



THE CHEVRA

Young Israel of Fair Lawn
The Morris J. Kraut z'l Torah Center

Joe Smith - President

This Shabbat:

Parashat Vaera

1 Shevat, 5767

January 19, 20 - 2007

Haftorah for Shabbos and Rosh
Chodesh (Isaiah 66:1-24, repeating
verse 23 at the end)

Friday

Candle Lighting 4:39 PM
Mincha 4:40 PM

Shabbat

Chevra Mishnayos Shiur 8:00 AM
Shacharit 9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema: 9:42 AM (Gra"h)

Mincha 4:30 PM
Maariv and Havdala 5:43 PM

Sunday Shacharit 8:00 AM
Monday-Friday Shacharit 7:00 AM

Daily Minyan

The Young Israel of Fair Lawn is starting to have a daily Minyan at 7:00 AM. If your schedule allows, please help us with the Minyan. Any day(s) you could come to help would be greatly appreciated. Sunday (and Legal Holiday) Minyan will continue to be scheduled for 8:00 AM.

Torah Insights – Harav Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vaera

Exodus 6:2-9:35

By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “What’s in a name?”, asked Shakespeare, arguing that a rose by any other name would still have the same fragrance. But our Bible and our Talmudic Sages seem to feel differently; a name is a kind of “calling card”, a self-definition, which can often affect how we look at ourselves and towards which direction we develop our personalities. “As is his name, so is he”, teaches the Talmud. If this is true regarding regular mortals, a name which refers to G-d must have an even greater significance. Did we not read in last week’s Biblical portion how Moses beseeches G-d to tell him His name? (Exodus 3:13)

Hence when we come to the opening of this week’s portion, we must take G-d’s name definition with utmost seriousness: “G-d spoke to Moses and said to him, I am Y-HVH. I revealed myself to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as G-d Almighty (*E-L Shaddai*) and I was not known to them by my name Y-HVH (Exodus 6:2,3).

◁What is patently difficult about these verses is that the Divine Name Y-HVH appears more than one hundred times in the Book of Genesis (for example, Gen. 9:26, Gen 15:7, Gen 28:13); apparently the patriarchs did know that Divine appellation. Hence we must explain that it is not the name Y-HVH that the patriarchs did not know, but it is rather the Divine activities reflected in the name Y-HVH that the patriarchs did not experience.

The Ibn Ezra and the Ramban maintain that E-L Shaddai refers to the powerful G-d of creation and nature who revealed Himself to the patriarchs without changing the natural order of the universe; Y-HVY changed the natural order of the universe in the plagues and the splitting of the Reed Sea in order to free the Israelites from Egyptian servitude. The difficulty with this explanation is that it has very little to do with the verses which follow, the Divine promise to bring them into the land of Canaan and the five expressions of redemption from Egyptian despotic cruelty (Ex. 6:4-8). What we would have expected to find is a forecast of the plagues, and the cataclysmic natural changes they would effectuate.

Rashi takes the name of E-L Shaddai to refer to the G-d of the Book of Genesis who made

promises, but did not yet keep them; it is in the Book of Exodus that He begins to actualize the Covenant between the Pieces. The problem here is that although G-d promises the patriarchs the land of Israel many times in the Book of Genesis, the name E-L Shaddai appears only twice: Genesis 17:1 and 35:11.

Rav Elhanan Samet, basing himself on a fascinating insight of the Baal HaTurim, maintains that both the names E-L Shaddai and Y-HVH are bound up in promises made by G-d: E-L Shaddai guaranteed the patriarchs progeny (Genesis 17:1” I am E-L Shaddai...and I will increase your numbers very much” and Genesis 35:11 “I am E-L Shaddai, be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a congregation of nations shall be effectuated – yihye- from you”), which He carried out, and Y-HVH which guaranteed the patriarchs the land (Gen 15:7, “I am Y-HVH, who has taken you out from the Ur Kasdim to give you this land as an inheritance” and Gen. 18:13 “I am Y-HVH...the land which you are lying upon I shall give to you and your seed”) which He had not yet carried out, since the Israelites are in Egyptian exile as the Book of Exodus opens. These are the two necessary building blocks of a nation: a fruitful family writ large, with common ancestors and traditions and a homeland which they can call their own.

Rav Samet also links these two names of G-d to the substance of the promises which they engender: progeny is built in to the natural order of things, to the powers of a G-d of nature who created a world of human, animal and plant propagation, whereas the conquest and retention of a land is bound up

with historical process, the G-d of eternal history who was, is and will be (Y-HVH).

At this point, I would like to add one critical caveat. Progeny means that the Jewish people will never be destroyed, that there will always be Israelites in the world; it does not necessarily claim that we will be among the more mathematically numerous nations of the world. Much the opposite, our Bible teaches, “It was not because you had greater numbers than all the other nations that G-d cherished you and chose you; you are among the fewest of all nations. It is because of G-d’s love for you and because He is keeping the oath that He made to your fathers” (Deut. 7:7,8).

Yes, the Bible tells us that we will be as grains of sand at the edge of the sea, but this may just be a metaphor for the fact that we will be trod and spat upon; yes, we will be as the stars of the heavens, but this too is a metaphor for the light of morality and peace which we must bring to a darkened world. And the *Sfat Emet* takes the famous passage wherein G-d takes Abraham outside to see the stars (Gen 15:5) to mean, “Look at the heavens and count the stars; it is impossible to count them... So shall be your progeny,” that is to say, your progeny will always accomplish the impossible! Perhaps the very reason that we are forbidden to take a numerical census of our nation (Exodus 30:12) but must only count each person’s offering is because we must think in terms of quality and not quantity, the qualitative contributions that our nation makes to the world rather than our quantitative numbers.

Finally, I would argue that the G-d of Genesis is E-L Shaddai, the Almighty Power and the sum total of all the powers of the universe (*Elohim*). He created the cosmos before there was any human beings on earth, He effectuated the Big Bang, He sets limits to every earthly creation, and He did it all by Himself. He is the G-d who revealed Himself to Abraham and his family and established with them a covenant and mission to perfect the world.

The G-d of Exodus is Y-HWH, literally He will effectuate and bring about redemption in history through the partnership of Israel and the nations of the world. E-L Shaddai is the G-d of creation and being; Y-HVH is the G-d of history and becoming. Center stage in Genesis is G-d alone; center stage in Exodus is G-d and Israel as we march the long, torturous but guaranteed march to redemption.

Shabbat Shalom

Shlomo Riskin

Chancellor Ohr Torah Stone

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