

Three Alephs -- "א'היה א'שר א'היה" A Wonderful Formula for Success in All Aspects of Life

In this week's parsha, parshas Shemos, we read (Shemos 3, 13):
"ויאמר משה אל האלקים הנה אנכי בא אל בני ישראל ואמרת להם אלקי אבותיכם שלחני אליכם, ואמרו לי מה שמו מה אומר אליהם, ויאמר אלקים אל משה אהיה אשר אהיה — Moshe said to G-d, 'Behold, when I come to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, 'The G-d of your forefathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' — what shall I say to them?' Hashem answered Moshe, 'אהיה אשר אהיה.' And He said, 'So shall you say to Bnei Yisrael, 'אהיה has sent me to you.'"

Now, we know that many appellations for HKB"H are mentioned in the Torah: הוי"ה, אלקים, אל, שדי, אדני. So, when Moshe asks HKBH: "And when they say to me, 'What is His name?' — what shall I say to them?" — why does HKB"H choose this name specifically, which does not appear anywhere else in the Torah: "אהיה אשר אהיה"? An answer is provided by the Midrash (S.R. 3, 6):

"ויאמר אלקים אל משה. אמר רבי אבא בר ממל, אמר ליה הקב"ה למשה, שמי אתה מבקש לידע, לפי מעשי אני נקרא, פעמים שאני נקרא באל שדי, בצבאות, באלקים, בה', כשאני דן את הבריות אני נקרא אלקים, וכשאני עושה מלחמה ברשעים אני נקרא צבאות, וכשאני תולה על חטאיו של אדם אני נקרא אל שדי, וכשאני מרחם על עולמי אני נקרא ה', שאין ה' אלא מדת רחמים שנאמר (שמות לד-ו) ה' ה' אל רחום וחנון, הוי אהיה אשר אהיה, אני נקרא לפי מעשי."

HKB"H tells Moshe that each particular name of G-d relates to a specific divine function. When He judges creation, He is referred to as "Elokim"; when He battles the wicked, He is referred to as "Tzevakot"; when He suspends judgment regarding a person's transgressions, He is referred to as "Kel Shakkai"; and when He shows His world mercy, He is known as Hashem (Havaya). So, the answer: "אהיה אשר אהיה" -- "I Shall Be What I Shall Be" -- indicates that the name He is called depends on the particular divine function being displayed.

Simply put, according to the Midrash, when HKB"H answers Moshe: "אהיה אשר אהיה" — He is informing Moshe

that He will be revealed in the world by the name reflecting the divine function that He is performing at that particular moment. This, however, still deserves further explanation. For, according to this explanation, "אהיה אשר אהיה" is not a name at all, but merely an explanation — that HKB"H is perceived in the world by the name associated with the divine task being performed at any given time. So, the actual names He uses to reveal Himself are not presented at all. That being the case, how does HKB"H's reply: "אהיה אשר אהיה" — answer Moshe's question: "And when they say to me, 'What is His name?' — what shall I say to them?"

Additionally, it is worth examining the statement in the Tikunei Zohar (144b) that with the words: "אהיה אשר אהיה" — HKB"H alludes to tefillin shel yad and tefillin shel rosh. For, in the four passages contained in the tefillin shel rosh, the name Havaya appears twenty-one times — the numerical value of the name אהי"ה; this is alluded to by the first אהי"ה. Similarly, in the four passages contained in the tefillin shel yad, the name Havaya appears twenty-one times — accounting for the second mention of the name אהי"ה. Thus, the two tefillin together are alluded to by the phrase: "אהיה אשר אהיה". Hence, we must endeavor to explain the practical significance of the association between the words "אהיה אשר אהיה" and the mitzvah of tefillin. Furthermore, what message is HKB"H conveying to Moshe with this reply?

