

## **“I” Stands Between** **Rabbi Zev-Hayyim Feyer**

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### *Parshat Va'et'hanan*

**I stood between the Eternal and you at that time to convey to you the Word of the Eternal, since you trembled with awe before the fire and could not ascend the mountain.** (Deuteronomy 5:5)

Our tradition tells us that we should not “divide” a Scriptural verse which Moses did not “divide.” That is to say, we are enjoined not to take pieces of the Torah out of context. Yet, throughout our history, we have done exactly that. We take pieces of the text and interpret them – sometimes in relation to their context, sometimes (more often) with near-disregard of their context.

The Hassidic master Rebbe Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov (who passed from this life on 25 Elul 5546, 18 September 1786) was a direct disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and mentor of several of the outstanding lights of the third generation of Hassidic masters. He examines the first words of this verse and finds there a very deep spiritual and psychological lesson.

**I stood between the Eternal and you.** We have come to understand that the stories we find in the Torah (in Scripture generally, whether our own *Tanach* or the holy Scriptures of other peoples) are – regardless of their historical accuracy or lack thereof – reflections of the psyche of the individual reader.

In its simple, plain-text meaning (what we call *pshat*), this is Moses' recounting of the events surrounding the giving of the Torah at Sinai, when Moses acted as intermediary between the people and G\*d, for the people feared the volcanic manifestations of G\*d's Presence.

Rebbe Yehiel Mikhal, however, understands it on a deeper level. The “I,” he teaches, is what stands between us and G\*d. The “I” is what separates us from G\*d. (Of course, that separation is an illusion, for G\*d is never truly separated from us, but it seems real to us.)

When one says “I,” implying an independent existence, Rebbe Yehiel Mikhal says, one is using a word that belongs only to G\*d and is thereby shutting oneself off from G\*d by encroaching upon the word of the Creator. One thus puts a wall between oneself and G\*d. When one offers one's “I,” however, as a sacrifice, then there is nothing between such a one and the Creator.

This it is, concludes Rebbe Yehiel Mikhal, that is meant by the words (Song of Songs 6:3), **I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.** When I take my “I” and give it – freely and wholeheartedly, with nothing held back – then my Beloved's being mine becomes fully manifest.

Shabbat Shalom.