

## The Revelation of the Name

In this week's reading from *Parashat Va'era* (*Shemot / Exodus 6:2-9:35*), we read of the presence of God amongst His people and His power to deliver His people from slavery and bondage. The Lord God spoke to Moshe declaring that He is revealing Himself in a new way to His people saying, *ג וַאֲרָא אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי וְשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: 6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. (NASB)* The Lord continues saying, *ד וְגַם הִקְמַמְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם לְתַת לָהֶם אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֵת: 6:4 'I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. (NASB)* reaffirming the covenant promise that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He will be their God and He will bring them into the land that He had promised. The Lord instructs Moshe and Aaron to go to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. Moshe goes and performs many signs and miracles; the sign of the staff turning into a serpent (*7:8-10*), turning the Nile River to blood (*7:15-24*), the plague of frogs (*8:1-15*), turning dust into gnats and swarms of insects (*8:16-31*), the livestock are struck with pestilence causing them to die (*9:1-7*), boils break out on all of the Egyptians (*9:8-17*), and the Lord brought a plague of hail mingled with fire (*9:18-35*). Pharaoh recognizes his sin before God and states, *9:27 ... 'I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. 9:28 'Make supplication to the Lord, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.'* (NASB) When the hail ceased the Scriptures continue saying that Pharaoh sinned again and hardened his heart both he and his servants. Based upon this week's portion, troublesome times brings repentance and return, whereas times of blessing can cause a man to build up within his heart a god of his own making to trust and rely upon rather than upon the Lord God in heaven. It seems that this is the reason and the purpose the Lord God has chosen to reveal His Name to Moshe and Israel at this time. Keep this in mind as we continue in the study, *"How does the revelation of the Name defines who God is and who we are as His people?"*

ספר שמות פרק ו *Shemot / Exodus 6:2-8*

ב וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה: ג וַאֲרָא אֶל-  
אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל  
שְׁדֵי וְשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם:  
ד וְגַם הִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתָּם  
לְתַת לָהֶם אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֵת אֶרֶץ  
מִגְרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר-גָּרוּ בָּהּ: ה וְגַם  
| אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-נִאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂ-  
רָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבָדִים אִתָּם  
וְאָזְכֹּר אֶת-בְּרִיתִי: ו לָכֵן אֹמֵר  
לְבְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה וְהוֹצֵא-  
תִּי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִתַּחַת סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם  
וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבָדָתָם וְגִאֲלֹתִי  
אֶתְכֶם בְּזִרְוֹעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשַׁפְטִים גְּדוֹ-  
לִים: ז וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעַם  
וְהִייתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי  
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם  
מִמִּצְרַיִם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם: ח וְהִבֵּא-  
תִּי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי  
אֶת-יְדֵי לְתַת אֶתָּה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְ-  
חָק וְלַיַּעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֶתָּה לָכֶם מוֹרָ-  
שָׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה:

6:2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord; 6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. 6:4 'I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. 6:5 'Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. 6:6 'Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 6:7 'Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 6:8 'I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord.' (NASB)

It is interesting to note how the Lord God spoke to Moshe about His name, the Torah tells us saying, ב וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה: 6:2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord; (NASB) The Lord says "I am YHVH" (אֲנִי יְהוָה), and the question is how did Moshe understand what the Lord meant when he said "I am YHVH" (אֲנִי יְהוָה)? Did he have an instant revelation on the meaning of the name or did it take time for him to understand what the Lord meant by revealing His name in this new way? The Lord God then tells Moshe that He did

not reveal His name to the Patriarchs. He revealed Himself as El Shaddai, the all sufficient one. **ג** וְאֵל-אֲבֹרְתָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שְׁדַי וַיִּשְׁמֵי : וְהָיָה לֹא נֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם: *6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. (NASB)* What we read according to the narrative in the Torah is the Lord revealing Himself in power and authority over all, in the way in which He delivers Israel from bondage in Egypt. The Lord God has over over all of creation.

To gain some further insight into the meaning on the revelation of the Name, let's look at what the rabbis have to say concerning the Name of God.

