EMUNA: Thinking about HaShem's names

Last week we explained that the Shem haMeforash, the main name of HaShem, is written in one way and it is pronounced in a different way. The meaning of the name of HaShem as it is written means "The Eternal", the One that was, is and will be. As such, when we read this name we remember that it is beyond our limited capacity to know Him or understand Him. We should be humble and in a sate of awe and submission (yr-at HaShem) when we realize that God is transcendent and beyond our comprehension.

But although written in a way that expresses the unbridgeable distance between Him and us, we pronounce His name in a way more accessible to us. We read His name A-M-O-N-A-Y (reading D for the M) which comes from the word ADON (Lord), He is our Master. We see HaShem as the Creator of the world, its Owner, its Master. The Eternal is recondite but the Master is accessible. He listens to our prayers. He loves us and cares about us. We can easily relate to our Master (ahabat Hashem).

According to the Shulhan 'arukh (OH, 5:1), every time we pronounce this name of God we have to keep in mind these two meanings: ADON haKol, He is our Master, and He is Eternal (He is, was and will be).

These two meanings of the name of HaShem, obviously, complement each other.

In the same halakha the Shulhan 'arukh explains the second most common name by which we refer to God: Eloqim. This name of HaShem means that He is all-powerful and Omnipotent. When we pronounce Eloqim we have to think and remember that nothing is beyond HaShem's possibilities or His knowledge. He knows what we do, even in our intimate life, and he knows what we think and what we feel. "Eloqim" remind us that we live (or we should live…) permanently under His sight. Keeping this in mind, should inspire us to do always what is correct in His eyes, and especially, avoid what is wrong in His eyes.

The Shulhan 'arukh stresses the importance of thinking about these ideas when we say the names of HaShem.

The Midrash says that HaShem told Yesha'ayahu haNabi that some

of His children praid to Him with their lips but not with their hearts (□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□). In other words, they were reciting the prayers, but were not thinking about the meaning of those prayers. In this way, they did not allow the prayers to inspire them and realize, for example, that HaShem, although Infinite and Recondite, is close to us, He knows what we do, what we say, what we think.

HaShem, in Ladino

In Spanish, the name of God is "Dios". But Sephardic Jews who spoke Ladino did not call HaSjem "Dios" but "Dio" (Buena semana mos de el Dió…etc.). Why? Because in Spanish, like English, the ending letter "s" signifies the plural, especially when the word ends with a vowel (casa/casas, hombre/hombres, sombrero/sombreros). They were therefore very careful to call HaShem "Dió" without the final "s", to stress the singularity of God, stressing in this particular way their Emuna in HaShem Ehad (HaShem is One).