

Parashat Shemot - 'Names' (Exodus 1:1-6:1)

The title for this week's Scripture portion comes from the first verse of Exodus.

***V'ele sh'mot b'nei Yisra'el habaim Mitzraima et Ya'akov ish
uveito bau.***

Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob.

From this week's parasha title, we learn the title for the entire book our English Bibles title "Exodus." *Names* is the title for this week's Scripture portion, and *Names* is the Hebrew title for this book. *Names* is a much better title, as we will see.

Names...

There are the names of the family of Jacob, the family of Israel. Jacob himself has two names which both identify his persistence in holding on to the G-d of Abraham and Isaac. His name "Israel" also declares him to be a prince of the Almighty.

Jacob's sons are named. Twelve sons. Two adopted who inherit for one. Twelve (or is it thirteen?) tribes multiple outside of the Land of Promise. Not to worry, it is a part of the plan that G-d outlined in Genesis 15. A plan that is all about names.

Names...

The names of two Hebrew midwives, who feared the Almighty more than man, or Pharaoh. How interesting that we know the names of Shifrah and Puah - but not the name of the Pharaoh who persecuted tribes of Israel.

Names...

The Egyptian-raised Hebrew boy, named by an Egyptian princess, becomes the instrument of freedom for the enslaved sons of Israel. Moses, named for being drawn from the water - is used to draw the descendants of Abraham out of their slavery, and eventually into the Land of Promise.

Names...

Although we have read His Name previously in the Torah - we now learn that this is His personal and holy Name. Moses is told by G-d Almighty what His most holy Name is. This Name, made up of four Hebrew letters is used over 2,500 times in the TaNaKh. It makes its way into the English simply as "L-RD" in all upper case, but it does not mean "L-rd."

Beloved, as you may well know, this Name of G-d has been often misrepresented, mispronounced, and most certainly misused. There is a reason why it is only four Hebrew

letters with no vowel points. ***It is not meant to be used casually.*** The ancient Masoretes, treated this Name with the utmost caution and reverence. When writing the text in a scroll, they would employ a technique called *kere ketiv* [read, write] - which was a form of adding notes to the text without altering the text itself. It permitted them to tell the reader that the text should be read silently one way, but out loud another way. This permitted the public reading of sensitive and socially delicate texts. The Masorete scribes used a permanent *kere ketiv* when they came to the four letter Name of G-d that is technically referred to now as the "Tetragrammaton." Their notation used the vowels for "Ad-nai" [My L-rd] around the consonants of the four letters. The Masorete scribes were saying in this: "Read the four letters, but out loud say the word "Ad-nai." This practice is in use today in our English Bibles where "L-RD" in all capitals is a fill-in, or circumlocution for the most holy Name of G-d.

In 1520, Galatinus, mistook the *kere ketiv* under the Name of G-d and thought those marks were the missing vowels. Too bad he didn't ask a Jewish person, because they could have spared us the word "Jehovah" which is neither a name, or even a Hebrew word. It is completely fabricated. Galatinus took the vowel points for "Ad-nai" which the Masoretes used to tell the reader not to try to utter the Name - and instead inserted them into the four consonants of G-d's holy Name. The result has been over 400 hundred years of misunderstanding regarding the Tetragrammaton. Although most scholars learned of the mistake by the early Twentieth Century, it did not keep them from trying different combinations of vowels to try and derive the pronunciation for the Name - some of which are equally as wrong as "Jehovah." Most of which are completely lacking in understanding of Hebrew grammar. Suffice it to say, that most preachers casually barking the common two-syllable mispronunciation of this Hebrew Name are uttering complete gibberish. The fact is, we really ***do not know*** the pronunciation of this Name, even though we might think we can ***guess***.

During the Second Temple period, the most holy Name of G-d was not uttered out loud by anyone except the High Priest once a year at Yom Kippur. It was upon hearing the Name, that the people on Yom Kippur would reply with the now familiar phrase, "*Baruch shem k'vod, malchuto l'olam va'ed!*" [Blessed be the glorious Name, Whose Kingdom is forever and ever!].

Since we do not have a Temple, the uttering of the Name has ceased. More importantly, we have learned that trying to discover the Name's pronunciation is not ***nearly*** as important, ***as is treating it as holy***. We are commanded to blot out the names of the idols - but we are commanded not to thus blot out the Name of the Almighty. Putting dashes etc. into references of G-d is an effort to remind the reader and the writer that G-d's Names are not to be treated lightly. Generally, the practice holds that if a written work might be thrown away, or treated improperly, dashes etc. are used in "L-RD," "G-d," etc.

We have learned the practice of circumlocution - that is, using an evasive synonym for G-d. We use "Ad-nai" in place of the holy Name of G-d in prayer. We use "HaShem" [the Name] when speaking ***about*** Him. Believers have practiced circumlocution for thousands of years. Our Master, Yeshua, taught us to do this as well. He referred to HaShem as "Father," "Father in Heaven," "Heaven," "The Power on High," "The Mighty" etc. Those who imitate the Master are careful with HaShem's Name.

Names...

There are a lot of names in this portion - the most important of course is the Name of G-d. The thing we learn right away with regard to the Name of HaShem is that He takes names seriously. His own... and the names of His own possession. The names of Israel are important to Him. To Pharaoh they were but slaves. But HaShem remembered that He swore by His Name to Abraham - and HaShem remembered the names of Abraham's descendants that were in bondage.