אמ"ת אהי"ה Times אהי"ה — HKB"H's Trademark

Let us begin our investigation with the illuminating words of the Arizal in Likutei Torah. He provides us with a wonderful explanation regarding HKB"H's reply: "אהיה אשר אהיה", based on what we have learned in the Gemara (Shabbas 55a): "חותמו" "אהיה אשר אהיה" — של הקדוש ברוך הוא אמת". The Arizal explains that this is a reference to the name: אהיה

“אשר אהיה”; for אהיה (21) times equals אמ”ת (441). Therefore, when Moshe asks HKB”H how he should respond to Bnei Yisrael, HKB”H replies: “אהיה אשר אהיה” — this is the seal encompassing all of the divine names. Here are the sacred words of the Arizal: “כי כל שמות הקודש חתמו הקב”ה בשם אמת שהוא” — all the names of HKB”H reflect His seal of “emes”; this is alluded to by the fact that אהיה (21) times equals אמ”ת (441).

After much consideration, I would like to propose an interpretation of the Midrash above based on this illuminating Arizal. Moshe Rabeinu inquires: “And when they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ — what shall I say to them?” In other words, which divine name should we have in mind and should we pray to in order to trigger all of the salvations. According to the Midrash, HKB”H responds: “שמי אתה מבקש לידע, לפי מעשי” — you want to know My name? My name depends on the action I am performing. Nevertheless, to trigger salvations from all of the names, it is advisable to employ the appellation: “אהיה אשר אהיה” — the seal of “emes” encompassing all of the divine names. For, as we have learned, אהיה (21) times equals אמ”ת (441).

The message conveyed by this allusion is that the key to access all of the divine names is to pray wholeheartedly with “emes.” This notion is expressed by the passuk (Tehillim 145, 18): “קרוב ה’ לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת” — Hashem is close to all those that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him with “emes.” We find support for this idea in the Orchos Tzaddikim:

“מצאתי כתוב, כתיב אהיה אשר אהיה, וכתיב (ירמיה י-י) וה’ אלקים אמת הוא אלקים חיים ומלך עולם, ועתה יש להודיעך שהקב”ה אלקים אמת, כי תמצא כ”א פעמים אהיה שהוא בגימטריא אמ”ת וגם כן אהיה בגימטריא כ”א. (קהלת ז-כט) האלקים עשה את האדם להיות ישר, וחוטמו של הקב”ה אמת (שבת נה.), וכתיב (תהלים קא-ז) דובר שקרים לא יכון לנגד עיני...”

ולכך אמר הפסוק (תהלים קמא-יח) קרוב ה’ לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, כי הקב”ה שהוא אמת מתקרב למי שקוראו באמת, ואיזה דבר נקרא קריאת אמת, זהו המפנה לבו מכל דבר שבעולם ומתקרב אל הקב”ה לבד, ושכלו הולך ומתחזק להידבק באור העליון וישים מוחשבתו בחשקו תמיד.”

He cites the passuk (Yirmiyah 10, 10): “But Hashem, G-d, is “emes”; He is the living G-d and the Eternal King.” This teaches us that HKB”H is the G-d of “emes.” Therefore, since HKB”H’s seal is “emes,” the passuk (Tehillim 145, 18) states that HKB”H draws near to anyone who calls upon Him with “emes” — with sincerity. What is considered calling upon

Him with “emes”? This refers to a person who clears his heart and mind of everything else in the world, and focuses only on HKB”H. This person clings to the heavenly light and always has in mind G-d’s will.

This allows us to understand very nicely what the great luminary, the gaon Chida, zy”a, writes in Avodas Kodesh (7), concerning the appellation: “אהיה אשר אהיה”. He writes that this name employed in tefilah is capable of affecting salvation for everything in the world:

“מצאתי כתוב בגנזי המקובלים כתב יד, אם יתפלל אדם לשם אהיה אשר אהיה בכל דבר שבעולם, לחולה, לבנים, לחכמה, לזכירה, לפרנסה, להינצל מסער הים, ומסכנת דרכים, ולכל דבר, רק שיהיה טהור, ויאמר בכוונה, יהי רצון מלפניך השם הגדול אהיה אשר אהיה שתרחם עלי ותעשה, וישאל בקשתו בלשון ברור, וכן יאמר ג’ פעמים.”

I found in the manuscripts of the kabbalists that it is appropriate for a person to pray to the appellation “אהיה אשר אהיה” for any problem in this world — for sickness, for children, for wisdom, to be remembered, for monetary matters, to be saved from a storm at sea, for danger on the roads. It is essential, however, that he be pure, and that he utter sincerely: “Let it be the will of the esteemed name “אהיה אשר אהיה” that You have mercy on me and act on my behalf.” He should state his request clearly, and should repeat it three times.

