

Parashat Ki Tissa: 33:12-23

P'SHAT

Ex. 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Lead this people forward,’ but You have not made known to me whom You will send with me. Further, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have, indeed, found favor in My eyes.’¹³ Now, if I have truly found favor in Your eyes, pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue in find favor in Your eyes. Consider, too, that this nation is Your people.”¹⁴ And God said, “If My Presence shall go [with you], will you rest more easily?”¹⁵ And he said to God, “If Your Presence does not go, do not make us leave this place.¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your People? Will it not be Your going with us, that I and Your people may be distinguished from every people on the face of the earth?”

Ex. 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly found favor in My eyes and I have known you by name.”¹⁸ Moses said, “Oh, let me behold Your Glory!”¹⁹ And God answered, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name ‘YHVH,’ and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show.²⁰ “But,” God said, “You cannot see My face, for no human may see Me and live.”²¹ And the LORD said, “See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock²² and, as My Glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by.²³ Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen.”

[R. Alter & E. Fox translations adapted]

12 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה רְאֵה אֶתָּה אֹמֵר אֵלַי הֲעַל אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאַתָּה אֹמֵר יְדַעְתִּיךָ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם־מָצָאתָ חֵן בְּעֵינָי: 13 וְעַתָּה אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת־דַּרְכְּךָ וְאַדְעֶךָ לְמַעַן אֲמַצֶּא־חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה כִּי עִמָּךָ הִגֹּי הַזֶּה: 14 וַיֹּאמֶר פָּגִי יֵלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְךָ: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם־אֵין פְּנֶיךָ הַלְכִים אֶל־תַּעֲלֵבוּ מִזֶּה: 16 וּבְמַה אֶיְיָ וְיִגְדַע אֲפֹא כִי־מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעִמָּךָ הַלֹּא בְּלִכְתֶּךָ עִמָּנוּ וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעִמָּךָ מִכָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: 17 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעֱשֶׂה כִּי־מָצָאתָ חֵן בְּעֵינָי וְאַדְעֶךָ בְּשֵׁם: 18 וַיֹּאמֶר הֲרָאִנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבוֹדְךָ: 19 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶעֱבִיר כָּל־טוֹבִל עַל־פְּנֶיךָ וְקִרְאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְחִנַּתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן וְרַחֲמֵי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם: 20 וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֶת־פָּנָי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחָי: 21 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל־הַצּוּר: 22 וְהִנֵּה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבֹדִי וְשַׁמְתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשַׁכַּתִּי כַּפֵּי עֲלֶיךָ עַד־עֲבָרִי: 23 וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת־כַּפְּי וּרְאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֵרַי וּפְנֵי לֹא יִרְאוּ: 24

KEY KOSHI: What are Moses & God negotiating? What does it mean to be ‘beloved’?

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
 Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
 Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ by IBN EZRA: His philosophy on one foot: All objects and beings owe their existence to God, who is pure intellect, entirely separated from matter; He is their source and their being, just as all numbers both stem and include the number "1" [from Carsik's *The Commentator's Bible!*]

v. 12: *"You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have, indeed, found favor in My eyes.'"*

This should be translated as follows: "You have said that I would know You, and also, 'You have, indeed, gained My favor.'" V. 13 is Moses' request that, if he has indeed gained God's favor, He should let Moses know him, as He promised.

Now, listen closely to my opinion. You must know that the hosts of heaven and of the earth all owe their continuation in existence to God's thought. The forms correspond to God's thoughts, and the categories of created beings correspond to the forms. Thus, within God, the knower becomes one with the known, which is why they say of divine knowledge that He is both the knower and the known. The knowledge of created beings does not work this way, for their individuality prevents the knower from being the known. Knowing God by name implies that Moses, by adhering so closely to God, has been raised to a level at which he too is both the knower and the known. This is why God created signs and wonders in the world through Moses.

v. 13: *"...Pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue in find favor in Your eyes."*

A created being has no power to know the Creator of the world, except through His ways. But one who does know His ways will know Him, for then he will be raised to the level of the angelic forms. That is why Moses said, Let me know Your ways.

v. 17: *"I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly found favor in My eyes and I have known you by name."*

God knows particular details not as individual pieces of knowledge, but through His knowledge of All, as a single, unified whole...The point of this whole passage is as follows: God told Moses, before the Golden Calf incident, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). Once they made the calf, He said, "I will not go in your midst" (v. 3), meaning that the Tabernacle need not be made. But when Moses pleaded with Him, He told him that the Shekhinah would rest upon the Tent—that is Moses' tent. Moses pleaded with Him a second time, on Israel's behalf, at which point God agreed that He would indeed dwell in the midst of Israel.

v. 23: *"...Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."*

You must understand that every compound physical body has a "face" and a "back." But the sun, the greatest and most glorious of all created things has no face and no back. Nor do the stars, much less their Creator. So every soul is attached to God, and He alone has no beginning and no end. The soul that is attached to Him has no end from the perspective of God. But it does have a beginning, the moment at which it became attached to God.

