

"FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE"
(Agadic Portion)

The relation of Faith (emunah) and Knowledge (daat) in Judaism is quite a complicated study. But in relation to our Halakhic discourse, let us analyze these two elements ^S and they correspond to two aspects of the Creator Himself.

Rabbi Shneur Zalmen, the author of the Tanya, tells us that there are two aspects of God to which faith and knowledge correspond. One of these is called Sovev-kol-Almin, God as ~~He~~ is distant and remote, as ~~He~~ causes the world to whirl through space and about each other. This is the aspect of God which is transcendent. The other aspect is that of Memalei-kol-Almin, God who "fills the world," who is close to man, involved in his destiny and history, who sustains Nature; it is the immanent aspect of God. Now, teaches Rabbi Shneur Zalmen, our orientation and relation to God in ~~His~~ aspect of transcendence (Sovev-kol-Almin) is faith, or emunah; our relationship to God in ~~His~~ immanence (Memalei-kol-Almin) is knowledge, or daat. There is a compelling logic to this analysis. God in ~~His~~ transcendence, in ~~His~~ remoteness, in ~~His~~ total otherness, cannot be "known" in any human sense. One can only have faith in God who is beyond all human conception. When, then, can we be said to "know" God? -- in His aspect of immanence as ~~He~~ "fills the world," ^S Memalei-kol-Almin. God as ~~He~~ is involved in nature and in history, as ~~He~~ ^e is accessible to human and thought and investigation and feeling, can be "known."

Rosh Hashanah, according to Rabbi Shneur Zalmen and his grandson-in-law, Rabbi Men~~achem~~ Mendel, embodies the principle of Sovev-kol-Almin; God is recognized as a King, who sits in judgment upon the world. The Deity is almost completely satim: hidden, obscure, transeendent. It is a day in which the attribute of din, justice, reigns supreme. That is why Rosh Hashanah is known as yom ha-din, the day of justice or judgment.

Yom Kippur, however is that day in which is revealed primarily God in His immanence, God as Memalei-kol-Almin. It is the time that the Deity partakes more of galya than satim. On this day one can almost feel the presence of God. It is therefore a day of rahamim rather than din; love and mercy rather than justice and judgment. To be accurate, therefore, Yom Kippur should not be called yom ha-din but yom ha-rahamim. (As a matter of fact, some of the more precise copies of the Siddur, in the Mi she'berakh, do not refer to Yom Kippur as yom ha-din but yom ha-rahamim.)

Therefore, because Rosh Hashanah represents the aspect of transcendence and justice, it is the day when it is most appropriate to speak of emunah or faith. The relation between justice or fear ~~of~~ and reverence and faith can be amply illustrated. For instance: va-yiru ha-am et ha-Shem... va-yaaminu ba-Shem. Or, referred ^{ing} to Rosh Hashanah itself, the ~~same~~ famous hymn in which we read ha-ohez be'had midat mishpat... ve'khol maaminim... tushav le'vadekha ve'timlokh... -- note the relation between mishpat, emunah, and the idea of God's sole transcendence and kingship. By the same token, Yom Kippur as a day of immanence and mercy and love, emphasizes daat, knowledge. That love and knowledge go hand in hand is also obvious from many passages. For instance, the idea of "carnal knowledge," as in va-yeda Adam et Havah. Or, the famous statement by Maimonides relating the knowledge of God ~~with~~ to the love of God: le'fi ha-deiah ha-ahavah.

There are yet two other key words that can be used to distinguish between these two complexes of concepts. The idea of immanence and justice, Sovev-kol-Almin and din, may be referred to as: malkhut. Whereas immanence and love, Memalei-kol-Almin and rahamim, may be referred to as: kavod.

Thus, Rosh Hashanah is primarily the day of Malkhut. It is a day when we celebrate God's transcendence^t royalty, and pray melokh al kol ha-olam ku-lo.

If there is any mention of kavod, it is only secondary. Thus, the prayer which

above all emphasizes God's immanence, ~~His~~ turning from otherness to closeness, from transcendence to nearness, from malkhut to kavod, is the famous barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam va'ed -- and that is recited in a whisper on Rosh Hashanah as well as all year long! But on Yom Kippur, we no longer recite the prayer of melokh al kol ha-olam ku-lo; ^{but} ~~yet~~, this is the one day of the year when we recite aloud and in full voice the marukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam va'ed. It is a day when God is evident everywhere; we feel with every fibre of our being that He is Memalei-kol-Almin. No wonder that we forbid ne'ilat ha-sandal: how can one wear shoes, and with his boots trample upon the earth which is filled with the kavod of God!

We even find the difference expressed as well in the nature of the sounding of the Shofar in these two days. On Rosh Hashanah the tekiah is expressive of man's foredoomed attempt to reach God who~~s~~ is beyond all reaching. The tekiah represents man's frustrating efforts to reach the setima di-khol setimin. No wonder that Hassidim used to ~~weep~~ during the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah! They knew in advance that the attempt to discover the secret of God's transcendence, of the Sovev-kol-Almin, is doomed to failure. On Yom Kippur at Ne'ilah, however, the Shofar has a completely different meaning. It signifies the conclusion of a day in which there took place hitgalut, the revelation of God's love and closeness to man. No wonder that at the sounding of the Shofar at the end of Yom Kippur we pronounce le'shanah ha-baah bi-yerushalayim!

The function of teshuvah according to Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner, is to increase the relatedness of God, to bring God closer to us, to draw ~~him~~ out of ~~his~~ transcendence and into greater immanence. In other words, we might say that the function of teshuvah is to lead man, correspondingly, from emunah to daat, from faith to knowledge. This is the meaning of the Prophet's shuvu elai v'ashuvah alekhem -- if we will turn to God, if we will have more than faith, but also knowledge, ~~than~~ God will turn to us, out of transcendence to immanence.

So too, the famous Rabbi of Ger interprete^s the verse in Deutoronomy: ve'yadata
ki ha-shem hu Elokim
ha-yom ve'hashevota el levavekha ba-shamayim mi-maal v'al ha-aretz mi-tahat
ein ode. This means, he says, not that what we must know is that there is only
one God, but that this knowledge -- ein ode -- is the only knowledge~~x~~ that is
really knowledge. There is no other daat or knowledge! The knowledge
that God is ba-shamayim mi-maal, i.e. that he is Sovev-kol-Almin, and that
God is v'al ha-aretz mi-tahat, i.e. that he is Memalei-kol-Almin, is the only
knowledge worthy of man's contemplation: ein ode, there is none other.

It is told of Rabbi Lebele Eger, the grandson of Rabbi Akivah Eger who became
a Hasid, that in the days when he was ^a ~~the~~ ^{the} follower of Rabbi Kotzk, he said,
"the only difference between ^{Hasidim of} Kotzk and ^{other} other Jews, is that only Jews believe
in God -- whereas we know that there is a God..." Herein lies the superiority
of daat over emunah.

It is Hoshea, the Prophet of teshuvah, who begins his famous Haftarah which we
read today, with the invitation to teshuvah in the famous words shuvah Yisrael
ad ha-Shem Elokekha. And his conclusion is: mi-hakham ve'yaven eleh,
navon ve'yeda'em -- repentence or teshuvah must leave^d man from the grace^{eat} and
noble state of emunah to the yet greater, more splendid, and more luminous
state of daat.