



Parasha Va'era

January 21, 2023

Torah: Exodus 6:2-9:35

Haftarah: Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

Ketuwim Shlichim: Romans 9:14-25

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! This week in *Parasha Va'era*, we see the beginning of the plagues which ADONAI brought against the nation of Egypt, but the *parasha* begins with ADONAI speaking the word, *Va'era*, וַאֲרָא, which means “I appeared.” 2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am Adonai. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, as El Shaddai. Yet by My Name, Adonai, have I not made Myself known to them” (Exodus 6:2-3 TLV). There continues to be a typo in verse 3 in some TLV versions. It reads in the positive, indicating that He did make Himself known as YHVH, ADONAI. What you see on the screen is correct. The Hebrew reads: *Vayadaber Elohim el Moshe vayomer elav ani ADONAI.* G-d spoke further to Moses and said: “I am YHVH.” Then He said: *Va'era el Avraham el Yitzchak, va'el Ya'acov ba'El Shaddai ushmi ADONAI lo nodat lahem.* “I revealed myself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai, אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי, but I did not reveal my name YHVH, יְהוָה, to them.”

What did ADONAI mean when He said “I revealed myself as *El Shaddai*, but I did not reveal my name YHVH, יְהוָה, to them?” It doesn't mean that the Jacob's descendants didn't know His name. We verify this by going to Genesis. When ADONAI appeared to Abraham at his tents by the oaks of Mamre, *Torah* says: *Vayera elav YHVH,* וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה, “And ADONAI appeared unto him.” (Exodus 18:1 TLV). This shows us that Abraham did know Him as YHVH, יְהוָה. These words are the beginning words of *Parasha Vayera*. Don't confuse *Parasha Vayera* in Genesis with today's *Parasha Va'era* in Exodus. The titles are similar. *Vayera*, וַיֵּרָא, means “He appeared” and *Va'era*, וַאֲרָא, means “I appeared.” Do you see the difference? וַאֲרָא <> וַיֵּרָא: *Vayera* has a *yod* and *Va'era* has an *aleph*, otherwise, they are the same.

From *Parasha Vayera* in Genesis 18, it's obvious that Abraham and those after him knew ADONAI's name, YHVH. But, the point that ADONAI is making is that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know the part of ADONAI's character attached to His name YHVH. They didn't know the other aspects of His Godhood. Up until this time, when He revealed it to Moses on Mount Sinai, ADONAI had only revealed His character to them as *El Shaddai*, usually expressed as G-d Almighty. What does this name mean? No one is really certain, but one thought is that *El Shaddai* means the “many breasted G-d” because *Shaddai* may have come from the Hebrew word for breasts, *shada'im*, and could refer to the feminine, nurturing side of ADONAI's character. Another thought is that *Shaddai* could come from a contraction of two Hebrew words, *sha*, meaning “who” and *dai* meaning “enough,” or “He who is enough.” A third thought is that it may come from the Hebrew word *shaddad* which means to “overpower.” Whatever the origin of His name, it didn't matter to the Israelites. *El Shaddai* was the G-d of their father Abraham. Two of these meanings, “the many breasted G-d” and “He Who is enough,” have something in common, nurturing love, the love that ADONAI had for His chosen ones. He was their “All Sufficient.” He was the Power above who had chosen them to be His children. In today's *parasha*, as ADONAI begins to deal with Pharaoh, we read about the first seven plagues. Through them, ADONAI gradually revealed His

omnipotent character to the Egyptians. And, Israel saw it too. Israel was beginning to understand Who ADONAI is as YHVH. He is their Creator and the most powerful being in the world that they know. He placed them where they are now and it is His will to rescue them from their captivity. In the process, He will judge the false gods of Egypt, including Pharaoh.

