

# CHEVRAH TORAH 5778...Seeking ✨ Spirituality

## Shabbat VaERA

Exodus 6:2-9

In Honor of our cherished member, tumbler & teacher IRV ZUCKERMAN's 94<sup>th</sup> Birthday

### KEY KOSHI:

HOW IS ANI ADONAI AN ANSWER FOR MOSES, ISRAEL & US IN PERCEIVING GOD'S PRESENCE? WHAT DOES THIS NAME TEACH US ABOUT HOW WE, SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING, MEET/FIND GOD?

**P'SHAT—AWARENESS...** The beginning of knowing about God is simply paying attention, being fully present where you are

6:2] God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord. 3] I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them by My name YHVH. 4] I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. 5] I have now heard the moaning of the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. 6] Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the Lord. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. 7] And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians. 8] I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession, I the Lord. 9] But when Moses told this to the Israelites, they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage.

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר <sup>2</sup>  
אֵלַיו אֲנִי יְהוָה : <sup>3</sup> וַאֲרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם  
אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שְׁדַי וְשְׁמִי  
יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם : <sup>4</sup> וְגַם  
הִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתָּם לָתֵת לָהֶם  
אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֵת אֶרֶץ מִגְרֵיהֶם  
אֲשֶׁר־גָּרוּ בָּהּ : <sup>5</sup> וְגַם | אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי  
אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם  
מַעֲבֹדִים אַתָּם וְאִזְכֹּר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי :  
<sup>6</sup> לָכֵן אֶמַר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה  
וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת  
מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבָדְתֶּם  
וְגִאֲלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה  
וּבְשַׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים : <sup>7</sup> וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם  
לִי לְעָם וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים  
וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת  
מִצְרַיִם : <sup>8</sup> וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּיל אֶת־יָדִי לָתֵת אֹתָהּ  
לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלַיַּעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי  
אֹתָהּ לָכֶם מִוְרֶשֶׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה :  
<sup>9</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא  
שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקְצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבָדָה  
קָשָׁה :

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

## REMEZ—UN-SELF-AWARENESS...

V. 2-3 *God spoke to Moses and said unto him: I am Adonai. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob as El Shaddai, But I did not make myself known unto them by My Name---Y-H-V-H*

**BENNO JACOB**...It is a fallacy to imagine that these verses speak of the revelation of a new name. Why, after all, should the tetragrammaton be called “My Name,” for was not “El Shaddai” God’s name as well? “*I am Adonai.*”

**SARNA**...The phrase “*ANI YHVH*” appears scores of times in the Bible and is widespread in corresponding form in Northwest Semitic royal inscriptions...It cannot, therefore, reflect the introduction of a new name. On the contrary...In the present context, the invocation of a hitherto unknown divine name would hardly serve to counteract the widespread demoralization, which is, after all, the very function of God’s declaration. In light of these considerations, the meaning of this verse needs to be reexamined. In the ancient Near Eastern world, names in general, and the name of a god in particular, possessed a dynamic quality and were expressive of character and potency... “*I did not make Myself known to them by My Name ADONAI*” is to state that the patriarchs did not experience the essential power associated with this Name. The present reiteration of the promises exclusively in the name of YHVH means that their fulfillment is imminent...

**IBN EZRA**...IBN JANAHA interprets it as an oath:

“*By My Name YHVH! I have not made Myself known as I have to you!*”...SA’ADIAH explains it that the Patriarchs knew God as El Shaddai, and not only as YHVH. But are they not one and the same? Y’HOSHUA ben YEHUDAH thinks that the Patriarchs did not know the tetragrammaton, but this is incorrect. There is no doubt they knew The Name. After all, God explicitly tells Avram, “*I am Adonai who brought you out of Ur...*” [Gen 15:17] They merely did not know that this Name YHVH was descriptive as well as God’s name...

**RASHI**...This Name implies, ‘I made promises to the Patriarchs as “*El Shaddai,*” ...but I did not become known to them...[That is,] I was not recognized by them, in keeping faith with them, as “*ADONAI.*”

**RAMBAM**...*Ani Adonai*---Faithful to reward those who follow My path. I did not send you for nothing, but to fulfill the promise I made to the patriarchs.

**RAMBAN**...*Ani Adonai*—God is thus saying to Moses: I appeared to the Patriarchs as the One who assisted Israel in due keeping with the course of nature, but I was not known to them as a God who changed the natural course of events—YHVH!

