

PRAYER

Supreme God, Your light is brighter than the sun,
Your purity whiter than mountain snow.

You are present wherever I go.

All people of wisdom praise You.

*So we too put faith in all Your words,
knowing that everything You teach is true.*

Neither humans on earth nor even the angels of heaven can
know the perfection of Your wisdom, for it is
beyond all understanding.

*Only Your spirit knows You;
only You can know Your true self.*

You are the source of all being, the power
of all power, the ruler of all creatures.
So You alone understand what You are.

*In Your mercy reveal to us all that we need to know,
in order to find peace and joy.*

Tell us the truths that are necessary
for the world in which we live.

*Show us how we can meditate upon You, learning
from You the wisdom that we need.*

Arjuna (Adapted)

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

What you possess in the world will be found at the day of your death to
belong to someone else. But what you are will be yours forever.

Henry VanDyke



January 14, 2012

יט טבת תשע"ב

Parashat Shemot - Exodus 1:1-6:1 (שמות)
Hertz – p 206 Stone – p 292

Haftarah – Isaiah 27:6 - 28:13 & 29:22-23 (ישעיה)
Hertz – p 225 Stone – p 1146

Kiddush sponsored by
Steve & Sandy Bell
in honor of
Steve's 70th Birthday

Talmud Class with Rabbi Gordon – 3:15 PM
Minchah - 4:30 PM **Shabbat Ends** – 5:43 PM

On This Week's Torah Portion – שמות

Ehyeh asher ehyeh / I will be what I will be (3:14)

Further they expounded [Shemot Rabbah 3:6] Rabbi Yitzchak says: HKB"Y said to [Moshe]: Moshe! Tell them I am the One Who Was, and I am now the One, and I will be the One in the future.

And Rambam says in Moreh Nevuchim that Ehyeh asher Ehyeh means "the Being that exists," that is to say "Whose existence is a necessity."

He told Moshe that he was being sent to them through the Midat haDin / Attribute of Strict Justice that is within the Midat haRachamim / Attribute of Mercy. It teaches that He is atzilut from beginning to end, and the midat haDin is in the middle, for His Name is within Him. (Ramban ad loc)

The name of the Parashah, and of the whole book, is of course *Shemot / Names*. Ostensibly this is because the book begins "And these are the *names* of the children of Israel who were coming to Egypt..." In fact, however, considerable emphasis is given in the Parashah to *Gd's Names*, so we should look at our tradition to see what it has to say about the different appellations given to Gd throughout Scripture.

In most languages, the words and sounds are more or less arbitrary symbols that refer to the objects or concepts they express. According to our Sages, this is not true of the Hebrew language. In Hebrew, there is a relationship between the sounds and letters of Hebrew and their combinations, and the objects and/or ideas to which those combinations (words, phrases, sentences etc.) refer. This is also true, on a much deeper level, about the different Names of Gd that are used in Torah. Ultimately, of course, since Gd is infinite, no "Name," however profound, can encapsulate or represent Gd's essence. What the different Names indicate are the modes of interaction Gd has with creation.

The Names that are used primarily throughout Torah are the Tetragrammaton (Y-K-V-K/*HaShem* – the Name *par excellence*) which is not pronounced, and which represents Gd's Attribute of Mercy (*midat haRachamim*), and *Elokim*, usually translated "Gd" and which represents Gd's Attribute of (Strict) Justice (*midat haDin*). The latter Name is also associated with the laws of nature; the *gematria* (numerical value of the letters) of *Elokim* is the same as that for *haTeva* – nature.

When Moshe asks Gd what he is to tell the Israelites when they ask Who sent him, Gd says "tell them *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh* sent you." That is, Gd is indicating that He is planning on interacting with Israel and Egypt using a different modality than the ones we have grown accustomed to. This Name is generally translated "I will be what I will be." This indicates an infinite flexibility, an infinite range of possible behaviors for Gd.

I would like to focus on Ramban's own discussion of this Name. He indicates that the Name reflects a combination of the two attributes given by *Y-K-V-K* and *Elokim* – the Attribute of Justice and the Attribute of Mercy. More precisely, Ramban states that the Attribute of Justice is *within* the Attribute of Mercy. His further elucidation is just as cryptic: *He is atzilut from beginning to end, and the midat haDin is in the middle, for His Name is within Him.*

I haven't translated the word *atzilut* here. The dictionary says it means *nobility*, but it is also has the sense of nearness: the closest of the Kabbalists' 4 "worlds," to Gd is called *Atzilut*. What Ramban appears to be saying here is that this "nearness" to Gd is a continuum, and that nature, represented by the *midat haDin* is somehow "in the middle," or embedded in some way in it. I think this may be a repetition in other words of the concept Ramban expresses just prior to this in the quoted passage: the *midat haDin* is *within* the *midat haRachamim*. Now the *midat haRachamim* is associated with the transcendental nature of Gd, which integrates all differences within itself, and the *midat haDin* is, as we mentioned above, associated with nature – the expressed aspect of creation.

