

9-19-26 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Ha'azinu* (give ear!) *Shabbes Shuvah*

Torah Portion; Deut 32:1-52

Special Haftarat: Hos 14:2-10, Mic 7:18-20 and Joel 2:15-27

Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Eph 4:1-4

What about the Name?

Central question of this message: How are we to treat the four-letter Name of G-d today?

We have a special Torah reading for this special Shabbes, which is called *Shabbes Shuvah* which means “Sabbath of Repentance/Return.”

Today is the intervening Shabbes during the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur begins this coming Sunday night.

During these 10 days we are to do an examination of our lives over the last year, and do what we might have postponed doing during that time – get right with one another, and get right with G-d.

We are today in Parashah *Ha'azinu*, which means “give ear!” Its name comes from the first two words in the English and the first word in the original Hebrew.

Deut 32:1-4

32 "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 "Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass And as the showers on the herb. 3 "For I proclaim the name of the Lord; Ascribe greatness to our God! 4 "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

הָאֲזִינוּ 32:1 הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבַּרְהָ וְהִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אֲמַר־
the words of O earth, and hear, and I will speak; O ye heavens, Give ear,
561 776 8085 1696 8064 238

כִּי:
my mouth.
6310

יֵעֲרֶף 2 כֶּמֶטֶר לִקְחִי תִזֹל כָּטַל אֲמַרְתִּי
my speech as the dew, shall distil My doctrine as the rain, shall drop
565 2919 5140 3948 4306 6201

כַּשְׁעִירָם עָלַי- וְשֵׂא וְכִרְבִּיבִים עָלַי- עֵשֶׂב:
the grass: upon and as the showers tender herb, the upon as the small rain
6212 5921 7241 1877 9999 5921 8164

כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא הָבוּ גִדְל לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ: 3
unto our God. greatness ascribe ye I will publish the Lord: the name of Because
430 1433 3051 7121 3068 8034 3588

הַצּוּר 4 תְּנִימִם פְּעֻלוֹ כִּי כָל- דְּרָכָיו מִשְׁפָּט
judgment: are his ways all for his work perfect: is the Rock, He is
4941 9999 1870 3605 3588 6467 8549 9999 6697 9999

אֵל אֱמוּנָה וְאֵין לְעוֹל צְדִיק וְיֵשֶׁר הוּא:
he. is and right just iniquity, and without truth a God of
1931 9999 3477 6662 5766 369 530 410

These are the first words of the second “Song of Moses.” The first is found in Exodus 15:1-18. I frankly think that first one is the “Song of Moses” that will be paired with the “Song of the Lamb” as is prophesied in Revelation 15:3.

I believe that is the case because the first “Song of Moses” is completely consistent with the pattern of salvation and rescue described by the prophets, and in Revelation, which Yeshua will bring about in the final days of this earth. We will be brought out from among our oppressors and enemies. We will all be caught up across a great chasm more miraculous and impossible than the parting of the sea, and our pursuers will perish as we are saved. Then we will dwell with Him in the House that He built, as He rules over the entire earth as King, forever.

One can lay the elements of both these world-changing events alongside the other and see that the events of one seem to mirror the events of the other.

One of the themes of this season is getting right with one another, before we approach G-d’s throne. We are to be known for our unity with one another.

Matt 5:23-25

23 "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar,
and there remember that your brother has something against
you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar, and go your
way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and
present your offering.

I believe that when we have an ongoing conflict with another brother or sister which is rooted in sin, and we have not resolved that matter with the other person, our prayers are hindered before the throne. I think G-d is telling us that our prayers (and sacrifices) just don't smell right before Him when we are not right with one another in unity.

It seems that the body of faith has found myriads of ways to divide one from the other. Part of our problem today is ignorance of the biblical way in which we are to resolve issues. Another problem is cowardice in stepping forward to actually do that hard work. Another problem is pride – because we are stubborn in our “I am right!” position, and we won't even carry on a respectful conversation with one another to resolve issues.

I want to address an important issue that seems to be plaguing some in the messianic community. It seems to be an issue that has caused more than a little division. And division of the body of faith is one of Satan's most effective tools.

