



ENGAGE EMPOWER CONNECT

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Each of us experiences constant change. However, often we have difficulty dealing with the consequence of change: uncertainty. We cannot predict what will happen next. We can deny change, attempt control, or even try to stop change, but none of these strategies work. They are all illusionary. Try as we might, reality always intrudes. We invest in images that we might apply to ourselves or others, to freeze change. It does not work.

Instead, we need to engage and accept change, facing the challenge of uncertainty. We then can discover our ability to empower ourselves by connecting with the gift of our uniqueness. Our individuality describes who we are, why we exist and how we are able to transcend our limitations.

To engage, empower and connect are actions which are epitomized in the biblical story of Jacob (Genesis 32:25-29). Faced with the existential threat of his twin brother, Esau, he spends the night wrestling with a being (divine? Himself?) and refuses to let go until he is transformed from Jacob to Israel. He has proven himself capable of surviving the struggle.

Standing alone facing Esau, he provides for an escape route for his family if Esau attacks him. Rather Esau embraces him, overcoming his own anger, confident of his own success.

What Jacob-Israel declares to Esau is that his own experience with God provided him with strength and inner confidence. He has engaged, felt empowered and connect to his own sense of self.

This process can be understood in three Hebrew words. Although I have written about each word separately, this essay is my attempt to demonstrate how they come together as a process in our ability to navigate change and uncertainty.

Psalm 6:10: ...*YHVH take my tefila*: *YHVH*, usually translated as “Our Lord” or “Adonai” is never pronounced (except during Biblical times by the high priest on Yom Kippur). We do not even know how to pronounce it. We are not even supposed to write it, with the exception of a Torah scribe under very specific instructions. The reason for these restrictions is that we cannot use this word for oaths, taking it in vain. We are not allowed to use this word as a means to control the Infinite-Eternal.

In the story of the bush that was not consumed (Exodus 3:14), Moses was commanded to go to Egypt and demand that the pharaoh free Israel from bondage. Moses was told that Eheyeh sent him. Eheyeh means *I will become*. It is a verb the basis of *YHVH*. It is a verb, not a noun. It is dynamic and cannot be controlled. It is not a name but an action, becoming.

Living is not static. Every aspect of life, animal, vegetable and even mineral is constantly changing: becoming. With this realization we understand that our relationships cannot be based on control. To do so is to perpetuate an illusion. Every aspect of creation is “becoming”.

Tefila is usually translated as “prayer”, that is, an act of asking for something from “God”. What happens when our “prayers” are not answered? What even happens when our “prayers” are answered? *Tefila* is based on the verb root which means examining oneself. *Tefila* is about looking to our unique core and determining how we can fulfill the content of the specific *tefila*. So when I am dealing with words of healing, I am challenging myself: how am I acting to bring healing. When I am dealing with justice the question is what am I doing to assert justice. Every “prayer” that I might recite is a means to reach into the core of my uniqueness (my “oneness”, what I share with the Infinite-Eternal—why I was created—to offer my own contribution to a just and compassionate world).

Yisrael, the name change given to the ancient Jacob, was a consequence of wrestling with BECOMING and surviving (Genesis 32:25-29). BECOMING is about change and uncertainty. Jacob engaged change. He realized that life is about not giving in to the fear of the future, to understand that life is not fixed. The future cannot be controlled.

These three words, *YHVH*, *Tefila* and *Yisrael* are our guide to *engage, empower, connect*. When we take responsibility by being engaged in life, by reaching into the very core of our being, we can have a profound effect on the world.