Although ADONAI as *El Shaddai* seems to be the side of His character that we understand to be somewhat like a nurturing mother, it is His Fatherhood to which we most relate as individuals. Both Judaism and Christianity see ADONAI as Father. This signifies His role as the life-giver, the authority, and the powerful protector. We see Him as immense in every way, that is, omnipotent, all powerful, omniscient, all knowing, and omnipresent, present everywhere in past, present and future, having infinite love which goes far beyond our human understanding. Christianity and Messianic Judaism find strong Scriptural evidence of ADONAI's fatherhood in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua's disciples, and that is how we most often see Him. Actually, ADONAI is so much more than a father. He is Creator. He created the universe and our heaven and earth. But, when He designed human beings, the design followed His Father nature. And He set up the human family pattern to include a father protector and a mother nurturer. As the protector and provider for the family, the father is depicted as also having great love for his wife and for their children. This pattern for human families that ADONAI has designed also helps us to relate to Him as Father. And seeing ADONAI as Father is the way that we must see Him in order to be able to properly relate to Him.

It's very important that we understand these aspects of ADONAI's nature as we move on to the theme of today's message. Last *Shabbat*, we discussed the *Shema*. Today, we are going to continue that discussion with emphasis upon what it requires of us as members of ADONAI's family and as followers of Yeshua. We begin by saying: "*Shema, Yisrael, ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI Echad.*" "Hear O Israel, ADONAI is our G-d, ADONAI is One." (Deuteronomy 6:4 TLV). Then we continue with: 5 "*Love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength:* (Deuteronomy 6:5 TLV). What does it mean to love ADONAI with all your heart, soul and strength? The simple answer is: "to love Him completely and fully;" love Him with all your being! These words come from Deuteronomy and are so important that Yeshua expressed them again in the Gospels. They are found in Matthew 27:37-38, Mark 12:29-30 and Luke 10:27.

When we pray the *Shema*, and it is a prayer, are we saying that we do love ADONAI with all our heart, soul and strength, that we have already reached that high place? Or, are we saying that we desire to love ADONAI with all our heart, soul and strength? We are saying the second, that we desire to love ADONAI in this way. Being honest, we know that that we don't love Him fully and completely. It is almost humanly impossible to love Him with all our heart, soul and strength. There are so many distractions; family, job, and yes, our desire for pleasure, to gratify ourselves. But, would you agree that loving ADONAI to the fullest extent should be our goal? And, if it is our goal and we sincerely seek to reach it, won't we be changed? Won't we be more committed to ADONAI's Word. Won't we be more like Yeshua, which is another of our goals? I think that the answer is definitely, yes! That is what ADONAI wants from us.

If we say that we love Him, how do we express our love? This could be discussed for days on end, considering a number of principles, actions, which express love. There are a number which are intimately connected with love, but today we will only discuss one, a very

important one, faith. Through our faith we can show our love of G-d. When we think of faith, the Scripture which immediately comes to the mind of a believer is Hebrews 11. Verse 1 says: *1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of realities not seen* (Hebrews 11:1 TLV). The English word faith is translated from the Greek word *pistis* and according to Strong's Concordance, it means faith, belief, trust, confidence, fidelity, and faithfulness. The first three definitions, faith, belief and trust, are related words which show that the individuals spoken of in Hebrews 11, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and the others, believed what ADONAI said. They believed, they trusted, in what they were told by ADONAI. But, the meaning of the last two words of the definition, fidelity and faithfulness, is also a part of what these individuals did. Noah is a good example. *7 By faith Noah, when warned about events not yet seen, in holy fear prepared an ark for the safety of his household. Through faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith* (Hebrews 11:7 TLV). Genesis tells us that Noah was 500 years old when he fathered Shem, Ham and Japheth and that he was 600 years old when the flood waters began. *8 But Noah found favor in Adonai's eyes. 9 These are the genealogies of Noah. Noah was a righteous man. He was blameless among his generation. Noah continually walked with God* (Genesis 6:8-9 TLV). That Noah continually walked with God for 100 years is faithfulness, *emunah*. It also expresses fidelity which means: "demonstrating continuing loyalty and support." To work on an ark for around 100 years and to continue to believe that there would be a flood demonstrates Noah's fidelity, his faithfulness. Noah's testimony shows us that faith includes both belief and faithfulness. First we believe, that is, have faith, the substance upon which we initially trust, and then we walk in it, faithfulness. The Prophet *Habakkuk* taught us about faith: *4 "See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness"* – (Habakkuk 2:4 NIV). I have used the NIV here because I believe that it better expresses the thought. The Hebrew word translated as "by his faithfulness" is *b'emunato*, בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ. The word from which it comes, *emunah*, אֱמוּנָה, means: firmness, steadfastness, and fidelity. There is no discussion of belief here; just faithfulness. But, we also understand that faithfulness cannot exist without first having faith. A person who says "I have faith," but does not prove that faith by his actions does not have faith. Yes, faith is belief, but it is also much more. Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* spoke about it: *17 So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself* (Jacob 2:14 TLV). Faith and works are expressed as belief and action and the two are linked. In Hebraic thinking, the very heart of faith is faithfulness. *Emun*, אֱמֵן, the root of *emunah*, faithfulness, is linked to *emet*, אֱמֶת, truth. The two go together. *Emun* and *emet* as linked together show that faith is trusting faithfulness in ADONAI which leads to truth, the truth of His Word, the *Torah*. We find an example of this in Deuteronomy in the passage known as the Song of Moses. Through Moses, ADONAI spoke to the Israelites about their future unfaithfulness: *20 He said, "I will hide My face from them, I want to see their hereafter. For they are an upside down generation, children with no faithfulness in them"* (Deuteronomy 32:20 TLV). The Hebrew says: *lo emun*, לֹא-אֱמֵן, no faithfulness. This is about disobeying ADONAI's commands, *Torah*. ADONAI saw their future disobedience to following His commands, their lack of faithfulness.