The issue I wish to address is the use of, and also the attempted pronunciation of, the four-letter Name. An important part of our parasha for today gives us some guidance on this matter, which I will get to at the end.

I have counted 106 times in the entirety of Scripture (NASB) that the phrase “name of the L-rd” is used. Some of our dear friends in other expressions of faith have determined that it is not only proper but essential to make a pronunciation of the four-letter Name many times, especially in a worship service. I have never met an observant Jew who believed in this particular practice.

I have now heard at least four separate and distinct attempted pronunciations of the four-letter Name by people who insist upon doing that. Each one seems to me to believe that in doing so they are somehow being more holy and close to G-d.

I sometimes question the person who spoke it regarding how he came to use that particular pronunciation. I tend to do that when I hear a new version. I always get the same answer: “The Spirit told me that this was the correct way to pronounce the Name.”

This explanation leaves me with more questions than were answered in the first instance. If each of the various four (and there may be more) attempted pronunciations of the Name was given to that person by the Spirit, then I must conclude one of several options must be true:

1. It wasn't the Spirit of G-d speaking, but rather a spirit of confusion and chaos. And the person isn't mature enough to discern between the spirits.
2. If it *actually was* the Spirit of G-d in each instance, then the Spirit of G-d is confused and inconsistent, and we should not listen to such a Spirit.
3. At least three of the four different persons who each use a different pronunciation (each of whom are absolutely certain that each heard from the Spirit the correct pronunciation), each of them either didn't hear it correctly, remember it correctly, or repeat what he heard correctly. So, this casts doubt on all the attempted pronunciations.
4. Even if one of the four attempted pronunciations I have heard actually is the correct one, why didn't G-d tell this particular correct pronunciation to a descendant of the High Priest – a Jewish person who loves G-d and His Instructions? Why would He tell a goy, especially one who has rejected His Torah?

Since before the destruction of the Second Temple, the consensus of Jewish theology is that the four-letter Name is *not to be pronounced*. It is simply too holy to be spoken by ordinary people, even during prayer. If it is ever pronounced, it is to be pronounced by one person only – the High Priest – and then only in the Temple during Yom Kippur. So, since there is no Temple today, nobody is pronouncing it.

Because some people who were not qualified to do so had been presumptuously attempting to pronounce the four-letter Name, the Jewish people decided to strictly restrict the transmission of the correct pronunciation, and also have found ways to conceal it.

The *Mishneh Torah, Prayer and the Priestly Blessing*, gives us some historical understanding of how things were during the second Temple period.

How is the priestly blessing recited in the Temple? The priests ascend to the duchar¹ after the priests have completed the service associated with the morning sacrifice offered daily. They lift their hands above their heads with their fingers

¹ The Mishnah (Middot 2:6) and the Rambam (Hilchot Beit HaBechirah 6:3) describe the duchar as three steps separating the Courtyard of the Israelites from the Priestly Courtyard. There, the Levites would stand and accompany the Temple service with songs and music.

extended, except the High Priest. He does not lift his hands above the *tzitz*.²

One person reads [the blessings] to them, word for word, in the same manner as outside the Temple, until they complete the three verses. The people do not respond ["Amen"] after each verse. Instead, in the Temple, [the priestly blessings] are read as a single blessing. When [the priests] conclude, all the people respond, "Blessed be God, the Lord, the Lord of Israel to all eternity."

They recite [God's] name - i.e., the name יה-וה-י, as it is written. This is what is referred to as the "explicit name" in all sources. In the country, it is read [using another one of God's names]: אדני,³ for only in the Temple is this name [of God] recited as it is written.

After Shimon HaTzaddik⁴ died, the priests ceased reciting the [priestly] blessing using God's explicit name even in the Temple, lest it be learned by a person lacking proper stature and moral conduct. The Sages of the early generations would teach [this name] once in seven years, only to their students

² In this context, the *tzitz* refers to the golden plate worn by the High Priest on his forehead on which God's name is written (Exodus 28:37). Accordingly, it is not proper for the High Priest to lift his hands above it (Rashi, loc. cit.).

³ Pronounced "Adonai." This means "our L-rd."

⁴ He was High Priest during the Second Temple period, and was one of the members of the Great Assembly.

and sons [who had proven] their moral conduct. All this is in reverence for His great and awesome name.

