

Salvation in the Name

In this week's reading from *Parashat Vayelech* (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:1-31:30*), Moshe is explaining to the people the blessings and the curses that will come if they do not love and obey. Moshe also tells us that the Lord God Almighty will transform (cut away at) our hearts so that we will love the Lord our God and not depart from His commandments. At the end of the book of Leviticus in *Parashat Bechukotai*, the Lord says in *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:40* *'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me 26:41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.* (NASB) The Scriptures indicate that if the people repent the Lord will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and save them. According to these Scriptures, the repentance process is also a part of this heart circumcision process in which the Lord God Himself is involved. Moshe said in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:16* "... and stiffen your neck no longer," meaning we are to be humble before God. In *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:41*, Moshe speaks of people who have uncircumcised hearts and if they would humble themselves the Lord would return them to the land. In addition to this, prophetically speaking (*Jeremiah 31:30*) the purpose of the New Covenant, made by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, was so that God would circumcise our hearts. The way this would be accomplished is by the Lord writing His Law upon our hearts so we would desire to obey Him. According to these verses, it appears that it is the Lord God who enables us to love Him with all of our heart, mind, and strength (וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ) just as we are supposed to do according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4-5*.

The Description of the Lord God being involved in the cutting away of the dead parts of our hearts, is a description of the Lord working in our lives to change us from the inside out. It is the Lord God who causes us to

have the desire to draw near, to walk in His ways, and to seek His holiness and righteousness. These are the things that are found within the details of the Salvation of God for His people. The Lord is looking for the inward change, He is looking for a people that seeks Him and seeks His will in their lives. In Parashat Vayelech, the circumcision of the heart is brought into the context of the uncircumcised heart, and the salvation of God. The uncircumcised heart is closed off to the Lord's calling, has no desire to serve the Lord, and no interest in God's Word. On the other hand, the circumcised heart is found within the covenant relationship and the promises the Lord had given us, that He will work in our lives to change us.

ספר דברים פרק לא Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:7-9

ז וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֵלָיו לְעֵינַי כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲזֹק וְאַמֵץ
 כִּי אַתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל-
 הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְתָּם
 לָתֵת לָהֶם וְאַתָּה תִּנְחַלְנָה אוֹתָם: ח
 וַיְהִי הוּא | הַהֹלֵךְ לְפָנָיִךְ הוּא יְהִי
 עִמָּךְ לֹא יִרְפָּךְ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבְךָ לֹא תִירָא
 וְלֹא תִחַת: ט וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת-
 הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת וַיִּתְּנָהּ אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים
 בְּנֵי לֵוִי הַנֹּשְׂאִים אֶת-אֲרוֹן בְּרִית
 יְהוָה וְאֶל-כָּל-זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

31:7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. 31:8 'The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.' 31:9 So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. (NASB)

There are a number of interesting things that may be observed in the opening verses of Parashat Vayelech. First, in the Hebrew language, the Hebrew word for *“He will save”* is ישע (*“yasha”*) which has the same root as the name *“Yeshua”* (ישוע). The name given to Yeshua reveals to us what he has done, the Messiah saves. The etymology of the name Yeshua (ישוע) suggests that this name is a contraction on the name Yehoshua (יהושוע) Joshua. With this in mind, the idea of Joshua going ahead of Israel into the Promised Land is rich with meaning according to the Torah.

The meaning of the name Yeshua (ישוע) is provided for us explicitly

within the text in *Matthew 1:21*, the NASB renders the verse as “*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yeshua), for he will save his people from their sins.*” (וְהָיָה יְלֵדָת בֶּן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת שְׁמוֹ יֵשׁוּעַ כִּי הוּא יוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת) (עמו מעונותיהם: There seems to be a parallel here to what we are reading in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:7* *Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. (NASB)* In the Tanach, the names parents gave to their children generally expressed the future expectation of their children or how blessed the parent was in being given a son or a daughter. The Torah states that Moshe called to Joshua. Another way of reading this might be that Moshe called out unto Salvation (וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ) in the sight of all Israel. Note that the scripture says that Yehoshua (Joshua) would not depart from the Ohel Moed (*Shemot / Exodus 33:11*). Salvation is found within the Ohel Moed, in the presence of God. Note also that Moshe speaks to the Lord requesting that His presence come with the Children of Israel (*33:12-17*) and we are told that the Lord’s presence will go before Israel into the Land, and before Joshua.