In the *Tanakh*, we usually see that ADONAI defines faith in the context of faithfulness. David said: *29 "Turn me away from the deceitful way, and be gracious to me with Your Torah. 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness. I have set my heart on Your judgments"* (Psalm 119:29-30 TLV). In verse 30, "Your judgments" is *mishpateka*, מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ, and can also mean: "Your ordinances" and "your Laws." David's words show us that faithfulness has to do with obedience to ADONAI's commands, commands which in Matthew 5:17-18, Yeshua said, would not pass away before heaven and earth pass away.

How does all this tie in with the *Shema*? Here is how. If we love ADONAI in the fullest sense that we can, are actively seeking to love Him in that way, we will be faithful. We will keep His commandments. Loving Him is being obedient to Him. I am speaking to those of you here and not to any other followers of Yeshua. He has not given me authority to bind and to loose for anyone but you. Binding and loosing is congregational authority to interpret ADONAI's Word. I know that I am not perfect in it, but do the best I can, understanding that Yeshua will judge me for what I get wrong. I do not take it lightly. Understanding what ADONAI requires of Yeshua's followers is found in the *Shema*. He spoke about the two greatest commandments in *Torah* in Matthew, Mark and Luke, saying that we are to first love ADONAI and then to love our neighbor as ourselves. After stating the two commandments, He said: 40 "*The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*" (Matthew 22:40 TLV). The word hang comes from the Greek *kremannumi* (krem-an'-noo-mee). It means to hang up; to suspend. Picture this in your mind's eye. Can you see the *Torah* commands hanging down, suspended, underneath the *Shema*? Think about this for a minute. Because of ADONAI's great love for us, He gave us *Torah*, instructions for living, and then later spoke through the Prophets to encourage us. But, He gave us *Torah*, instruction, to teach us to live successfully with Him. *Torah* means teaching and instruction, but also includes commands. When we are faithful to His commands, we show that we are walking in what He has taught us. Our obedience shows our love for Him, the love asked for in the *Shema*. We should want to follow His commandments, those which we can obey. The rabbis state that there are 613 commandments in the *Torah*, but there are not nearly that many that we can keep today because some commands, some *mitzvot*, can only be obeyed in the presence of the Temple and the Levitical priesthood which we no longer have. Additionally, some are only to be obeyed in the Land of Israel. That means that there are not nearly 613 which we can obey today. It is our responsibility to know which they are. As followers of Yeshua and covenant partners in the New Covenant, we understand this. Those commands which we can obey "hang" on the first and second greatest commandments. If we love ADONAI and our neighbor in the way that we should, we will automatically keep the commandments hanging beneath this principle.