In *Mishneh Beruah* 5 we see a further discussion of how we are to substitute the term “Adonai” in place of the four-letter Name.

The Name as it is pronounced - Adon-ai (אֲדֹנָי) - Because The Honored and Awesome Name (יְהוָה) is forbidden to pronounce it as it is written; like the Sages stated (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10) "One who pronounces The Name [as it is written] with it's letters has no portion in the World to Come". Rather, one must pronounce it as if the Name Adon-ai (אֲדֹנָי) was written, and also [pronounce it] with the vowels of [the Name] Adon-ai (אֲדֹנָי).

This rationale persists today. The current orthodox halacha regarding the holy Name is that in casual conversation about G-d, one refers to Him as “Hashem” which title means “The Name” and also invokes with greatest respect the essence of who G-d is. In prayer, it is proper to say “Adonai” which means “our L-rd” which not only recognizes the essence of G-d but also adds to that the proclamation that He is L-rd of all.

Many Jews today consider an attempt to pronounce the holy four-letter Name as a direct violation of the commandment:

Ex 20:7 (also Deut 5:11)

7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,
for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His
name in vain.

So, you can already see why observant Jews are finding deep offense when non-Jews insist upon attempting to pronounce the four-letter Name.

There are few quicker and more effective ways to convince Jews that Christians and their beliefs are to be avoided than this.

In our congregation we do not attempt to pronounce the holy Name, and I will gently caution anyone who does so in our congregation to please refrain from doing so. And if they defiantly insist upon such behavior, they will likely be asked to leave our group. We need to have order and a consistent halacha.

One of the main focuses of our congregation is to be a comfortable resting place for Jews who wish to reconnect with the faith of their fathers in a deeper way. We are well on our way to achieving that goal.

How can we embrace a Jewish visitor when any one of us engages in speech which offers him grievous offense? The only thing leading a Jew to questions in our midst should be our understanding of Yeshua as Messiah. Another benefit of worshipping with us is that it trains our members how to properly fold-into the Jewish community when they on occasion find themselves in another city and wish to attend synagogue. One cannot be a witness in a community where you are excluded.

One of the guiding verses which directs us in our vision is this:

Rom 1:16

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first** and also to the Greek.

And another is this:

Rom 11:11-24

11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. 12 Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! 13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. 15 For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 16 And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too. **17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.** 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

Our congregation is part of the cultivated olive tree of the people Israel, in the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Yeshua, and Paul. I believe Scripture urges those who come to the G-d of Israel to become grafted-into the cultivated olive tree of the Jewish faith in the Jewish G-d. It is not required, but the pathway is always open.

To properly do that, those who are coming from among the nations must not bring with them practices which are detestable and offensive to Jews. That was at least part of the reasoning behind the four commands given to those new believing goyim coming to the synagogues in the Second Temple period.

Acts 15:19-21

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Each of the prohibited practices were hallmarks of pagan worship of that day. When the new attendees to the synagogue who were coming to G-d took pains to distance themselves from those practices, they made a strong statement of fidelity not only to G-d, but to Israel as a people. They showed the beginnings of being fully grafted-in. They were accepted.

Jews are not to be grafted-into a different tree. We are to remain in the tree that G-d has been cultivating since the beginning. The prophets are clear that this cultivated olive tree that is Israel will bloom in the Kingdom age, and that tens of thousands of people will want to come to be part of Israel, and be like Ruth – completely grafted in.

Some believe that Jews are to adopt the doctrines of their particular Christian denomination. The problem with that is that some of their

doctrines are completely inconsistent with the faith that Yeshua lived and taught. They insist that the Jews be “grafted-in” to their denomination, rather than allowing Jews to simply add Yeshua to their existing Jewish faith.

That “come to be part of us” philosophy led to the antisemitic heresy which led Marcion, Martin Luther, and many of the early Church Fathers astray.⁵ Rather, according to Scripture, the goyim are to be grafted-into the Jewish tree as Paul so elegantly articulated in Romans 11.

