



Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades
שבת מברכים פרשת וארא | Shabbat M'varchim Parashat Vaera
January 13, 2018 | Tevet 26, 5778

TORAH STUDY

**This Week: Shabbat M'varchim Parashat Va-era
Sh'mot 6.2-9.35, pages 351-368**

FIRST ALIYAH: "Vay'daber Elohim el Moshe"—and God spoke to Moshe. God already "spoke" to him more than once, so what is particularly significant about this time?

SIXTH ALIYAH: As verse 9.14 puts it, "For this time, I will send all my plagues" upon Egypt and its people. Yet only four plagues follow this pronouncement. Surely God has many others, so what is He really saying here?

The haftarah, Y'chezkel 28.25-29.21 begins on Page 370.

**Next Week: Shabbat Parashat Bo
Sh'mot 10.1-13.16., pages 374-394**

FIRST ALIYAH: After announcing the locusts were coming, the text says Moshe "turned and left pharaoh's presence." He always waited for an answer before, so why not now?

FOURTH ALIYAH: Chapter 12 opens with God declaring that "this month shall mark for you the beginning of the year.: Is there a commandment or two lurking here and, if yes, what is it (what are they)?"

The haftarah, Yirmiyahu 46.13-28 begins on Page 395.

For haftarot, we follow S'fardi custom.

'EL SHADDAI: MEANING AND ORIGIN ELUDE US

As a divine name, 'El Shaddai (found in verse 6.3) appears nine times in the Torah, of which three are in poetic texts. All but two of the Bible's other 39 usages are likewise poetic (Prophets, Psalms, and Job). The prose exceptions (Ruth 1.20-21) are more apparent than real, since the Book of Ruth possesses a poetic substratum and frequently displays archaisms.

These statistics have an important bearing on the question of the antiquity of usage. The overwhelming appearance in poetic contexts points a priori to a venerable tradition, for Hebrew poetry tends to preserve or consciously to employ early forms of speech. The remarkably high incidence of shaddai in Iyuv (Job) is of particular importance in light of that book's patriarchal setting. All the true prose usages are concentrated within the B'reishit narratives, a fact that is in perfect harmony with Sh'mot 6.3: "I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov as El Shaddai," a tradition explicitly assigning the divine name to the pre-Mosaic age.

Significantly, of the vast store of biblical personal names, only three are constructed with the element shaddai. This suggests that the divine name Shaddai lost its vitality in Israel with the advent of Moshe, and was preserved only as a literary relic in poetic compositions.

The great antiquity of the name and its obsolescence in Israel in the Mosaic period explain why there are no consistent traditions as to its meaning and why the ancient versions have no uniform rendering. The modern conjecture that has gained widest currency connects shaddai with an Akkadian word meaning "a mountain." The name would originally have meant, "The One of the Mountain," probably referring to a cosmic mount, or corresponding to the divine epithet "The Rock." This is conjecture; the original meaning of the divine name shaddai still eludes us.

—Adapted from the JPS Commentary to Exodus

CBIOTP STANDARDS & PRACTICES

1. Men must keep their heads covered in the building and must wear a talit when appropriate. Women may choose to do either or both, but it is not mandatory.
2. Anyone accepting a Torah-related honor must wear a talit, regardless of gender.
3. Only one person at a time may take an aliyah.
4. No one should enter or leave the sanctuary during a K'dushah. One should not leave the sanctuary when the Torah scroll is being carried from or to the ark.
5. No conversations may be held in the hallway outside the sanctuary, or while standing in an aisle alongside a pew.
6. The use of recording equipment of any kind is forbidden on sacred days.
7. Also forbidden are cell phones, beepers and PDAs, except for physicians on call and emergency aid workers (please use vibrating option).
8. No smoking at any time in the building, or on synagogue grounds on Shabbatot and Yom Kippur.
9. No non-kosher food allowed in the building at any time.
10. No one may remove food or utensils from the shul on Shabbatot. An exception is made for food being brought to someone who is ailing and/or homebound.