ADONAI said through Jeremiah: 32 "*But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days*" —it is a declaration of Adonai— "*I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people*" (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). The covenant He referred to is the New Covenant, the *B'rit Chadasha*, which ADONAI promised to make with Israel. And, He did make it. He cut the covenant with His own Son's blood, Yeshua's blood. This covenant was cut with Israel. Those who enter into it become a part of Israel. To write His *Torah* on hearts is also a promise for "all Israel," the part of Israel, the Jews, who have not yet trusted in Yeshua. This will happen one day soon as *Sha'ul* prophesied in Romans 11:27-29. The days are not far off when it will become a reality for "all Israel" and they meet their Messiah. But, *Torah* written on our hearts is a reality now for those of us who know Yeshua. ADONAI has already put His *Torah* within us. He wrote it on our hearts, our spirits, by His *Ruach HaKodesh*, His Holy Spirit, when we trusted in Yeshua. Believe it, your faith, your *emun*, your *pistis*. Act upon it, your faithfulness, your *emunah*.

Don't let anyone tell you that keeping *Torah* is putting you back under the Law. Nothing could be further from the truth. A common misunderstanding today is that *Torah* and grace are mutually exclusive; that you can't have both. If we're talking about salvation, it is definitely true. We have no argument there. No one can be saved by keeping *Torah*. But, if we're talking about after salvation; after accepting Yeshua, yes, *Torah* is for keeping!

After salvation, faithfulness through obedience to ADONAI and Yeshua is the normal approach for us. This includes obedience to commands given by Yeshua in the *Ketuvim Shlichim* and commands in *Torah* and the *Tanach* which are applicable today. *Sha'ul* describes the process. 20 “For no human, on the basis of Torah observance, will be set right in His sight—for through the Torah comes awareness of sin. 21 But now God’s righteousness apart from the Torah has been revealed, to which the Torah and the Prophets bear witness—22 namely, the righteousness of God through putting trust in Messiah Yeshua, to all who keep on trusting. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 They are set right as a gift of His grace, through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua. 25 God set forth Yeshua as an atonement, through faith in His blood, to show His righteousness in passing over sins already committed” (Romans 3:20-25 TLV). *Sha'ul* made it very clear that salvation is a gift of G-d’s grace and that no human can receive salvation on the basis of *Torah* observance. Actually, I don’t know anyone who is trying to do that. I think it is just misinformation by those who say we are doing that. No one that I know believes that they can be saved by keeping *Torah*.

But, something is required before salvation by grace. It is repentance. We must repent of our sins. On the day of *Shavuot*, Pentecost, *Shimon Kefa* said: 36 “Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him—this Yeshua whom you had crucified—both Lord and Messiah!” 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the emissaries, “Fellow brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Messiah Yeshua for the removal of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach ha-Kodesh” (Acts 2:36-38 TLV). *Tevillah*, immersion in Yeshua’s name is important too. We are commanded to be immersed. But, *Kefa* was hung up on repentance, because he said it again at another time on the Temple mount: To those listening, he said: 9 Repent, therefore, and return—so your sins might be blotted out,... (Acts 3:19a TLV). Repentance and return go together. We must first repent of our sins, but also return. The Greek word expressed as return is *epistrephó*, (ep-ee-stref-o) and means “to turn” or “return.” *Kefa* said to them: “turn back to ADONAI.” Repentance, asking forgiveness for sins, is necessary, you can’t be saved without it. But, so is return. We must turn away from our ungodliness. There are a number of Scriptures which attest to this. Yeshua said: 2 “Turn away from your sins, for the kingdom of heaven is near!” (Matthew 3:2 TLV). *Sha'ul* said: 20 Rather, I kept declaring—first to those in Damascus, and then Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also the Gentiles—that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds consistent with that repentance. (Acts 26:20 TLV). *Shimon Kefa* said: 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you—not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance. (2Peter 3:9 TLV). Yeshua said: 19 “Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be zealous and repent.” (Revelation 3:19 TLV).