It is clear that the concept of the divine names and how to apply them is beyond our comprehension. Nevertheless, seeing as this name alludes to HKB”H’s seal of “emes,” which encompasses all of the divine appellations, we can suggest that by focusing on the name “אהיה אשר אהיה” — whose product is “emes” — one merits enlightenment from the attribute of “emes,” enabling one to pray to Hashem with true sincerity. As a result, he is guaranteed that the words of the passuk will be fulfilled: “קרוב ה’ לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, רצון יראיו יעשה ואת שוועתם Hashem is close to all those that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him with “emes”; the will of those who revere Him, He will perform, and He will hear their plea and rescue them.

The Connection between the Seal of Emes and the Appellation “אהיה אשר אהיה”

Now, we have learned from the Arizal that with the statement “אהיה אשר אהיה”, HKB”H was alluding to His trademark of “emes.” This idea can be applied to better understand the implication of the awe-inspiring piyut recited during Mussaf on the High

Holidays: “האוחז ביד מדת משפט” (according to the Kol Bo Machzor, this piyut was composed and instituted by Ezra HaSofer and Zerubavel ben Shealtiel). In the piyut, we declare: **“וכל מאמינים — שהוא דיין אמת, ההגוי באהיה אשר אהיה”** — **And all believe that He is a judge of “emes”; the One whose name was pronounced “אהיה אשר אהיה”**. Let us endeavor to understand the connection between the fact that HKB”H is **“a judge of emes”** and the appellation **“אהיה אשר אהיה”**.

The matter can be explained as it is presented in Likutei Yehudah in the name of his elder, the author of the Imrei Emes of Gur, zy”a, based on what we have learned from the Arizal. Seeing as אהי”ה (21) times אהי”ה (21) equals אמ”ת (441), the message conveyed by the piyut is quite clear; this appellation represents HKB”H’s seal and trademark — **“emes.”**

Still, it behooves us to explain the significance of this connection. While the numerical equivalent exists, clearly there exists a deeper, practical connection, which is relevant to each and every one of us — a connection teaching us how to serve Hashem with this appellation in order to connect with HKB”H’s trademark of **“emes.”**

I was struck by a wonderful idea based on the explanation presented by the Ramban here regarding the appellation **“אהיה אשר אהיה”** in the name of the Midrash (which does not appear in our texts): **“במדרש אגדה, ומהו אהיה אשר אהיה, כשם שאתה הווה עמי כך אני הווה עמך, אם פותחין את ידיהם ועושין צדקה אף אני אפתח את ידי, שנאמר — (דברים כח-יב) יפתח ה' לך את אוצרו הטוב”** — **as you behave presently with Me, so will I behave presently with you; if you open your hands and give tzedakah, so, too, will I open My hands** ...

“Know what is above you” from Your Deeds Below

This teaches us a tremendous chiddush. HKB”H’s response to Moshe: **“אהיה אשר אהיה”** — alludes to one of the basic principles and foundations of the entire Torah. Namely, HKB”H acts with a person in accordance with how that person acts with Him. This coincides beautifully with what the Shela hakadosh (Mishpatim) presents in the name of the Midrash regarding the passuk (Tehillim 121, 6):

“ה' צלך. מהו ה' צלך, כצלך, מה צלך אם אתה משחק לו הוא משחק לך, ואם אתה בוכה לו הוא בוכה כנגדך, ואם אתה מראה לו פנים זעומות או מסבירות את — הוא נותן לך כך, אף הקב"ה ה' צלך, כשם שאתה הווה עמו הוא הווה עמך.” **“Hashem is your shadow.”** Just as your shadow mirrors your

actions, so, too, HKB”H acts like your shadow. His behavior toward you reflects your behavior toward Him.

