *mitzvos* have this distinction? Because they encompass the entire Torah: Anochi—all the positive *mitzvos*, and *Lo yihiyeh lecha*—all the negative *mitzvos*.

Moreover, the first *dibur* is higher than the second, and the first word—Anochi—is higher yet. Furthermore, the Zohar states that Anochi represents Hashem Himself (*Anochi mi sheAnochi*). The words *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* are in a descending order: Elokecha is the name of Elokim; Hashem is the name of Havayah—the highest from among Hashem's names, but a name nonetheless; and Anochi is yet higher, a level that is beyond any name.

How can it be that this word, representing such a lofty level, was taken from the Egyptian language?!

NO NAME

The Rambam explains that one of the unique aspects of Lashon Hakodesh is that it does not contain terms associated with *ervah*. (Whenever the Torah needs to speak about it, it uses euphemisms and borrowed terms, but there are no actual words for these organs and this activity.)

We know that every entity receives its energy from its name in

Lashon Hakodesh (as the Alter Rebbe explains in Shaar Hayichud Veha'emunah). An ox receives its *chayus* from the letters שור, a donkey—from the letters חמור, and so on.

This can help us understand the Midrash that Adam Harishon was smarter than the angels, and was therefore able to give names to the animals. If Lashon Hakodesh was the same as any other language, where people simply decide what word to use for which item, what's the big deal to decide on some names? The Shaloh explains that an entity's name in Lashon Hakodesh is not just a chosen term, but is the

chayus of that entity. Adam Harishon was able to see the *chayus* of each animal, and based on that he was able to give it a name.

If so, how can it be that *ervah* doesn't have a name in Lashon Hakodesh? Where does it get its *chayus* from?

THE LOWEST LANGUAGE

The Rambam doesn't mean to say that *ervah* does not have a name in Lashon Hakodesh at all. Rather, as this concept exists in Lashon Hakodesh, there is no negativity associated with it—it is something altogether different.

An example to this idea:

The Torah relates that after Adam and Chavah ate from the *etz hadaas*, "they understood that they were naked," and they fashioned clothing from fig leaves. Now, sinning lowers a person; it does not make him any better. How can it be that through the *chet etz hadaas*, Adam and Chavah gained knowledge?

The answer is that before the sin, there was no negativity associated with these organs. It was clear that they were only there to serve Hashem, through fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *pru urvu*. Just as a man is not embarrassed with his hand—he knows that it's there to don *tefillin* and give *tzedakah*, so what is there to be ashamed of?—Adam and Chavah were similarly not embarrassed with these organs.

This changed after the *chet etz hadaas*. As a result of this sin, these organs became associated with physical pleasure. It was only then that they became ashamed and needed to cover themselves.

This is what the Rambam is saying. As the concept of *ervah* exists in Lashon Hakodesh, there is no negativity associated with it; Lashon Hakodesh does not have a name for this concept as it exists in its lower form. It is only once it enters the realm of the other languages that it becomes a bodily pleasure and adopts the appropriate names.

From among the other languages, the Egyptian language is coarser than the rest. Egypt is known as *ervas ha'aretz*, and the Egyptians were known to be obsessed with this activity. The Egyptian language was a language of *ervah*.

This only strengthens our question. How can it be that Anochi, the first word of the Aseres Hadibros, comes from the *Egyptian language*?!!

TORAH IN MITZRAYIM

When Moshe ascended Har Sinai to take the Torah, the angels claimed that they wanted the Torah for themselves. Hashem instructed Moshe to respond. One of Moshe's replies was, "The Torah states, 'I am Hashem your G-d who has taken you out of Mitzrayim.' Were you ever in Mitzrayim? The Torah is not for you!"

Now, the angels obviously wanted the Torah in its *spiritual* form. If so, why did not being in Mitzrayim pose a problem?

The angels may have appreciated the Torah, but they are not whom the Torah was given for.

The Torah is meant for people found in a lowly, coarse world; people who, if not for the Torah, are associated with the *ervah* of Mitzrayim. The goal is that *they* should receive the Torah, so that they can elevate themselves and leave Mitzrayim.

Angels are already in a refined state; they wanted Torah merely to further their spirituality. But this is not what the Torah is all about.

It is specifically in Mitzrayim where the power of Anochi is unleashed. Hashem's holy names ("*Hashem Elokecha*") are

lofty indeed, but even they are "confined" in a subtle way: they represent a lofty spiritual light far beyond physicality. Even if they can impact the physical, they cannot reach the coarseness of Mitzrayim. When a Jew needs to be redeemed from Mitzrayim, this can only be accomplished by Hashem Himself—Anochi, Who has no constraints whatsoever.

A POWERFUL POSSUK

This is why Anochi is an Egyptian word. When a Jew is involved in holy, spiritual pursuits—he is davening, learning Torah, and doing *mitzvos*—he does not need the power of Anochi. It is specifically when he is involved in physical activities, and he does them *lesheim shamayim*, that the power of Anochi comes to the fore. Only Hashem Himself can give the *koach* for a Jew to do an activity associated with the "Egyptian language"—one that does not have a name in Lashon Hakodesh—and nevertheless perform it in a pure, sacred manner.

The Gemara says that "*Bechol derachecha da'eihu*, In all your ways you should know Him," is a small *parshah* upon which depends the entire Torah. Why is this so? Of course it is important to perform one's physical activities *lesheim shamayim*. But why is *everything* dependent on this?

The reason is that this is where Anochi—which encompasses the entire Torah—is manifest. It is only with this *koach* that we can focus on Hashem even when involved in physical pursuits, including

those associated with the "Egyptian language," and transform them as well.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 3, pp. 892-895.

Only Hashem Himself can give a Jew the *koach* to do an activity associated with the "Egyptian language" in a pure, sacred manner.



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