Now perhaps we can set up a correspondence between the Name of Gd in our *parashah*, and Ramban's descriptions of what this name represents. We begin with Gd alone – *Ehyeh*, infinite potential, integrated, the *midat haRachamim*, the Name Y-K-V-K. The contraction of Gd into Himself (*tzimtzum*) represents finite creation/ *asher* ("that" = limitation of infinity into one possible configuration) / *midat haDin* = nature. Finally we have the reintegration of the finite and infinite values to create a "bigger" infinity: *Ehyeh* (now inclusive of both the original *Ehyeh* and *asher*) / *midat haDin* embedded as it were in *midat haRachamim* / *midat haDin* embedded in *atzilut*, which is the continuum of pure existence.

When Ramban concludes that *His Name is within Him* I believe we can say that he is at once summing up this correspondence, and at the same time pointing to an even more sublime level of perception where we can perceive the underlying reality directly. The idea of Gd as separate from Creation and interacting with it is valid only from the level of the creation. The deeper reality is that there is *only* the continuum of Gd's Existence – His essential nature never changes, never "interacts" with anything. Therefore *His Name is within Him* – He is all that ever was, all that is, and all that ever will be; the creation is within His nature, and His interaction with creation is simply Gd interacting with Himself. Our mission as the people of Israel is to realize this vision as best we can in our daily lives, thereby fulfilling the very purpose of Gd's creation. On that day H" will be One and His Name will be One. *Shabbat shalom, Rafi Rabinoff*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, January 15 **2nd Annual Anna's Soup Kitchen**, 5:30-7:00 PM. Soups 'n sides, at the door \$13/person, \$50 family max (kids under 5 eat free). Carry-out available, \$3 additional/person.

Monday, January 16 **Deadline for submission of articles, etc. for February Newsletter**. Please email to Marian at tradcong@sbcglobal.net.

Shabbat, January 21 **Kiddush luncheon sponsored by Sid & Barbara Levin** in honor of Sid's 60th birthday.

Tuesday, January 24 Brodsky Library Night at the Movies, debut screening of "The Debt" starring Helen Mirren. Kopolow Building, \$4/person. RSVP required 314-442-3720.

Shabbat, January 28 **Kiddush Luncheon and Tish with Rabbi Gordon**.

Tuesday, January 31 *Tu B'Shevat* PJ Storytime at Brodsky Library, 6:45 PM for ages 3-9 and parents/grandparents. Stories, puppets, crafts, treats. RSVP required, 314-442-3720.

Sunday, February 5 **Knosh & Knowledge** featuring Sol Segal. Continuing our series about Jews from around the world, Sol will discuss growing up Jewish in Brazil—family, friends, school, community, society, university and work. Brunch begins at 9:45 AM, the presentation at 10:45. Please RSVP to Marian at 314-576-5230 by Jan. 31.

Do you have... A box at the Fox? A condo in the Ozarks? Tix to the Cardinals, Blues or Rams? A case of kosher wine? A service you can provide? We need your donation of items or services for our **Silent Auction** which will be held in conjunction with our fabulous **Casino Night on February 11th**. Get creative! Call Jennifer Tobias at 636-532-6621 and let her know what you can contribute to our Silent Auction.

Plans are underway for Graduation Shabbat on May 5th. Contact Claire Hack if you have a high or college grad you'd like to be included (even if they're unable to attend). If your graduate would like to participate in the service or if you can help with the event, please contact Claire at ceh1492@hotmail.com.

Refuah Sh'leimah to... Frances Gersten; Steve Bell; Marilyn Spirt; Sarah Ezekiel **Mazal Tov to...** Sandra Garriga, Amy Garriga and Scott Shafman on the arrival and naming of their new granddaughter/niece, Talia Shifren, daughter of Caryn Garriga and Adrian Shifren.

....Neal & Pamela Neuman on the birth of a granddaughter in Israel to Daniel and Shira Neuman.

DAILY SERVICE TIMES

Sunday morning – 9:00 AM Monday-Friday mornings – 7:00 AM
Monday-Thursday evenings – 6:30 PM
Friday evening – 5:45 PM