It is for this reason that we in our congregation are going to keep the most pure sap flowing upward through our branch of the cultivated olive tree. We will reject the theological pollution which has been introduced by modern Judaism just as we reject the theological pollution that some church doctrines seem to embrace. We see great value in some of the theology of both sides, but we remain in the center of the road of faith and we will walk-out our faith as Yeshua showed us to walk.

And let me now revisit that list I began with earlier, of possible reasons people might have heard a different spirit than the Holy Spirit on this matter of the Holy Name. I have one further thing to offer. It comes from

⁵ This pervasive antisemitism is illustrated well by Derek Frank in his film *Let the Lion Roar*.

a few conversations I have had with sweet people who have insisted upon pronouncing the four-letter Name in my presence.

Here is the essence of my conversation with that person:

Let's assume that you are the one person on the planet who, since the Second Temple stood, actually knows the true way that the four-letter Name is to be vocalized.

Then you should also know that observant Jews (including me) recoil in revulsion when you pronounce that Name in our presence. You would not be permitted to enter the Temple during Yom Kippur anyhow, much less stand and give the benediction using the Holy Name. What you are doing is presumptuous at best.

And I am telling you that a very quick way to destroy your witness regarding Yeshua with a Jew is to try to pronounce the Name.

I am telling you that when you do that, you reinforce the belief in the Jewish community that the goyim of the church tread

upon the holiness of G-d, and have no part with Israel in redemption.

And you already know that the Scriptures direct that the gospel is “to the Jew first.” Does that verse mean nothing to you?

And finally, just because you might have the right answer, and can do all things like that, does it then follow that you *should do it*, knowing that you are driving Jews further away from Yeshua, and you are encouraging others to do the same?

Eph 4:1-4

4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 4:29-30

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

And the final question is this: Just because you *can* do something, does that mean you *should* do it? Scripture speaks to that very issue.

1 Cor 8:9-13

9 But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12 And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.

So, what about the “Name?” Is there some name we *can invoke* with our mouths and not cause others to stumble? I suggest that Moses himself might have given us the answer in this week’s parasha. Let’s look at it once again.

Deut 32:3-4

3 "For **I proclaim the name of the Lord;**

Ascribe greatness to our God!

4 "**The Rock!** His work is perfect,

For all His ways are just;

A God of faithfulness and without injustice,

Righteous and upright is He.

I have already taught you, in a lengthy teaching, clearly that “the Rock” to which Moses refers is Yeshua. Here, Moses identifies “the Name” that he proclaims is “The Rock!”

The Psalms record that Moses’ concept of “the Rock” was central to Jewish theology long after the Song of Moses was first sung.

Ps 95:1-7

95 O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;

Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;

Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

3 For the Lord is a great God,

And a great King above all gods,

4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth;

The peaks of the mountains are His also.

5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it;

And His hands formed the dry land.

6 Come, let us worship and bow down;

Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

7 For He is our God,

And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

Please focus on the highlighted part of the passage, in the Hebrew.

נְרִיעָה	לִיהוָה	נִרְנְנָה	לְכוּ	95:1
let us make a joyful noise	unto the Lord:	let us sing	O come,	
<u>7321</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>7442</u>	<u>3212</u>	
		יְשַׁעֲנוּ:	לְצוּר	
		our salvation.	to the rock of	
		<u>3468</u>	<u>6697</u>	

The Hebrew word *tzur* (rock) is used by Moses in his song, as well as by the psalmist in his praise of the same G-d. The psalmist even connects G-d with Yeshua, since the Name Yeshua means “G-d is salvation.”

For those of us who believe in Yeshua as not only Messiah but also the Savior who is One with the Father, is there a name we can pronounce? Yes.

Moses called him the “Rock” (*tzur*). He is joined in that practice by the psalmist who made it even more clear by calling Him “Rock of our Salvation.” (*tzur yesheinu*).

But we can safely and lovingly use a shortcut today – just call him Yeshua!

Please seek unity with the others in our faith who believe differently than we do, and practice their faith in a way that troubles – and maybe even insults – us. Let gentle words turn away anger. Have conversations and not arguments. Let things pass in the pursuit of unity and love. Inasmuch as it is up to you, live at peace with everyone. Let your life be the light that shines in the darkness to show that your faith in G-d is pure and true. People will notice.