In a similar vein, the Zohar hakadosh states (Lech Lecha 88a): **“באתערותא דלתתא אשתכח אתערותא לעילא, דהא לא אתער לעילא עד — דאתער לתתא”** — man’s actions below trigger the divine influence from above. In truth, this notion is expressed explicitly by the following Gemara (Shabbas 151b): **“כל המרחם על הבריות מרחם על הבריות אין מרחמין עליו מן השמים”** — **whoever has mercy on his fellow creatures is shown mercy from the heavens; whoever fails to have mercy on his fellow creatures is not shown mercy from the heavens.**

This is the message conveyed by the Mishnah (Avos 2, 1): **“דע מה למעלה ממך”** — **know what is above you.”** The following interpretation is presented by the Toldot Yaakov Yosef (Vayikra), the Maor Einayim (Matot) and the Kedushat Levi (Metzora). Everything that transpires in the heavens above comes from you -- **“ממך”** — is caused by your actions below. Similarly, the Nefesh HaChaim writes (1, 4 in the gloss):

“וקרוב לשמוע שגם זה בכלל כוונתם ז”ל באבות, דע מה למעלה ממך, רצונו לומר, אם כי אינך רואה בעיניך הענינים הנוראים הנעשים ממעשיך, אבל תדע נאמנה כי כל מה שנעשה למעלה בעולמות העליונים גבוהי גבוהים, הכל ממך הוא על פי מעשיך לאן — נוטים, על פיהם יצאו ויבואו.” This is the lesson taught by the Mishnah in Avos: **“דע מה למעלה ממך”**. People do not realize the tremendous impact of their actions. They should recognize unequivocally that everything that transpires in the heavenly realms stems from their actions; they are the determining factors.

“אהיה אשר אהיה”

Is the Source for All Salvation

This enlightens us and provides us with a better understanding of HKB”H’s reply to Moshe’s inquiry: **“Behold, when I come to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, ‘The G-d of your forefathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ — what shall I say to them?”** In other words, they will want to know and be familiar with all of HKB”H’s names. This knowledge will enable them to receive the needed benefits associated with each particular name — such as rachamim, health, livelihood, protection and the like.

In response, HKB”H answered succinctly and to the point: **“ויאמר אלקים אל משה אהיה אשר אהיה”**. As the Midrash cited by the Ramban explains: **“כשם שאתה הווה עמי כך אני הווה עמך, אם פותחין את ידיהם ועושין צדקה אף אני אפתח את ידי”** — **I will act toward them as they act toward Me.** This being the case, it is no longer

necessary to be familiar with each of the divine names of HKB”H specifically in order to receive salvation. Rather, everything depends on man’s behavior below. Thus, the system of “אהיה אשר אהיה” accounts for all of HKB”H’s names necessary to achieve every form of salvation. For, it is within man’s power to trigger any desired response from above based on his behavior below.

We can now appreciate the connection between the appellation “אהיה אשר אהיה” and HKB”H’s trademark of “emes.” For, the fact that we see that HKB”H treats each individual differently does not contradict His trait of “emes.” Quite the opposite! This is evidence of His trait of “emes.” He behaves with each individual in accordance with how that individual behaves below, reflecting the concept of: **Hashem is your shadow**. If the person is merciful, he is shown mercy from above; if he is cruel, chas v’shalom, he is treated cruelly from above. This is precisely the message conveyed by the allusion: אהיה times אהיה equals אמ”ת. For, the divine trademark of “emes” is revealed by the union of the two names אהיה, in keeping with HKB”H’s statement: כשם שאתה הווה עמי כך אני הווה — as you are with Me, so, too, I am with you.

This, too, is the message of the piyut: וכל מאמינים שהוא דיין. By acting in accordance with the concept of “אהיה אשר אהיה” — behaving toward each person as he behaves toward Hashem — HKB”H’s seal of “emes” becomes evident. So, if a person should ask, “Why is HKB”H treating me this way?” It behooves him to know that the answer lies in HKB”H’s succinct reply to Moshe: “אהיה אשר אהיה” — My response from above mirrors man’s actions below.

Rambam: “A Wonderful Insight Has Been Revealed to Me”

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us explain HKB”H’s response to Moshe’s inquiry in greater depth based on the incredible words of the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim (Part 3, Chapter 21), where he discusses the manner in which HKB”H interacts with and supervises mankind — “hashgachah.” The Rambam writes: יסורו בו ספקות ויתגלו בו סודות אלוהיות — a wonderful insight has been revealed to me; it will remove doubts and uncertainties and will help reveal divine secrets.

