

Parashat Va'etchanan 5781, 2021:

May We Ever Seek Him

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, and the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, Moshe ben Itta Golda, Yocheved Dafneh bat Dinah Zehavah, Reuven Shmuel ben Leah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

This week's *haftarah* is the single most longed-for *haftarah* of the entire year. Until now, the Three Weeks and Tisha b'Av have forced us to focus upon the trials and tribulations of our nation's history. Suddenly, Tisha b'Av ends and we are greeted with Yeshayahu's proclamation of comfort: "*Nachamu nachamu ami yomar Elokeichem*" (*Sefer Yeshayahu* 40:1, "Console console My people says your G-d," this and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*) The world returns to its normal rhythms, and we are no longer preoccupied with the dire times of Jewish history. Our national *aveilut* (mourning) ceases, at last.

Yet, what kind of *nechama* (consolation) has really been achieved? The *Beit HaMikdash* remains in ruins, anti-Semitism, both in the United States and the rest of the world, grows ever stronger, and Israel is continually reviled in many "halls of justice" throughout the world. Paradoxically, I believe that a powerful response to this question is contained in *Megillat Eicha*, itself, the *megillah* of Tisha b'Av that concerns itself with unspeakable tragedy: "This I reply to my heart; therefore, I have hope. Verily, the kindnesses of the

L-rd (*chasdai Hashem*) never cease! Indeed, His mercies (*rachamov*) never fail! They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The L-rd is my portion,’ says my soul; ‘therefore, I will hope in Him.’” (3:21-24)

In the midst of some of the most horrific prophecies ever uttered, *Yirmiyahu* (*Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 15a*) is teaching us a fundamental lesson of faith and hope: “... the kindnesses of the L-rd never cease! Indeed, His mercies never fail! They are new every morning...” No matter what we may encounter in our lives, we must ever remember that “the darkest hour is just before the dawn.” (Thomas Fuller, *A Pisgah - Sight of Palestine And The Confines Thereof*, 1650) *Yirmiyahu* is reminding us that we must search ceaselessly for Hashem’s *chasadim* and *rachamim*, with the expectation that they will be found. Little wonder, then, that in the very next *pasuk* in *Megillat Eicha* he declares: “The L-rd is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.”

Yeshayahu joins *Yirmiyahu* in urging us to seek out Hashem’s presence. In one of his most famous *pasukim* he exhorts us: “*Dirshu Hashem b’hematzo, k’ra’uhu bi’yoto karov*” (“Seek the L-rd where He is found, call Him when He is near,” 55:6) Yet, where, exactly, is Hashem to be found? The Kotzker *rebbe zatzal* (1787-1859) addresses this question directly in one of his best-known aphorisms: “Where is G-d? Wherever He is allowed in!” This is a profound idea. It inspires us to allow Hashem into every part of our lives, no matter where we may be, so that we may find Him. As stated by the Kotzker on another occasion: “He who doesn’t see G-d everywhere, isn’t capable of seeing Him anywhere.” (Kotzker quotations, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4287676/jewish/48-Wise-and-Deep-Sayings-of-Rabbi-Menachem-Mendel-of-Kotzk.htm)

Armed with this enhanced understanding of our *haftarah's pasuk*, “The L-rd is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him,” may we go forward with the discernment and heartfelt dedication to ever seek Hashem’s ineffable presence. As *Dovid HaMelech* said so long ago: “*Shiviti Hashem l’negdi tamid*” (“I have placed the L-rd before me constantly,” *Sefer Tehillim* 16:8) *V’chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom and may Hashem in His infinite mercy remove the pandemic from *klal Yisrael* and all the nations of the world.

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>

The email list, *b’chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com>.

*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav zatzal](#)