

Parashat V'Et'Chanan - 'I Pleased' (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11)

The title of this week's portion comes from the first verse.

***Va'etchannan, el-Hashem, ba'et hahiv, lemor
HaShem HaShem, attah hachillota l'har'ot et-avd'cha et-gad'l'cha, v'et-yad'cha
hachazakah--asher mi-el bashamayim uva'aretz, asher-ya'aseh ch'ma'aseicha
v'chigvurotecha***

***And I besought HaShem at that time, saying:
'O HaShem HaShem, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness, and
Thy strong hand; for what G-d is there in heaven or on earth, that can do
according to Thy works, and according to Thy mighty acts?***

Deuteronomy 3:2-3

Notice that "pleaded" or "besought" comes from the root "*chanan*" which is commonly translated "grace." Moses, "pleading" is the petition that depends upon the *chanan* [grace] of the hearer. Beloved, Devarim [Deuteronomy] is a book of **grace**.

G-d has written a love letter to all humanity. It is His self-disclosure - the revelation of Himself. His love for man motivated Him to provide a means for fellowship, which had been terminated by our sin in the Garden. Yeshua's work on our behalf is that means of fellowship. When you hold your Bible in your hands, you **hold** that love letter. When you see your brother or sister lovingly obeying G-d, you are **seeing** that love letter.

This week's Scripture portion contains important details about His love letter to man, and how they were to learn of Him and His ways. It contains important details of how He would provide redemption for man so that fellowship with Him is again possible. Our portion this week also contains our love response to His act of redemption.

We learn at the end of this week's parasha that G-d chose Israel to be His own - **purely out of grace**.

*For you are a holy people to HaShem your G-d; HaShem your G-d has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. **HaShem did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because HaShem loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers...***

Deuteronomy 7:6-8a

Love motivated the King of the Universe to choose Israel for His own. He is *Avinu*, He is Our Father.

Lest you think that being chosen by G-d is an end to itself, the beginning of this week's portion tells us an important reason why G-d chose Israel for His own holy people.

*Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as HaShem my G-d commanded me, that you should act **according to them** in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be **careful to observe them**; for this is your **wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples** who will hear all these statutes, and say, '**Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people**. For what great nation is there that has G-d so near to it, as HaShem our G-d is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has **such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this Torah** which I set before you this day?*

Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Notice what is happening. The pagan nations around Israel were to see how Israel lived by G-d's loving and wise instructions in the Torah - and they were to be drawn to G-d and want to learn of Him. One reason Israel was chosen, was to be a light to the Gentiles - to bring them to *Avinu*, our Father in Heaven. Note how those Gentiles would be drawn - by **seeing** Israel live according to the wise and gracious instructions of HaShem. Torah living was to draw them.

We see this same thing prophetically speaking of a time yet future.

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of HaShem's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; **and all nations shall flow to it**. Many people shall come and say. "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the house of the G-d of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths**." For out of Zion shall go forth **the Torah**, and the **word of HaShem** from Jerusalem.*

Isaiah 2:2-3

The most effective tool ever used to draw men, women, and children to HaShem is **Torah living**. Beloved, that is the essence of the Gospel message which says that G-d loves you, wants a relationship with you, and wants you separate and holy for Him. Yeshua's sacrifice and redemption of us provides for that relationship - by grace. Now, He wants you **to live your love for Him** by living as Yeshua did: faithfully to His gracious instructions. Love is always tied to obedience in G-d's Word.

It is not a creed, or a series of "I believes" that sets G-d's people apart, it is this single thing: **They show their love for Him by love for each other, and obedience to Him**. He is **Malkeinu**, Our King.

*By this we **know that we love** the children of G-d, when we **love G-d and keep His commandments**. For this is the love of G-d, that we keep His commandments. **And His commandments are not burdensome**.*

1John 5:2-3

If you love Me, keep My commandments.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

John 14:15, 21

Torah living will not redeem you. We cannot **earn** His favor. But we are told we must love Him. It is a command. A result of our loving Him, will lead us to live according to His gracious instructions - to obey His commandments. What commandments? Beloved, G-d does not change. Neither do His instructions for living. Listen to what Yeshua says about the greatest commandment, the sum of them all:

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Torah?" Yeshua said to him, 'You shall love HaShem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Torah and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:36-40

Yeshua was quoting from our parasha this week from Deuteronomy 6:4. He was also quoting from Leviticus 19:18. Some have assumed that in these two commands Yeshua was annulling the Torah. That flies in the face of Yeshua's own declaration in Matthew 5:17-19 about the eternal nature of G-d's commands. Instead, Yeshua is telling us **what love for G-d looks like**. He is telling us **what love for our neighbor looks like**. Torah living **defines** loving G-d and loving our fellow man.