DRASH by ALAN MORINIS: Being Beloved (*Ahuv*) – Chapter 29 in *With Heart in Mind*

The starting point for the Mussar teachers is the recognition that our primary inner nature is that of a soul. There are levels, or dimensions, to the soul, but only one concerns us in regard to love, and that is the *nefesh*-soul, which is the aspect of the inner life that is made up of all the emotions, character traits, and values that are specific to an individual. What we call love blossoms when two human beings draw so close to one another that their *nefesh*-souls merge.

This phenomenon is explained well in the sixteenth-century kabbalistic Mussar text called *Reishit Chochmah*, written by Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas (1518-92). He writes that what we call “love” is in actuality the coming together of two separate souls to create a larger unit:

Even though your body’s material substance separates you from your friend, the *nefesh*-soul of both of you is a spiritual entity and the tendency of the spirit is to make you cleave to your friend with unbroken unity. When your *nefesh*-soul becomes aroused to love a friend, your friend’s *nefesh*-soul will be equally aroused to love you in return until both of your souls are bound to form one single entity.

...It is not that these two friends loved each other because their souls knit together, nor did their souls cleave to one another because of their love; rather *love* is a term we use to name the spiritual reality of two souls connecting and cleaving into one unit, knitting together. Love is the emotional experience of *achdut ha’ohev ve-ha’ahuv*—the unity of the lover and the beloved. In over two hundred places in the Torah, the word *ahavah* appears to describe the unity of man and woman, of master and servant, of family, of the neighbor and the stranger, and, of course, of seeker and God...

Now that we know that it is the merger of souls that generates love, what can we do to become beloved? King Solomon provides an answer by saying, “As water reflects a face, so does a person’s heart.” This means that whatever you project from your heart is what you can expect to receive in return. If you take no interest in others, they will take no interest in you. If, on the other hand, you are warm and caring, you can also expect to attract warmth to yourself...

Too often, we seek love from a place of need and want. We may not have realized that we become beloved by giving to others and feeding them (literally and metaphorically).

But how does being beloved help us to work the transformation that is called acquiring Torah? The Maharal suggests an interesting answer to this question: Only one who makes himself or herself part of the community merits the Torah’s wisdom, because Torah was given and continues to be given to the whole community, not to an individual. In a very famous comment, Rashi notes that when the people encamped at Mount Sinai in order to receive the Torah, the community was so cohesive it was “like one person with one heart.” Only in the context of love like that—where hearts are united—can one acquire Torah, with all that means.

SOD – Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, excerpted from the *Koren Sacks YK Machzor*

To those who fully open themselves to it, Yom Kippur is a life-transforming experience. It tells us that God, who created the universe in love and forgiveness, reaches out to us in love and forgiveness, asking us to love and forgive others. God never asked us not to make mistakes. All He asks is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, grow through them, and make amends where we can.

No religion has held such a high view of human possibility. The God who created us in His image, gave us freedom. We are not tainted by original sin, destined to fail, caught in the grip of an evil only divine grace can defeat. To the contrary we have within us the power to choose life. Together we have the power to change the world...

Judaism constantly asks us to exercise our freedom. To be a Jew is not to go with the flow, to be like everyone else, to follow the path of least resistance, to worship the conventional wisdom of the age. To the contrary, to be a Jew is to have the courage to live in a way that is not the way of everyone. Each time we eat, drink, pray or go to work, we are conscious of the demands our faith makes on us, to live God's will and be one of His ambassadors to the world. Judaism always has been, perhaps always will be, counter-cultural...

So high does Judaism set the bar that it is inevitable that we should fall short time and again. Which means that forgiveness was written into the script from the beginning. God, said the sages, sought to create the world under the attribute of strict justice but He saw that it could not stand. What did He do? He added mercy to justice, compassion to retribution, forbearance to the strict rule of law. God forgives. Judaism is a religion, the world's first, of forgiveness...

Beneath the awe and solemnity of Yom Kippur one fact shines radiant throughout: that God loves us more than we love ourselves. He believes in us more than we believe in ourselves. He never gives up on us, however many times we slip and fall. The story of Judaism from beginning to end is the tale of a love of God for a people who rarely fully reciprocated that love, yet never altogether failed to be moved by it.

Rabbi Akiva put it best in a mere two words: *Avinu malkenu*. Yes, You are our sovereign, God almighty, maker of the cosmos, king of kings. But You are also our father. You told Moses to say to Pharaoh in Your name: "My child, my firstborn, Israel." That love continues to make Jews a symbol of hope to humanity, testifying that a nation does not need to be large to be great, nor powerful to have influence. Each of us can, by a single act of kindness or generosity of spirit, cause a ray of the Divine light to shine in the human darkness, allowing the Shekhinah, at least for a moment, to be at home in our world.

More than Yom Kippur expresses our faith in God, it is the expression of God's faith in us.