The gist of his lesson is that HKB”H’s supervision and protection, “hashgachah,” of a human being from any ill

occurrences depends to a great degree on a person’s intellectual belief in Hashem’s direct supervision. If a person always has Hashem in mind, Hashem will never stop overseeing his life and his actions. Should we see that a tragedy befell a person, it is because he was not connected to Hashem in his thoughts. Here is an excerpt from what the Rambam writes:

“והנה נגלה אלי עיון נפלא מאד, יסורו בו ספקות ויתגלו בו סודות אלוהיות, והוא שאנחנו כבר בארנו בפרקי ההשגחה, כי כפי שיעור שכל [של] כל בעל שכל תהיה ההשגחה בו, והאיש השלם בהשגתו אשר לא יסור שכלו מהאלוה תמיד, תהיה ההשגחה בו תמיד. והאיש שלם ההשגה אשר תפנה מחשבתו מהאלוה קצת עתים, תהיה ההשגחה בו בעת חשבו באלוה לבד, ותסור ההשגחה ממנו בעת עסקו [בשאר ענינים כאשר אינו זוכר את ה'], ולא תסור ממנו [ההשגחה לגמרי] אז כסורה [כמו שהיא סרה] ממי שלא ישכיל כלל, [שהרי הוא מאמין בהשגחת ה'], אבל תמעט ההשגחה ההיא, אחר שאין לאיש ההוא השלם בהשגתו בעת עסקו [בעניני העולם הזה] שכל בפועל.”

The complete person will always have Hashem in mind; as a result, he will always be supervised from above. When he is engrossed in other matters and forgets Hashem, Hashem’s supervision will be absent temporarily. It will not be entirely absent as it would be from someone who does not believe in or comprehend Hashem’s supervision at all; for, this person does believe in Hashem’s “hashgachah.” His divine supervision at that moment will only be diminished.

Someone who does not recognize the presence of G-d and his supervision at all resembles a person living in darkness who has never seen light. Conversely, someone who does appreciate Hashem’s “hashgachah” resembles a person standing in the bright light of the sun. Thus, he who is aware of Hashem’s “hashgachah,” but has a momentary lapse of focus while engaged in worldly matters, can be compared to a person on a cloudy day — where the cloud temporarily blocks him from the sun.

Next, the Rambam adds an astounding and somewhat frightening thought. He states that anyone who experiences a negative occurrence, be he a prophet or a very devout person, that occurrence was due to a momentary disregard of Hashem’s “hashgachah”:

“ומפני זה יראה לי, כי כל מי שתמצאהו רעה מרעות העולם, מן הנביאים או מן החסידים השלמים, לא מצאוהו הרע ההוא רק בעת השכחה ההיא, ולפי אורך השכחה ההיא או פחיתות הענין אשר התעסק בו יהיה עוצם הרעה... ותהיה השגחת האלוה יתברך מתמדת במי שהגיע לו השפע ההוא, המזומן לכל מי שישתדל להגיע אליו.”

He states that the magnitude of a negative event correlates directly with the length of time and the degree to which the person forgot Hashem's "hashgachah." In summary, it all boils down to one's ability to remain constantly connected with HKB"H. That connection prevents mishaps; lack of connection opens one up to the possibility of misfortune and disaster.

Upon careful reflection, it appears that the Rambam's concept is stated explicitly in the Torah (Devarim 4, 4): **"ואתם הדבקים בה" — אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום" and you are attached to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today.** Here we are promised, in no uncertain terms, that so long as a Jew is connected to Hashem: **"חיים כולכם היום" — no ill or harm will befall him.** In the words of David Melech Yisrael (Tehillim 23, 4): **"גם כי אלך בגיא צלמות לא אירא — רע כי אתה עמדי" although I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil, because You are with me.**

The Ba'al Shem Tov Derives an Important Principle from the Rambam: Believe that HKB"H Is Present Even during Periods of "Hester Panim"

In my humble opinion, the Rambam's powerful words are the source for an important principle presented by the Toldot Yaakov Yosef (beginning of Bereishit) in the name of his master and teacher, the Ba'al Shem Tov hakadosh, zy"a. So long as a Jew believes wholeheartedly that HKB"H is with him — even during times of extreme concealment, "hester panim" — it is impossible for anything bad to befall him. When HKB"H wishes to punish a person for his countless sins, He conceals this awareness from the person — that He is with him even during times of trouble and suffering.