All of these Scriptures speak of repenting before salvation. But, once we have repented of our sins, salvation is given to us by ADONAI’s grace through faith with nothing else required. But, we are first required to turn from our sins. We express this idea in Hebrew by saying that we “make *t’shuvah*.” The root *tshuv* carries the idea of turning 180 degrees and walking directly away from sin. It’s not just renouncing sin, but actually running away from it. After *Sha'ul* explained in Romans 3 that salvation is a gift of ADONAI’s grace, he ended with these words: 31 “Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah” (Romans 3:31 TLV). *Sha'ul* made it very clear that after salvation, we do continue to follow *Torah*. These words of Yeshua are one basis for what *Sha'ul* said: 27 Then as Yeshua was saying these things, a certain woman in the crowd,

raising her voice, said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that carried You and the breasts that nursed You!” 28 But He said, “Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:27-28 TLV). That’s pretty clear, isn’t it? Yeshua said that those who hear ADONAI’s Word, His *Torah*, and obey it are blessed. The context in verse 28 is that Yeshua was referring to *Torah*. It’s very simple. When we keep *Torah* after we are saved, according to Yeshua, we “are blessed.” Our obedience to His commands is our expression of love and loyalty to Him and to the Father?

In *Parasha Va’era*, ADONAI sent seven plagues, which challenged and showed the non-power of the so-called gods of Egypt. In some of the plagues, more than one god was dealt with, so that a greater number than seven gods were exposed as powerless against ADONAI. There have been names attached to these gods of Egypt by archeologists, but that is not important to our message today. What we are to understand today is that ADONAI showed His mighty power, not only to the Egyptians, but also to the Israelites, who after several hundred years may also have been worshipping some of those demon gods. ADONAI was preparing His people to understand Him, the only true G-d, who had revealed Himself to Moses as YHVH, the only real *Elohim*, the only real G-d. All of the gods of Egypt were demon spirits, principalities and powers, agents of *HaSatan*, the Adversary, who rebelled against ADONAI. These seven plagues of *Parasha Va’era*, as we recite them in our *Pesach Seder*, are: *Dam*, דָּם, Blood, *Tz’fardei’a*, צַפְרְדְּעַי, Frogs, *Kinim*, כִּנָּם, Lice (or Gnats), *Arov*, אָרוֹב, Flies, *Dever*, דְּבַר, Pestilence (or Cattle Disease), *Sh’chin*, שְׁחִין, Boils and *Barad*, בָּרָד, Hail. ADONAI totally exposed all of them as powerless and by allowing the first three plagues to afflict both Egypt and Israel and the next four not to afflict Israel (in this *parasha*), both Egyptians and Israelites came to recognize the mighty power of ADONAI.

Today, we don’t have ADONAI striking the gods that are being worshipped in our nation and around the world. But, He has given us ample evidence that He is against them. His Word has revealed His disgust with *Ba’al*, *Ashtoreth*, *Astarte*, *Chemosh*, *Moloch* and others as Rabbi Jonathan Kahn has so accurately stated in his book, *The Return Of The Gods*. Today a very large percentage of the people of the world are engaged in acts represented by these false gods, actually demon spirits, acts which include sexual promiscuity, sexual deviation and the sacrifice of children through abortion. Yeshua will judge *HaSatan* and these demonic powers when He returns as King. But, it is up to us now as a part of His faithful remnant, to reject these abominations and to follow ADONAI’s Word and to be witnesses for His truth. May we, as individuals and also as a congregation, be what Yeshua has called us for and taught us to be. He said 33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33 TLV). ADONAI’s righteousness means “to be just before Him,” justified. The Greek word used here, *dikaiosynēn* (*dik-ah-yos-oo'-nayn*), comes from the root *dikaio* (*dik-ah-yos*) which corresponds with the Hebrew word *tzadik*, צַדִּיק, righteous one. Our goal is to turn completely away from sin and to walk righteously after our Messiah, to be *tzadikim*, righteous ones. Yeshua said that when we do this, when we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, everything else we need will be available to us. May we all be counted in heaven today as faithful *tzadikim*, righteous ones! There was a purpose for Israel being in Egypt and a purpose for Pharaoh. *Sha’ul* wrote: 17 *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up—to demonstrate My power in you, so My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”* (Romans 9:17 TLV). All of the nations of the earth knew it then and trembled. *Abba*, Help us to walk in the Shema and the 2nd greatest commandment and use us to proclaim your Word now that revival might come! *Shabbat shalom!*

