

A Rose by Any Other Name? (Lech Lecha)

The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper name. -Confucius

God reveals Himself to Abraham in this week's Torah reading (Genesis Ch. 17, verse 1) with the name "Shadai" (letters Shin, Daled, Yud). Centuries later, when God reveals Himself to Moses in Egypt, the Torah goes out of its way (Exodus Ch. 6, verse 3) to point out that God had not revealed Himself to the forefathers with the Tetragrammaton, the Four-Letter Name of God (letters Yud, Heh, Vav, Heh).

What difference does it make by what name we know God? Why did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob receive one name, "Shadai," and Moses another, the Tetragrammaton?

The 16th century Italian commentator, Rabbi Ovadia Sforno (1475-1549), brings our attention to two different levels of divine involvement implied in the different names. "Shadai" can also be read and translated as "That is sufficient". It implies God's self-sufficiency and ability to Be and to create the universe ex-nihilo. He exists without there being anything else, or with anything else acting on Him. The relationship of God to Man represented by "Shadai" is one within the normal bounds of nature and that was the basis of the relationship God had with our forefathers.

However, there is an even higher level of expression of the divine, that of revealed, public miracles that are completely outside the bounds of nature, as well as the level of prophecy that only Moses was privy to. This aspect of God was new to the nascent Jewish nation and required specific instructions and formulation. From the moment of Exodus forward, the relationship between God and Israel would be predicated by the supernatural, such as the Egyptian plagues, the splitting of the sea, the Sinai covenant, and all the miracles that have been a part of Jewish history since.

God's willingness to be actively and sometimes visibly involved in the lives of people and nations marks a higher level of connection and divine love that we should always be cognizant and appreciative of.

May we experience and notice more miracles, for all of our needs and endeavors.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication: To President Javier Milei of Argentina, on sharing his own words of Torah on this week's Torah portion in such a meaningful full way. Look it up:

<https://m.jpost.com/diaspora/article-827657>