Previously, the Torah tells us that the Lord declares He will bring Caleb and Joshua into the land because they remained faithful to Him. The Lord says that they have a different spirit, a spirit that follows the Lord fully (כֹּד וְעִבְדֵי כָּל־לֵב יַעֲקֹב הָיְתָה רוּחַ אַחֲרַת עַמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא אַחֲרָיו וְהִבִּיאֲתִיו אֶל-הָאָרֶץ) (אֲשֶׁר-בָּא שָׁמָּה וְזָרְעוּ יוֹרְשָׁנָה:). The promise of God to circumcise the heart of His people results in an inward change that facilitates the removal of the flesh from one’s will allowing the Spirit of God to direct us. In a parallel fashion, the Lord God says that He will cross over into the Promised land ahead of you (הָיְהוּה אֲלֵהֶיךָ הוּא | עֲבַר לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא-יִשְׁמִיד אֶת-הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה) (מִלְּפָנֶיךָ) and Salvation (Yehoshua, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Joshua) will cross over ahead of you as the Lord has spoken (וַיִּרְשָׁתֶם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הוּא עֲבַר לְפָנֶיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה) indicating the people’s role (stepping out in faith) is coupled to God’s role in taking the land. If we step out to make the initial effort in faith towards repentance, no matter how feeble, God receives the effort with joy and in His power He works miracles.

The Lord said, *“Joshua (the Lord’s Salvation) will cross ahead of you according to the word*

of the Lord.” The Aramaic translation (Targum Onkelos) says that the “*Memra*” (מִימְרָה) the Word of the Lord God, He will cross over before you (יַעֲבֹר קִדְמוֹךָ הוּא). The Aramaic translation tells us that God’s Word goes before us as both a deliverer and savior. Based upon these things, the Torah is describing Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Joshua) is a type of Messiah for the children of Israel. Appropriately, Joshua’s name (Yehoshua, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) means “*Salvation*” indicating his role in going with the people into the land and bringing them into their inheritance (כִּי אָתָּה תָּבוֹא אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֵל-). Moshe calling out to salvation (וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה) (וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר), draws in a deeper context with regard to the manner in which we are to live. The point is in order to be a true child of Abraham, one needs have the Word of God on the inside in order to sustain and support us like the Lord says to Joshua וַיִּמְרֵי יְהוָה בְּסֻעְדֹךָ “*My Word will sustain you,*” according to the Aramaic Targum. It is also important to note Yeshua’s words, *John 15:7* “*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (NASB)*” Yeshua is speaking of abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us. Remember last week’s study in Parashat Nitzavim, the Torah teaches us to remember, to repent, to turn, and to obey. These are the concepts that are found within Yeshua’s words of hearing, abiding, and keeping His word in our hearts. It is interesting to see the parallel here in Parashat Vayelech the parallel to all of these things, that Joshua whose name means “*the Lord’s salvation,*” will be sustained by God’s Memra (His Word). In addition, the Torah principle that Yeshua is teaching in *John 8:31-34*, is about the living Word of God (*John 1:1-14*), the light of the world (*John 8:12*), the Lord’s Salvation, His Messiah, and the abiding truth of God’s word that governs our hearts and our lives. Keeping God’s word close to the heart is the point of remembering what the Lord has done so that we may live in a state of repentance before the Lord.

The keeping of God’s word close to the heart is very important, and is significant enough for the rabbis to discuss the topic. The rabbinic commentary on this week’s Torah portion has the following to say concerning keeping the word of God close to the heart.

Sefer HaChinukh 613:1

For each person to write a Torah scroll for oneself - we

have been commanded for each person in Israel to own a Torah scroll... Among the roots of this mitzvah, it is because it is well-known among people that they do everything according to that which they find prepared for themselves, and therefore God commanded us, each and every one of the Children of Israel, to have a Torah scroll prepared and available to him, so that he can read it always and will not have to go looking for it at his friend's house.