MAZAL TOV

[If we don't know about it,
we can't print it;
if we can't print it,
we can't wish it.]

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Thursday Rowena Kamil Gianfredi
Friday Amir Glickman

*Did we miss a birthday, anniversary, or other simchah?
Let us know. We can't print what we don't know.*

THE IMAHOT:

*Following is the text adopted by the Ritual Committee
for use by the Prayer Leader in reciting the Amidah, and
those wishing to insert the Matriarchs in their Amidot:*

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֵמוֹתֵנוּ, אֱלֹהֵי
אֲבֹרָהּ וְשָׂרָה, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְרַבֵּקָה, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, רַחֵם
וְלֵאדָּה. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן, גּוֹמֵל
חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַפֶּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמְבִיא
גּוֹאֵל לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׂמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.

Recite this only between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur:

זְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מְלֶךְ חַפֵּץ בְּחַיִּים, וְכִתְבָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים,
לְמַעַן אֲ-לֹהִים חַיִּים.

מְלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגַן. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱדֹנָי, מְגַן אֲבֹרָהּ
וְעִזְרַת שָׂרָה.

This week's Shabbat Booklet
is being sponsored by
MARJORIE GOLDSTEIN
in memory of her late husband,
HERBERT GOLDSTEIN, ז"ל
may his memory be for a blessing

Присоединяйтесь к нам дл
освящение и обед
This week's kiddush and luncheon
are sponsored by

[YOUR NAME GOES HERE]

*Why not join the Kiddush Club?
It's only \$136 per person per year.*

PHOTO OF THE WEEK: Warming up to ⁱⁿ the new sanctuary



On Monday evening, Nadia Massuda, Rabbi Engelmayer, and Gary Miller took some time off from the freezing cold to explore our new building in Fort Lee. From their smiles, we can assume the sanctuary gave them a warm feeling. (Photo courtesy Donna Amsterdam)

I AM ADONAI: The God who acts in history

“When they left Pharaoh, they found Moshe and Aharon waiting to meet them, and they said, ‘May Adonai look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.’”

At this point Moshe—who had been so reluctant to take on the mission—turns to God in protest and anguish:

“Moshe returned to Adonai and said, ‘Adonai, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.’”

None of this, however, has been accidental. The Torah is preparing the ground for one of its most monumental propositions: It is in the darkest night that Israel has its greatest visions. Hope is born at the very edge of the abyss of despair. There is nothing natural about this, nothing inevitable. No logic can give rise to hope; no law of history charts a path from slavery to redemption, exile to return. The entire sequence of events has been a prelude to the single most formative moment in the history of Israel: the intervention of God in history—the supreme Power intervening on behalf of the supremely powerless, not (as in every other culture) to endorse the status quo, but to overturn it.

The speech that follows is breathtaking in its grandeur and literary structure. As Nechama Leibowitz and others point out, it takes the form of a chiasmus (a rhetorical or literary device in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form):

God said to Moshe:

[A] I am Adonai.

[B] I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov as Lord Almighty, but by My name Adonai I was not known to them.

[C] I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens.

[D] Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and have remembered My covenant.

[E] Therefore say to the Israelites, I am Adonai.

[D1] and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgments. I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am Adonai your God who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

[C1] And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hands to give

[B1] to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov. I will give it to you as a possession.

[A1] I am Adonai.

The structure is worked out in extraordinary detail. The first and second halves of the speech each contain exactly 50 words in the Hebrew text. B and B1 are about the patriarchs; C and C1 about the land; D and D1 about Egypt and slavery. The first half is about the past, the second about the future. The first half refers to the Israelites in the third person (“them”), the second in the second person (“you”). The entire speech turns on the three-fold repetition of “I am Adonai”—at the beginning, end, and middle of the speech. (The phrase actually appears four times, the extra mention occurring in D1. It is not impossible that this is linked to the fact that the name—which is, as we will see, the central theme of the speech—has four letters, the so-called tetragrammaton).