Names...

The significance of names does not end with this portion, or with this book. All the way to the last book of Scripture we read the significance of names. We read in Revelation 19 of the Name of Messiah, our Warrior Redeemer. He is "Faithful and True;" He is "King of kings and L-rd of lords." Isaiah 9:6b tells us:

Vayikra Sh'mo Pele Yoets El Gibor Avi-Ad Saro-Shalom

And He will be call the Name: Wonderful, Counselor, G-d Almighty, Eternal Father, Warrior-Prince of Peace.

Names...

In the end, we read of deeds written in books, and of names written in a book. It is the names written in the Book of the Lamb that we understand to be our sure hope. ***Our names...***

Beloved, as you study this week's portion remember that it is called *Shemot* [Names] for a reason. HaShem remembers names. ***He remembers your name too.***

What's in a name? William Shakespeare was wrong. Everything is in a ***Name...***

Haftarat Shemot - 'Names' (Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23)

Remember... it is about names.

A name carries with it remarkable insight into character and identity; and yet as the Sages noted, a specific name is shared by many people. Thus there is something yet hidden and private in a name that HaShem knows us by. A name to Him is far more intimate than what is put upon a birth certificate.

The haftarah this week is linked to this week's Torah portion because it begins with a remembrance of the descendants of Jacob. G-d remembers His promises. He will never cast off His people, whom He foreknew. Our reading from the Prophets begins this way:

Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

Isaiah 27:6

Compare this to the promise that G-d made to Abraham regarding his offspring:

Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Genesis 15:5

Israel will fill the world with fruit. What kind of fruit? Just in numbers of offspring? Are the promises and prophecies only speaking of numbers? No beloved, they speak of names, and deeds. The fruit is the fruit of deeds of repentance.

But we have a problem. In our haftarah portion, it continues the recounting of dealing with the sin of the nation of Israel.

Has He struck Israel as He struck those who struck him? Or has He been slain according to the slaughter of those who were slain by Him? In measure, by sending it away, You contended with it. He removes it by His rough wind in the day of the east wind.

Isaiah 27:7-8

And yet even with His "sending Israel away" He still has not dealt with Israel as He has with other nations that have sinned. They are all gone. Israel remains. That is the point of our haftarah. Israel is still here precisely because of G-d's promises to Abraham. Even in the darkest times (as we read about in this week's Torah and haftarah portions), G-d still remembers Israel. Yes, sin must be dealt with - but Israel's sin **will** be dealt with.

*Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be **covered**; and this is all the fruit of **taking away his sin**: when he makes all the stones of the altar like chalkstones that are beaten to dust, wooden images and incense altars shall not stand.*

Isaiah 27:9

There it is again - fruit. The fruit of taking away Israel's sin will be that idolatry ceases in the Land. As we continue to see in Scripture, we are redeemed for a purpose - and that purpose is to bear fruit, the fruit of righteousness and righteous living; thus bringing glory to our Father in Heaven. Idolatry will cease, and the outcasts of Israel will be gathered together in the Land - to worship the Almighty in the Place of the Abode of His Presence.

So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship HaShem in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Isaiah 27:13

Yes, our haftarah speaks of the sin of Israel; but it also speaks of the redemption of Israel. Like this week's Torah portion and the redemption from slavery in Egypt, so too G-d will one day ultimately redeem all Israel. Not on our own merit, but by His grace alone. Because of His promises.

This week's haftarah portion includes some interesting verses regarding the way that many approach HaShem's commands. To some, His instructions are a **burden**. They are merely

"Precept upon precept, line upon line." This greatly displeases G-d. His children should approach His instructions with the approach of those in intimate relationship with Him, instead of treating them merely as "ceremonial," "moral," or "ritual" "laws."

*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "This is the rest with **which you may cause the weary to rest,**" and, "**This is the refreshing**"; yet they would not hear.*

Isaiah 28:10-12

How sad. Our loving Father has given us instructions, His Torah, for rest to "*cause the weary to rest*" and for refreshing. And yet to so many of those who claim to know Him, His Torah is little more than "*precept upon precept.*" Yet, they would not hear. Will you hear? Will you understand that HaShem's Torah is about **rest and refreshment**? Will you see that our loving Father has given us rest in Him and in His wise decrees?

Our portion closes much like it begins - a reminder that Jacob's descendants are the recipients of the promises to Abraham. Period.

Therefore thus says HaShem, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now grow pale; but when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they will hallow My Name, and hallow the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the G-d of Israel."

Isaiah 29:22-23

Prayer Focus for Shemot - 'Shema' [Hear]

In the morning, and in the evening prayers, the "Shema" is prayed. It is a central prayer that "bookends" our day. It is 100% Scripture. It comes from Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41. It begins with what our Master, Yeshua, called the "Greatest Commandment" - to love G-d with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our resources. The second paragraph of the Shema ends with a portion from Deuteronomy 11:19-21, which gives us a glimpse into the rest that HaShem's words can give us. From it, we can see that His words are for our refreshment, for making it "like the days of the heaven upon the earth."

*Place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul; bind them for a sign upon your arm and let them be tefillin between your eyes.
Teach them to your children, to discuss them,
while you sit in your home,
while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise.
And write them on the doorposts of your house
and upon your gates.
In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the ground that
HaShem has sworn to your ancestors
to give them,
like the days of the heaven on the earth.*

-- ArtScroll translation