Kavana: Understanding the meaning

29th of Nisan, 5770. Today is the 14th day of Omer

When saying the Amida, we should delve into the meaning of every word. This mental exercise is called Kavana: consciousness / alertness. Distractions or even having a blank mind is not accepted. Kavana is required at the time of prayer and it's mandatory in the first Berakha of the Amida.ELOKIM is one of the names of God. It is actually the first name to appear in the Torah. The closest English word to define ELOKIM will be "Almighty". The Kuzari, written by rabbi Yehuda haLevy, explains that the word ELOKIM is written in the plural form, not to suggest that there is more than one God but to manifest that God Almighty encompasses all the powers. There is no force in the universe which is not under His control.

ELOKIM is also the way we refer to God when we want to express our perception of God acting with strict justice, (Middat haDin) in opposition to compassion. When God creates the world (nature, Bereshit chapter 1) the Torah uses the name ELOKIM, because nature is not compassionate. It's ruled by mechanical laws like, sicknesses, death and the survival of the fittest.

But when the Torah focuses on the Creation of man (Bereshit chapter 2) the Torah uses HASHEM ELOKIM which suggests "nature" combined with "compassion". In regards to human beings, God sometimes judges us or humanity with strict justice but we always pray to Him to be judged with compassion, consideration and patience.