What concerns us—as it has to successive generations of interpreters—is the proposition signaled at the outset: “I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov as Lord Almighty, but by My name Adonai I was not known to them.” A fundamental distinction is being made between the experience the patriarchs had of God, and the experience the Israelites are about to have. Something new, unprecedented, is about to happen. What is it?

Clearly it has to do with the names by which God is known. The verse distinguishes between El Shaddai (“Lord Almighty”) and the four-letter name of God which, because of its sanctity, Jewish tradition referred to simply as Hashem (“the name” *par excellence*).

As the classic Jewish commentators point out, the verse must be read with great care. It does not say the patriarchs “did not know” this name; nor does it say God did not “make this name known” to them. The four-letter name appears no less than 165 times in the book of B’reishit. God himself uses the phrase “I am Adonai” to both Avraham (B’reishit 15:7) and Yaakov (28: 13). Rashi’s explanation, therefore, is the simplest and most elegant:

“It is not written here, ‘[My name, Adonai] I did not make known to them,’ but rather ‘[By the name, Adonai] I was not known to them’—meaning, I was not recognized by them in My attribute of ‘keeping faith,’ by reason of which My name is ‘Adonai,’ namely that I am faithful to fulfill My word, for I made promises to them but I did not fulfill them [during their lifetime].’

“What then is the difference between the other names of God and Hashem? For the sages, Hashem signified the Divine attribute of compassion:

“God said to Moshe, ‘You wish to know My name? I am called according to My deeds....When I judge creatures, I am called Elohim. When I wage war against the wicked, I am called “Lord of hosts.” When I suspend judgment for

man's sins, I am called El Shaddai. When I am merciful towards My world, I am called Hashem."

Of all the explanations that have been proposed, this is the simplest and most cogent. Something was about to change. The patriarchs had received the covenantal promise. They would become a nation. They would inherit a land. None of this, however, happened in their lifetime. To the contrary, as Sefer B'reishit reaches its close, they number a mere 70 souls, and they are in exile in Egypt. Now the fulfillment is about to begin. Already, in the first chapter of Sh'mot, we hear, for the first time, the phrase "am b'nei Yisrael, "the people of the children of Israel." Israel has a last become, not a family, but a nation. Moshe at the burning bush has been told, by God, that He will bring them to "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." Hashem, therefore, means the God who acts in history to fulfill His promises.

I have often tried to convey the world-changing character of this idea. What is revolutionary in Judaism is not simply the concept of monotheism, but that God is not simply the force that brought the universe into being; nor is He reached only in the private recesses of the soul. At a certain point, He intervened in history, to rescue His people from slavery and set them on the path to freedom. This was the revolution, at once political and intellectual.

At the heart of most visions of the human condition is what Mircea Eliade (in his book *Cosmos and History*) calls "the terror of history." The passage of time, with its disasters, its apparent randomness, its radical contingency, is profoundly threatening to the human search for order and coherence.

Judaism is the escape into history, the unique attempt to endow events with meaning, and to see in the chronicles of mankind something more than a mere succession of happenings—to see them as nothing less than a drama of redemption in which the fate of a nation reflects its loyalty or otherwise to a covenant with God.

Where is God? It is a mark of how deeply influenced we have been by ancient Greece that we tend to answer this question in philosophical terms, by referring to logic (the "ontological argument") or nature (the "argument from design"). Many Jewish thinkers themselves—Maimonides is the most famous example—did likewise. Judah Halevi, however, thought otherwise. The Ten Declarations begin—he pointed out—not with the words "I am Adonai your God who created heaven and earth," but "I am Adonai your God who brought you out from Egypt, from the house of slavery." God—the One we call Hashem—is to be found not primarily in creation (that is another face of God to which we give the name Elohim), but in history.

I find it moving that this is precisely what non-Jewish

observers concluded. Pascal, for example, wrote:

"It is certain that in certain parts of the world we can see a peculiar people, separated from the other peoples of the world, and this is called the Jewish people.... This people is not only of remarkable antiquity but has also lasted for a singularly long time.... For whereas the peoples of Greece and Italy, of Sparta, Athens and Rome, and others who came so much later have perished so long ago, these still exist, despite the efforts of so many powerful kings who have tried a hundred times to wipe them out, as their historians testify, and as can easily be judged by the natural order of things over such a long spell of years. They have always been preserved, however, and their preservation was foretold...."