ספר החינוך תרי"ג:א'

(א) לכתב כל אחד ספר תורה לעצמו - שנצטוינו להיות לכל איש מישראל ספר תורה... משרשי המצוה, לפי שידוע בבני אדם שהם עושין כל דבריהם לפי ההכנה הנמצאת להם, ועל כן צונו ברוך הוא להיות לכל אחד ואחד מבני ישראל ספר תורה מוכן אצלו שיוכל לקרות בו תמיד ולא יצטרך ללכת אחריו לבית חברו.

Arbaah Turim 2:270:2

My master, my father, the Ro"sh, of blessed memory, wrote that this was written only for the earlier generations, who would write a Torah scroll and learn from it. But nowadays, when we write a Torah scroll and place it in the synagogue to read from it publicly, it is a positive mitzvah incumbent on all Jews who have the means to do so to write volumes of the Torah, and Mishnah, and Gemara, and their commentaries, and to read from them - him, and his sons. For the mitzvah of writing a Torah is in order to learn from it, as it says: (Deut. 31:19) "and teach it to the people of Israel, place it in their mouths."

ארבעה טורים ב':ע"ר:ב'

(ב) וכתב אדוני אבי הרא"ש ז"ל שזה לא נאמר אלא לדורות הראשונים שהיו כותבין ספר תורה ולומדים בה אבל האידנא שכותבין ספר תורה ומניחים אותו בבית הכנסת לקרות בהם ברבים מצות עשה על כל ישראל אשר ידו משגת לכתוב חמשה חומשי התורה ומשנה וגמרא ופירושיהם להגות בהן הוא ובניו כי מצות כתיבת התורה היא כדי ללמוד בה דכתיב (דברים לא: יט) ולמדה את בני

The rabbis consider the 613th mitzvah of the Torah as an obligation for everyone, that all of us needs to write a Torah scroll (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:19*) “*And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to the Children of Israel. Place it into their mouths, in order that this song will be for Me as a witness for the children of Israel.*” Rashi understands this command only to write the Torah portion that immediately follows, Parashat Ha’azinu, whereas the *Talmud Bavli Nedarim 38a* understands the command as referring to writing the entire Torah. Maimonides (Rambam, *Laws of Sefer Torah 7:1*) however explains that although the word “*song*” in the verse is referring to Parashat Ha’azinu, it is forbidden to write only a single portion of the Torah on a scroll (see *Talmud Bavli Gittin 60a*), it is therefore interpreted that this is an obligation for God’s people to write the entire Torah, a copy for themselves. This command is emphasized in the mitzvah for a king to write a “*second*” Torah scroll for himself. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 17:18*) Judaism also understands and interprets this verse to mean that in addition to the Torah scroll which he must write as everyone else does, the king also needs to write a second one which he will then carry with him and read from daily. (*Maimonides, Laws of Kings 3:1*)

It is interesting to note historically we don’t find any record that the Torah was produced by the hundreds or thousands, one for each person in Israel. We also do not find historically that many people actually commissioned the writing of their own scrolls either. The point of the command on writing the scroll is to read from it and learn from it, to keep the word of God close to the heart so that one would always remember what the Lord has done for His people.

The most significant aspect of this weeks Torah Portion, Parashat Vayelech, is to be prepared in this life for the service to the Lord God in heaven. In the previous studies, we have discussed the importance of being joyful in the Lord, in His word (the commands), in our lives, by the work of our hands, and to recognize that it is the Lord God in heaven who gives us all things (See Parashat Re’eh). In this week’s portion we are being instructed to remain faithful in our walk before the Lord. The Torah is not simply a history book to be read, but a living document to be applied to our lives. In Parashat Bo, the Lord brought great miracles to deliver Israel with a mighty hand from bondage. In a similar manner, the

Lord God our Father in heaven performed the greatest miracle of all, the provision and sending forth of His salvation before us, by raising Yeshua the Messiah from the grave showing Him to be victorious over death. As a result, we remember, we believe, we repent, and we turn from sin by the power of God who changes us from the inside out. For these things are can celebrate and rejoice before God because of His Son who had gone forth before us leading the way. He led the way being obedient to the Father, and in a similar manner, we are called to follow in His footsteps (*1 Peter 2:21*). Remember, believe and Praise His Name because He has delivered us from death unto life, from servitude to freedom, from bondage to redemption. What a wonderful and awesome God we serve!