### ***Ramban on Exodus 6:3, Part 1***

*God appeared to the Patriarchs as the Prime Mover behind all natural events. His miracles were apparent to them without recourse to violating the natural order. In times of famine He redeemed them from death and in war from the sword and provided them with wealth and honor and every good thing. These things, like all the promises in the Torah of blessing and curse, are not meted out to a man as his due, as a reward for good deeds and punishment for sin. They constitute miracles (of Divine grace). Man's own deeds do not automatically give rise to favorable effects or otherwise. But the reward and punishment alluded to in the Torah in this world are in the nature of miracles, hidden ones which the onlookers regard as the workings of nature. But in reality they are the providential allocation of reward and punishment. God said to Moses: I appeared to the Patriarchs as One who assists His chosen ones through the might of my hand (but without violating nature). By My ineffable name expressing the essence of all existence (Exodus 3:14) I was not known to them to introduce innovations changing the natural course of events. Therefore tell the Children of Israel that I am the Lord and let them know My great name through which I shall perform for them wonders that they may know that I am the Lord who does these things.*

Ramban tries to explain the difference between the name given to the Patriarchs as opposed to what He is saying now, the Lord reveals Himself as יהוה-וה. He says that the miracles of God were apparent to the Patriarchs during times of famine and war. Rambam says that these miracles were the product of Divine grace. He says that man's actions do not automatically give rise to the Lord providing favorable acts, but that the reward and punishments is a reference to the Torah. He continues saying that the Lord assisted the Patriarchs with a mighty hand without violating nature, on the other hand, this deliverance the Lord is bringing upon the people will be achieved by unnatural events so that they will recognize the Lord as the יהוה-וה. Rashbam continues saying the following:

### ***Rashbam on Exodus 6:3, Part 2***

‘ושמי ה', we have to explain the sequence as follows: “Although I have revealed Myself to the patriarchs as the attribute of Shaddai, My principal name, the one that represents My essence, etc.” We are faced with a repetition here, hence לא נודעת להם, “I did not reveal Myself to the patriarchs as My principal attribute but only as My attribute Shaddai. But to you, Moses, I have revealed My principal attribute which I described as אהיה and זכרי ה'. In your lifetime I plan to fulfill My promise.”

Rashbam's continuing thoughts on the attribute the Lord God is revealing to Moshe and Israel is in His ability to deliver them from bondage and to fulfill His promises to their fathers. Rashbam focuses upon this idea of “remembering the Lord” (זכרי ה') according to His actions for Israel.

Shney Luchot HaBrit has the following to say concerning the attribute that is being revealed to Moshe and Israel.

### ***Shney Luchot HaBrit, Mishpatim, Torah Ohr 19***

This is also what is meant when G'd told Moses that He had not needed to reveal Himself to the patriarchs in His aspect of the מדת הרחמים, His attribute of Mercy (compare Rashi on Exodus 6:3).

The commentary says the attribute that is being revealed is God's Mercy. Why do they say that God is revealing His mercy only now? The connection between the attribute of mercy may be to that of the *"increase of the strength of the Lord"* taken in context of what we are about to see according to the Torah. The Lord God is exalted and glorified as a result of recognizing this attribute in the sense of His interactions with our world through Israel. God's strength and presence increases through people, including sinners, who turn to Him and call in His Name. This idea of the increase of God's *"strength"* forms the basis of forgiveness, which is coupled to the idea of the Mercy of God and itself constitutes the basis of the continued existence of a world that is destined for destruction. The name of God being revealed is demonstrated in His action of mercy and grace, and our action of remembering what He has done!

Radak has the following to say concerning the revelation of the name.

### ***Radak on Genesis 17:1, Part 2***

*אני א-ל שדי, the word שדי means "strong, victorious." (root שדד) We find the term appearing in that sense in Ezekiel 1,24, בקול מים רבים כקול שדי, "like the sound of mighty waters, like the sound of Shaddai." Also in Ezekiel 10,5 כקול שדי א-ל שדי it appears in the same sense. G-d meant to tell him that although you are physically weak and Sarai is barren, I, G'd will overcome all these impediments and the laws of nature are subject to My control, so that I can change them whenever it suits me. G'd referred to this power again in Exodus 6,3 when Moses had despaired of his mission. He told them that he had already demonstrated this power when He made the three matriarchs, all of whom had been biologically barren, overcome such a handicap so that each bore a child or children. G'd had responded to the prayers of these people or their husbands and altered the laws of nature in order to fulfill their requests. When the word שדי is meant to be an attribute, it should be spelled שדדי, shaddeday." It would then mean something akin to Proverbs 28,23 מוכיח אדם אחרי חן ימצא, i.e. that as a result*

*of being rebuked, the subject of the rebuke will eventually find favour (in the eyes of the rebuker).*

Radak focuses upon the the word שדי “*sufficient one*” and explains that the Lord is able to overcome all impediments, and that even the laws of nature are subject to His control. This implies what others have been saying concerning the revelation of the Name, that we understand who God is by the way that He works in our lives. If we do not seek for Him to be in our lives, we will not see Him working. There is a lot that can be said concerning those who believe and those who do not, we who believe can see the Lord working in our lives daily. Those who do not believe in the Lord and in Yeshua His Messiah, do not see and cannot see until they make the invitation for the Lord to come into their lives.