Based on this idea, he elucidates the following passuk (Devarim 31, 18): **"ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני מהם ביום ההוא על כל הרעות אשר עשה כי פנה" אל אלהים אחרים — but I will surely conceal My countenance from them on that day because of all the evil that it did, for it turned to other gods.** HKB"H specifically says: **"ואנכי הסתר אסתיר" — in other words, I will conceal from them this knowledge that I am in a state of hiding during their time of distress, so that I may punish them for turning to other gods.**

Here are the words of the Toldot Yaakov Yosef as quoted by the great Rabbi of Komarna in Leket Imrei Peninim (end of Chumash Devarim) with some additional clarification:

"שמעתי ממורי, שאם ידע אדם בידיעה ואמונה שלימה, שבכל הסתרות ומחשבות זרות הקב"ה מסתתר שם אין זה הסתרה כלל, כי בידיעה שאדם יודע ומאמין שבכל

תנועה והרהור דבר גדול ודבר קטן שם הוא אלופו של עולם חיות אלקות, מיד יתפרדו כל פועלי און והרע נופל למטה, ונתגלה האור וחיות אלקות..."

אבל לפעמים ואנכי הסתר אסתיר, שאסתיר גם את ההסתרה, עד שאינו מרגיש שום חיות ואינו יודע ונשכח ממנו שהקב"ה שם אתו, וזה הוא לו כי פנה אל אלהים אחרים, בהסתלקות אמונה ובטחון, ואז חל עונש, אבל כל זמן שהאדם דבוק באמונה שלימה בבוראו, לא יארע לו שום רע אלא אהבה וחיבה."

If a person is aware and believes wholeheartedly that even in the most dismal circumstances HKB"H is actually there but in hiding, then the concealment no longer exists. For, with the awareness that the Master of the Universe is indeed there with him, all evil and negative elements disappear and the divine light is revealed.

At times, however, the awareness of My concealed presence must also be concealed, because the person turned to other gods. Consequently, the person forgets that HKB"H is with him, he no longer believes or trusts — he lacks "emunah" and "bitachon" -- and then he is punished.

We have now gained a glimpse of understanding regarding the secretive conversation conducted between Moshe Rabeinu and HKB"H. Moshe approached HKB"H with a question: **"ואמר: 'And when they say to me, 'What is His name?' — what shall I say to them?'"** After suffering so many hardships during the galut in Mitzrayim, Yisrael will ask, "What is HKB"H's name that is capable of rescuing us from any threat and calamity, so that we will no longer need to suffer as we did in Mitzrayim?"

To this HKB"H replied: **"אהיה אשר אהיה"**. The Midrash explains: **"כשם שאתה הווה עמי כך אני הווה עמך" — as you behave with Me, so, too, will I behave with you.** As the Rambam explained, HKB"H says to each individual: **"אהיה אשר אהיה" — if you want Me to be with you, there is a condition! Your relationship with Me must be characterized by constant "deveikus" — intimate attachment. This is HKB"H's seal and trademark of "emes"; he watches over each individual person in accordance and in proportion to that person's attachment to Him.**

The Association between "אהיה אשר אהיה" and Tefillin Shel Yad and Rosh

Taking the high road, let us apply this concept to explain the practical significance of what we have learned from the Tikunei HaZohar. When HKB"H said to Moshe: **"אהיה אשר אהיה" — he was referring to the tefillin shel yad and the tefillin shel rosh.**

Each of them contains four parshiyos (passages) containing a total of twenty-one — the numerical value of אהי"ה -- mentions of the name Havaya. Thus, the two tefillin together correspond to the appellation: "אהיה אשר אהיה".