The once-Marxist Russian thinker Nikolai Berdayev came to a similar conclusion:

"I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint.... Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions, and the fateful role played by them in history: all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny."

More recently, the historian Barbara Tuchman wrote:

"The history of the Jews is... intensely peculiar in the fact of having given the western world its concept of origins and monotheism, its ethical traditions, and the founder of its prevailing religion, yet suffering

dispersion, statelessness, and ceaseless persecution, and finally in our times nearly successful genocide, dramatically followed by fulfillment of the never-relinquished dream of return to the homeland. Viewing this strange and singular history, one cannot escape the impression that it must contain some special significance for the history of mankind, that in some way..., the Jews have been singled out to carry the tale of human fate."

Some 3,300 years ago, God told Moshe He would intervene in the arena of time, not only (though primarily) to rescue the Israelites, but also "so that My name may be declared throughout the world" (Sh'mot 9:16). The script of history would bear the mark of a hand—not human, but divine. And it began with these words: "Therefore say to the Israelites: I am Adonai, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."

—Adapted from the writings Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

**"Hope is born
at the very edge of
the abyss of despair."**

May He who blessed | מי שברך

May He who blessed our ancestors bless and heal all those whose names are listed here, those whose names will be called out, and those whose names we do not know because either we are unaware of their illness or they are.

We pray He mercifully quickly restore them to health and vigor. May He grant physical and spiritual well-being to all who are ill. אמן

Sydelle Klein	Sarah bat Malka	Avraham Yitzhak ben Masha
Bonnie Pritzker Appelbaum	Sarah Rifka bat Sarah	Aharon Hakohen ben Oodel
Deenah bat Sarah Leah	Shimona bat Flora	Chaim ben Golda
Rut bat Esther	Sura Osnat bat Alta Chayah	Ezra ben Luli
Miriam Zelda bat Gittel D'vorah	Tzipporah bat Yaffa	Gil Nechemiah ben Yisraela
Miriam Chanah Sarah bat Liba	Yospeh Perel bat Michlah	Mordechai ben Almah
Miriam Rachel bat Chanah	Michelle Blatteis	Moshe ben Shimon
Harav Mordechai Volff ben Liba Miryam	Diane Fowler	Harav R'fael Eliyahu ben Esther Malkah
Adina bat Freidel	Goldy Hess	Harab Shamshon David ben Liba Perel
Baila bat D'vorah	Fay Johnson	Harav Shimon Shlomo ben Taube v' Avraham
Chavah bat Sarah	Micki Kuttler	Yisrael Yitzhak ben Shayndel
Chayah bat Flora	Katie Kim	Yitzhak ben Tzivia
Devora Yocheved bat Yehudit	Elaine Laikin	Yonatan ben Malka
Esther bat D'vorah	Mira Levy	Yosef ben Flora
HaRav Ilana Chaya bat Rachel Esther	Robin Levy	Zalman Avraham ben Golda
Liba Ruchel bat Michlah	Lani Lipis	Larry Carlin
Masha bat Etl	Karen Lipsy	Harry Ikenson
Masha bat Rochel	Kathleen McCarty	Shannon Johnson
Matel bat Frimah	Gail Schenker	Itzik Khmishman
Mindel bat D'vorah	Linda State	Adam Messing
Ninette bat Aziza	Mary Thompson	Gabriel Neri
Pinyuh bat Surah	Michelle Lazar	Jeff Nicol
Rachel Leah bat Malkah	Norma Sugerman	Mark Alan Tunick
Rita bat Flora	Julia Yorke	
Rifkah bat Chanah	Avraham Akivah bat Chanah Sarah	

We pray for their safe return...

