

“Should We Ever Doubt God’s Justice”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Moses becomes the first person in the Bible to question the justice of what God has done. Earlier Abraham questioned what God *intended to do* at Sodom, but Moses is more radical; as the Egyptian oppression grows more harsh he cries out: “O Lord, why did You bring harm upon this people...?” God responds by saying “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them by My name Adonai.” Rashi assumes that God is comparing Moses unfavorably to the patriarchs, for they trusted in God’s justice despite seeing less directly into God’s ways.

But we might reverse this, and consider that the revelation of the Divine name follows right after Moses’ daring question. Rather than disapproving of doubt, perhaps God cherishes the protest born of outraged faith. There is a popular image that untroubled, unquestioning faith is the ideal, but our tradition presents a more dynamic picture of the Divine-human relationship. The faith of the Bible is turbulent, deep, doubting, and, yet, resolved to trust. Religion, as Rabbi Soloveitchik wrote, is a “raging, clamorous torrent of man’s consciousness with all its crises, pangs and torments.”

“God, why have You done this?” is not the scoffing of denial, but the heart cry of faith. Our name is Israel, which means those who struggle with God.