Yeshua's quote from this week's portion - the command to love G-d - is called the **Sh'ma**. Unlike many religions, Judaism does not have a creed. The **Sh'ma** is not a creed. **It is a call to action**. It is the single declaration of the Oneness of G-d - and the command to love Him - and then a view of what that love will look like when lived out. Listen to these powerful words. These are the words Yeshua wanted you to focus upon when you consider your response to His love for you.

*Hear [Sh'ma = heed, obey], O Israel: HaShem our G-d, **HaShem is one!** You shall love HaShem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

That beloved, is a powerful call. It is the call **of love** from *Avinu*, Our Father. It is a powerful call from *Abba*, Your Father. It is a desire for His people to live for Him, by His gracious instructions; and that will draw others to Him. His wisdom is not revealed by nice buildings, fancy programs, or even powerful teaching or preaching. His wisdom is revealed by simple people, like you and me - **living the Sh'ma**. Call it "**Sh'ma living**" if you will.

In some ways, if you are living the *Sh'ma lifestyle*, **you are a walking love letter** - and that is what the Holy One, blessed is He, always intended for you.

This week's Torah and haftarah portions are always read after *Tisha B'Av* [9th of Av]. They are always read after our three week period of mourning over our sin of the Golden Calf, and our lack of faith at Kadesh-Barnea and the sin of the spies. We have mourned. We have repented. We have fasted. We have asked the question, "**When will You reign in Zion?**" For these three weeks:

- We have seen the spiritual devastation of our lives - which reflects the devastation of the Land after Babylon and Rome finished their destructions.
- We have felt the spiritual dryness brought about by our sin and our pride
- We have prayed
- We have wept
- We have mourned over our sin and our lack of faith
- We have sought the righteousness of HaShem
- We have repented with open hands

And now, this week, we hear the answer to our prayers. The Holy One, blessed is He, answers us from this week's Torah and haftarah. We knew He would, because we believe Him. His Word is sure to us.

Nachamu, nachamu ami!

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your G-d. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from HaShem's hand double for all her sins."

Isaiah 1:1-2

Pictured in the ministry of Yochanan the Immerser [John], a cry is once again heard in the wilderness:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of HaShem; make straight in the desert a highway for our G-d. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; The glory of HaShem shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of HaShem has spoken."

Isaiah 40:3-5

These are the days of *Mashiach* [Messiah]. These are the days of comfort. The Almighty is drawing us to Him - and this is by the work of Messiah. Redemption draweth nigh!

These are days of comfort. These are days of rest. These are days that we quietly reflect how we have been rescued. Our tears have dried. Our mourning is past. Our repentance is steadfast. We look expectantly toward Zion... and ask the faith-filled question, "**When will You reign in Zion?**"

O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not

afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your G-d!" Behold, HaShem G-d shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.

Isaiah 40:9-11

Prayer Focus for Va'etchanan - "Kedushah" [Holiness]

The *Kedushah* is a part of the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer [also known as the *Amidah*]. The *Kedushah* is a part of the prayer that requires a *minyan* [ten men]. It is responsively prayed by a *chazan* [prayer leader] and the rest of the congregation. In the Shabbat version, there is a special prayer regarding Jerusalem and the Messianic Age.

*We shall sanctify Your Name in this world, just as they sanctify It in heaven
above, as it is written by Your prophet,
"And one angel will call another and say, 'Holy, holy, holy is HaShem, Master of
Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory.'
Then with a sound of great noise, raising themselves from the Seraphim, those
facing Him say, 'Blessed...' 'Blessed is the glory of HaShem from His place.'"
From Your place our King, You will appear and reign over us, for we await You.
When will You reign in Zion?
Soon, in our days - forever and ever - may You dwell there.
May You be exalted and sanctified within Jerusalem, Your city, from generation
to generation and for all eternity.
May our eyes see Your Kingdom, as it is expressed in the songs of Your might,
written by David, Your righteous anointed: "HaShem will reign forever - your G-d,
O Zion - from generation to generation, HalleluYah!"*

-- ArtScroll Translation