Sforno has the following to say concerning the name of God.

### ***Sforno on Genesis 17:1, Part 2***

*אני א-ל שדי, “I am the One Who is sufficient unto Himself by My very existence to carry out My special function the creation of the universe all by Myself without assistance by anyone else. [The word די expresses this self-sufficiency of the Lord/Creator. Ed.] The very opposite is true of all created phenomena other than the Creator. [the difference between G’d and creatures is that G’d is a “self-starter,” whereas all other phenomena require something to activate them even when performing the functions for which they have been created. Ed.] This all means that the recipient of a visual image, מראה, a vision, becomes aware of the existence of the Creator and His power, without him however becoming aware of underlying causes of such. The patriarchs became witnesses to G’d performing “invisible” miracles, as distinct from the “visible” miracles performed by Moses and other prophets after him to some extent. [an “invisible” miracle maybe recognized as such because the time and place has been foretold to the beneficiary, as in the case where the angels told Avram that Sarah would give birth to a son within the year. “Visible”*

*miracles, are for instance, water turning into blood, or all the firstborn of one nation dying at the same time [after this event having been announced.] the latter type of miracle says more about G'd as the originator of all that occurs in the universe than does the former kind of miracle. This latter kind of insight was not revealed by G'd before Moses, as we quoted from Exodus 6:3*

Sforno speaks of the Lord God being a self starter and of seeing a vision and becoming aware of the Lord God in heaven. What is invisible becomes manifest in the visible, in this world. The revelation of the Name is found in the distinction of what God is doing here for Israel, the difference between “invisible” miracles, as opposed to the “visible” miracles the Lord is performing on behalf of Israel. The Lord is being made known in this world through His people. *Isaiah 49:3* states “*You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*” (ESV) But how is the glory of God revealed in His people? *Tehillim / Psalms 84:7* brings this context into the light, saying, יִלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֶל-חֵיל יִרְאֶה אֶל-אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן: *84:7 They go from strength to strength, Every one of them appears before God in Zion.* (NASB) The rabbis interpret *Tehillim / Psalms 84:7* according to the Talmud in the following way.

#### ***Talmud Bavli Berakhot 64a***

*He who goes out from the Synagogue and enters the House of Study to occupy himself with Torah is worthy to receive the presence of the Shekinah; as it is said, “They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.”* (היוצא מבית הכנסת ונכנס לבית המדרש ועוסק) בתורה זוכה ומקבל פני שכינה שנאמר (תהלים פד, ח) ילכו מחיל אל חיל יראה אל אלהים בציון.

The rabbis say the meaning of going from strength to strength is a reference to the one who goes from the Synagogue to the House of Study. The strength to strength is of one who occupies himself with the study of Torah for the purpose of dwelling in the presence of the Glory (Shekinah) of God. The point is as we study God's word His Glory descends upon us,

His people. The Aramaic Targum states something very similar, ה אזלין, צדיקיא מן בית מקדשא לבית מדרשיא יתחמי ליעות אוריתא דילהון קדם יהוה די שכינתיה שריא בציון: ט אמר דוד יהוה אלהים צבאות קביל צלותי אצית אלהא : לעלמין: 84:8 *The righteous go from the sanctuary to the academies; their toil in the Torah will be manifest before the Lord, whose presence abides in Zion.* 84:9 *David said, "O Lord, God Sabaoth, receive my prayer; hear, O God of Jacob, forever."* (EMC) Judaism and the rabbis are always emphasizing the importance of studying Torah. In addition, it is interesting how Ein Yaakov's commentary on *Berakhot 9:22* interprets the meaning of this Psalm.

### ***Ein Yaakov on Berakhot 9:22***

*And further said R. Abin the Levite: "He who leaves his friend [after escorting him a distance] must not say 'Go in peace' but Go with peace.' for Jethro said unto Moses (Ex. 4:18) Go with peace. He went and succeeded, but David said to Abshalom (II Sam. 15:9) Go in peace. He went and hanged himself." Further said R. Abin the Levite: "He who takes leave of the dead body [after burial] must not say 'Go with peace' but 'Go in peace,' for it is said (Gen. 15:15) But thou shalt come to thy fathers in peace." R. Levi b. Chiya said : "He who goes out from the synagogue [after prayer] and enters the house of learning and studies the Torah will be permitted to wait on the Divine Presence, for it is said (Ps. 84:8) They go from strength to strength; each of them will appear before God in Zion." R. Elazar in the name of R. Chanina said : "Scholars advance peace in the world, as it is said (Is. 54, 13.) And all thy children shall be taught by the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children. Read not Banaich (Thy Children), but read it Bonaich (thy builders)"; Great peace have they who love thy Torah and there is no stumbling for them (Ps. 119:115). Peace be within thy rampart, prosperity within thy palaces (Ib. 122, 7). For my brethren and associates' sake I would fain speak peace concerning Thee (Ib.). For the sake of the house of the Lord our God. I would seek thy good. The*