**GUR ARYEH**...Y-H-V-H...Which contains within it God’s Eternality, *HaYaH/HoVeH/YiH’YeH*---*Is, Was and Will be.* Because the Holy One is Eternal, beyond time...

**S’FORNO**...In effect, what God is saying is: I did not make a point of becoming familiar to the Patriarchs in this way...Seeing that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could not have passed on knowledge of Me they did not have, I now have to reveal My Self in order to ensure the future survival of the Children of Israel.

**MIDRASH RABBAH**...The answer with which Moses question was met at the outset of our portion was: *They knew me as El Shaddai---Almighty God, but they did not know me as Adonai.* In other words, Abraham Isaac & Jacob underwent many trials, but there was no need to make Myself known to them as Adonai, for they never asked Who are You? They asked no questions of Me....But you, Moses, from the very start, ask “*What shall I say is Your Name?*”

V. 2-3 *But when Moses told the Israelites they would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage.*

**ZOHAR**...Do not read “*short of breath—kotser ru’ach*” but rather “constricted in spirit.” The people had no concern beyond their daily needs, thus the Holy One commanded Moses to bring them out.

**S’FAS EMES**...The Rabbis teach that a witness must be ‘one who is able to hear.’...When it says of the people Israel “they did not listen to Moses”...it means they were not ready to hear God’s Word...

**GREEN**...The Voice of God we are to hear comes from within ourselves. The power to hear the voice of God’s *ANI YHVH* calls for a faith in ourselves, and the power of The Name that would transform our lives.

## D'RASH—READING BETWEEN THE WORDS...

### MARTIN BUBER ...

During the Egyptian servitude, The Name itself degenerated into a sound simultaneously empty and half forgotten. Under such conditions the hour comes when people ask of a man bringing a message from this God: How can we know Him? How about His Name?...The true name of a person is far more than a mere denotative designation...It is the essence of the person, distilled from his real being, so that through its mention he is present in it once again....

In reply to his question about the Name Moses is told: EHYEH ASHER EHYEH. This is usually understood to mean "I am that I am," in the sense of YHVH describing himself as 'The Being One'

The One unalterably persisting in His Being. But that would be abstraction... "I am that I am" would only be understood as avoiding the question...Thus the Name changes...It is unfolded in its truest sense...ANI YHVH is "He who is present" or "He who is here," not merely sometime and somewhere, but in every now and in every here. In this self-revelation, YHVH now expresses his character...It is God Himself who unfolds his Name...

Again and again, when God says in the narrative "*then the Egyptians will recognize ANI ADONAI,*" or "*then you will know ANI ADONAI,*" it is clearly not the name as a sound, but the meaning revealed in it, which is meant. The Egyptians shall come to know that [unlike their gods] I am the truly Present One—the standing and acting One; you will know that I am He who is ever-present with you...beside you.

And so, the certainty of the Presence of God as the very core of His Being began to possess the souls of the generations. It is impossible to grasp such a process, beginning with the end of servitude and the journey to Israel's freedom, without the message contained in the meaning of The Name.

[Moses, Oxford & London East & West Library, Buber, pgs 50-54]

**SOD—The SELF of the UNIVERSE...** God's "I am" has the psycho-theological force not of dissolving individual selves but of reminding us that we were never individual selves in the first place...Our selfhood endures by virtue of its participation in some greater Self,

**R' LARRY KUSHNER...**

Only a few chapters ago, God finally revealed God's Name to Moses.

In what must surely be one of the slipperiest answers of all time, God says,

"You want to know My Name? Okay, My Name is I'll be whoever I'll be!" [Exod 3:14]

That's not a name, it's a handful of smoke and mirrors! (Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain," insists the Wizard of Oz.)

My own parents each had different names for God. My mother's was constant, unchanging, sure. God may have been whoever God wanted to be, but somehow, to her, God always wanted to remain the same. My father's God was a different story. The youngest of eight, he never even knew much about his own parents, let alone their God. Sometimes God was a player in his life, but just as often the two of them were strangers to one another. His God was intermittent, sporadic, mute.

So now, in our verse, God comes along and announces, after four hundred years, without so much as a postcard, that even though your parents knew me by a different name, I've been the same God all along. And furthermore, I'm letting you in on my own Name for Myself, a Name made only from vowels, a Name made from the root letters of the Hebrew verb "To Be," a Name scholars think must have once meant "*the One who brings into Being all that is,*" a Name whose pronunciation sounds like breathing. And here's the main thing, this Name—even though your parents never knew it—or maybe never realized, YOD—HEH—VAV—HEH, has been My Name all along.

[Five Cities of Refuge, pgs 51-52, Lawrence Kushner & David Mamet]