May He who blessed our ancestors bless, preserve, and protect the captive and missing soldiers of Tzahal—Ron Arad, Zecharia Baumel, Guy Chever, Zvi Feldman, Yekutiel Katz, and Zeev Rotshik—as well as those U.S. and allied soldiers, and the civilians working with them and around them, still missing in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all other areas of conflict, past and present.

And may He bless the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and Tzahal, and those who serve the United States and Israel in foreign lands in whatever capacity, official or unofficial, members of our community or related to members, and their colleagues and companions. Guide them in peace and return them speedily to their families alive and unharmed. אמן

**HONOR YOUR DEPARTED LOVED ONES
WITH A PLAQUE ON OUR
VIRTUAL MEMORIAL BOARD.
CALL THE OFFICE TO ADD THEIR NAMES
TO OUR MEMORIAL BOARD.**

Yahrzeits for Today Through Next Friday

זכרונם לברכה — May their memories be for a blessing!

- 13** Oscar Nitkin
Rose Cohen*
Herschel Mantin*
Dorothy Abrams*
- 14** Bernice Weiss*
Jack Schulman*
Rose Bergwerk Vogelman*
Berenice Checkman
Frances Stern*
- 15** Meyer S. Klein*
Max Stadfeld*
Arthur A. Zimmermann*
Harriet P. Herman*
Herbert Goldstein*
- 16** Freda Deborah Laikin*
Steven Schultz*
Tzvi Ben Menachem Mendel Ha-kohen*
Leon Fried
Morris Epstein*
- 17** Evna ben Sh'lomo Faynshteyn
Max Smith*
Morris Kahn*
Lillian Brauer*
Ben Zion Malek*
Dennis Robert Rachowitz*
- 18** Eliou Weinstein*
Frances Schlesinger*
George Rothstein*
Bernard Miller*
- 19** Berta Blum Rosenberg*, *Ruth Hammer's mother*
Hedwig Hirschberg
Liza Kiel, *Rabbi Mark Kiel's mother*
Rae Gruskin Sherman, *Nancy Warner's aunt*
Rose Schulman*
Philip Farbstein*
Denise Sheinberg*
Jacob Greenstone*
Temie N. Sherman**

* A plaque in this person's name is on our memorial board.

Kaddish list

Francine Feder	Rebecca Kaplan
Nancy Friedlander	Haviva Khedouri
Blanche Friedman	Judith Lorbeer
Jay Greenspan	Norman Harry Riederman
Jeanette Shandolow Herman	David Rosenthal
Harvey Jaffe	David Shandalow
	Paul Singman
	Leah Solomon
	Randolph Tolc

Are we in your will? *Shouldn't we be?*

When people prepare their wills, they usually look to leave a mark beyond the confines of their families. Thus it is that general gifts are left to hospitals, and other charitable organizations.

All too often ignored, however, is the synagogue, even though its role in our lives often begins at birth, and continues even beyond death. We come here on Yom Kippur and other days, after all, to say Yizkor, the prayer in memory of our loved ones.

Our Virtual Memorial Plaques remind everyone of who our loved ones were, and why we recall them. All of us join in saying the Kaddish on their yahrzeits.

Considering this, it is so unfortunate that, in our final act, we ignore the one institution in Jewish life that is so much a part of us.

The synagogue is here for us because those who came before us understood its importance and prepared for its preservation. By remembering it in our wills, we will do our part to assure that the synagogue will be there for future generations, as well.

Think about it. We have always been here for anyone who needed us in the past. Do not those who need us in the future have the same right to our help?

Of course they do. Do not delay! Act today! Help secure the future of your communal home.

**Is there a yahrzeit
we should know about?**

Congregation Beth Israel of the Palisades
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JOIN US SUNDAY, JAN. 21, AT 11 A.M.
FOR A TOUR OF OUR NEW HOME
IN FORT LEE.
THEN STAY FOR A DISCUSSION
ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THIS MOVE.
YOUR INPUT IS CRUCIAL!

Attention ALL Vets!
If you're not yet a member of
JWV Post 76,
YOU SHOULD BE!
For more information, call
201-869-6218

Shabbat ends Saturday night with havdalah at 5:37 p.m. EST