We know that the purpose of the mitzvah of tefillin is to connect a person with HKB"Y. We express this fact in the formula of the "לשם יחוד" recited prior to donning the tefillin: **לְהַנִּיחַ עַל הַיָּד לְזִכְרוֹן זְרוּעַ הַנְּטוּיָה, וְשֶׁהִיא נֹגֵד הַלֵּב, לְשַׁעֲבֵד בְּזֶה תַּאוּוֹת וּמַחֲשׁוֹת לִבְנוֹ לַעֲבֹדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ שְׁמוֹ, וְעַל הָרֹאשׁ נֹגֵד הַמוֹחַ, שֶׁהַנִּשְׁמָה שְׂבִימוּחֵי עִם שְׂאֵר חוּשֵׁי** -- we are commanded to place the tefillin on the upper arm, opposite the heart, in order to subjugate our desires and devote them solely to the service of the Almighty; we are also commanded to place the tefillin upon the head, opposite the brain, so that the soul, senses and faculties will all be subservient and devoted to the Almighty.

Thus, it appears that HKB”H gave us the mitzvah of tefillin — corresponding to the appellation of “אֱהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֱהִיָּה” — as a wonderful “segulah” for connecting and binding ourselves to HKB”H in a permanent fashion. This affords us a unique protection and supervision from HKB”H. This is the message conveyed by the appellation: “אֱהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֱהִיָּה”; HKB”H is telling us, “I will be (אֱהִיָּה) with the person who will be with Me.”

It appears that support for this explanation can be provided from the immaculate teachings of the Sefas Emes (Matos 5643). He explains why it is essential to do the tefillin shel yad prior to the tefillin shel rosh. For, the tefillin shel yad opposite the heart represent the notion of **אתערותא דלתתא** — an awakening from below — due to the subjugation of our hearts' desires to the service of Hashem. As a result, we merit **אתערותא דלעילא** — an awakening from above — protection from HKB"H via the tefillin shel rosh. This is learned from the Gemara's (Berachos 6a) elucidation of the passuk (Devarim 28, 10): **"וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך, רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר אלו תפילין שבראש"** -- the passuk states: **"Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will revere you."** Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: This is a reference to **"tefillin shel rosh."**

Let us provide an explanation based on our current discussion. The twenty-one mentions of the name Havaya in the tefillin shel yad represent the notion of אהי"ה (21) — every Jew's individual declaration that he will be with HKB"Y, by subjugating his every whim and thought to HKB"Y. In the merit of this commitment, HKB"Y fulfills His promise: אהיה "אשר אהיה" — to watch over us with the twenty-one mentions of the name Havaya in the tefillin shel rosh — equivalent to אהי"ה (21).

Based on this understanding, I would like to propose an interpretation of the following testimony found in the Scriptures regarding Shlomo HaMelech (Melachim I 5, 9): **וַיֵּתֶן אֱלֹקִים חִכְמָה: לְשִׁלְמֹה וְתִבְנוּנָה רַבָּה מְאֹד, וְרוּחַב לֵב כְּחוֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּם, וְתִרְבַּח חִכְמַת שְׁלֹמֹה מִחִכְמַת כָּל בְּנֵי קֶדֶם וּמִכָּל חִכְמַת מִצְרַיִם, וַיְחַכֵּם מִכָּל הָאָדָם... וַיְדַבֵּר שְׁלוֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים מִשְׁלִי.”** **G-d gave wisdom and considerable understanding to Shlomo, and breadth of heart as immense as the sand which is upon the seashore. Shlomo’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the East and all the wisdom of Mitzrayim. He was wiser than all men . . . He spoke three thousand proverbs.** We must endeavor to explain why he spoke specifically **שְׁלוֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים** (literally translated as three thousand) proverbs.

Notwithstanding Shlomo HaMelech's vast wisdom and knowledge, let us suggest that he taught the entire nation one essential lesson: The greatest form of wisdom is being connected and attached to Hashem in accordance with the three alephs -- שלושת אלפים . [Translator's note: שלושת אלפים can be translated as "three thousand" or as "the three alephs."] Those three alephs are the first letters of the appellation "אהיה אשר אהיה" — with which HKB"H conveyed to Moshe the essential lesson that He would be with any person who clings to Him. This is also the allusion found in the "Thirteen Midot HaRachamim" (Shemos 34, 7): "נוצר חסד לאלפים". In other words, HKB"H preserves and demonstrates kindness to those people who always remember the "alaphim" — the alephs of "אהיה אשר אהיה".

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