*Lord will give strength unto his people; The Lord will bless his people with peace.*

Ein Yaakov interprets the “*strength to strength*” as going from the synagogue to house of study, refers to going from prayer to studying Torah. He then draws a parallel to being at peace, and the one who studies Torah and applies it to his or her life is at peace with God. He says “*Great peace have they who love thy Torah and there is no stumbling for them (Ps. 119:115). Peace be within thy rampart, prosperity within thy palaces (Ib. 122, 7). For my brethren and associates’ sake I would fain speak peace concerning Thee (Ib.). For the sake of the house of the Lord our God. I would seek thy good. The Lord will give strength unto his people; The Lord will bless his people with peace.*” Going from prayer to studying God’s word will help to focus one’s heart and life for the Lord God in heaven in Yeshua the Messiah! Doing these things will bring peace from within that only the Lord Himself can give us.

The rabbis approach to understanding the revelation of the name (*refer to Shney Luchot HaBrit, Vaetchanan, Torah Ohr 86-88*) the kabbalistic approach the rabbis take is related to the word קֶן (*nest, cell, chamber, shell, habitation, from Tehillim / Psalms 84:3*) and the words מְצֵאָה בֵּית וְדָרוֹר | קֶן לָהּ “*has found a house, and a nest, a nest for herself.*” This is taken to be interpreted as understanding the Lord God in heaven. The Lord God is understood in two Sefarot, Understanding (בינה), and Wisdom (חכמה). Note the possible translations of the word for Understanding (בינה) and for wisdom (חכמה). Understanding is related to intellect, prudence, and comprehension. Wisdom is related to intelligence, knowledge, prudence, and insight. The rabbis say that “*When G’d’s name is spelled א-ה-י-ה, this symbolizes His manifestation in the emanation בינה, whereas when it is spelled ה-ו-ה-י-ה it symbolizes His being manifest in the emanation חכמה.*” There are parallels here to the Lord manifesting Himself in both the seen and unseen (in two worlds, spirit and tangible). The name of the Lord (י-ה-ו-ה) is manifested in understanding and wisdom. The concept here the rabbis are trying to get us to understand is that the Lord is manifest in the wisdom and understanding of Torah. How does this work? This occurs by walking and living in the commandments. We also know according to the Tanach, the Holy Spirit is responsible for writing the command-

ments of God upon our hearts. This means that we are to endeavor to keep the commandments by actively placing them on our hearts. Actively seeking the Lord God in heaven and actively walking in His ways. This could also be read to imply a future expectation. *Jeremiah 31:33* we read that in the new covenant, God will write his Torah upon our hearts. He says, *“I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it”* (*Jeremiah 31:33*). This means that God will actually change our nature, circumcising our hearts as it were, to remove from us the waywardness of our evil inclination. Paul speaks of this transformation as *“the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit”* (*Titus 3:5*). Living and obeying God’s Torah is purposed for our Understanding (בִּינָה), and Wisdom (חִכְמָה). In another passage, Paul states, *“Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”* (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). Paul points to the lives of believers as evidence of being in a covenant relationship with the Lord when he says, *“being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”* (*2 Corinthians 3:3*). All of these things happen to believers as a fulfillment of the promise of the covenant of God to Israel in the Messiah Yeshua. And so, obeying the Lord God according to His word is walking according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh.

This week we look at what God meant by revealing His Name. In the revelation of the Name the Lord God is giving to Moshe and to Israel, we see His Mercy and Grace, His power and ability to overcome all impediments, His power and authority over all of creation, He is the author of both the invisible, and the visible miracles, and that we are called to live according to His word for His glory! All of these things point us back to the covenant relationship and to Israel, a people chosen by God who live humble and prayerful lives before the Lord. A people who are hungry for His word, and who greatly desire to draw near at any chance we get. With all of these things in mind regarding the revelation of the Name, Do these things reveal anything about you and your relationship with the Lord? How about your relationship with the Messiah Yeshua?

