

Parshah Vayelech (And He Went)

(Deuteronomy 31:1-31:30, Hosea 14:2-10, Joel 2:11-27, Micah 7:18-20, Isaiah 55-56:3, Romans 10:14-18)

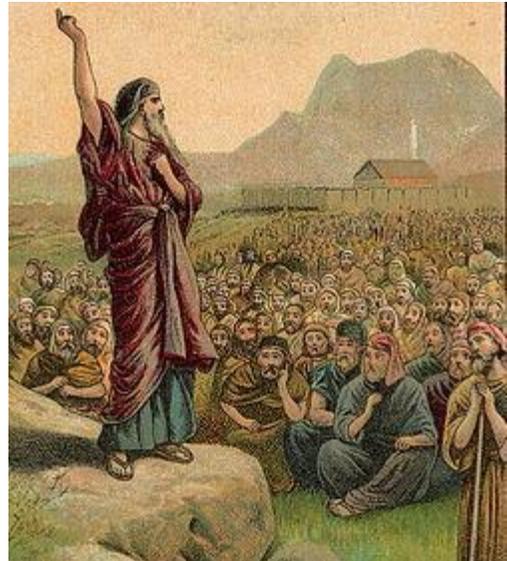
Last week's study of Parashah Nitzavim, described both the just and the merciful nature of God. In His righteous judgment, God would cast out the Jewish people from their Land; but this warning follows with a promise that if the people would turn back to Him, He would bless and prosper them.

Nitzavim ends with a choice being set before us: life or death, blessing or cursing. God's desire is for us to choose life and blessing through our obedience and fidelity.

This week's portion of Scripture, Parashah Vayelech, begins with Moses' address to the nation of Israel at the end of his earthly life at the age of 120. This has become a common blessing amongst the Jewish people today in the nation of Israel to bless someone at their birthday with the words, "*Ad me'ah v'esrim*" (May you live to 120)".

"Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: "I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you." (Deuteronomy 31:1-2)

Moses did not die infirm and feeble, but strong and healthy; and yet God took him home. The time had come for Moses to die and to pass on his leadership and authority to his successor, Joshua.



For everything there is a season: a time to be born and an appointed time to die:

" To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die;" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

The question is, "*Will we be ready, like Moses, when God deems it the right time to take us home?*"

Moses did not accomplish all the desires of his heart before his death; he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land but only to see it from a distance. And yet, in humility, he accepted God's will in the matter.

"The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.'" (Deuteronomy 31:2)

Moses graciously turns his authority over to Yehoshua (Joshua) to take the people across the Jordan and also encourages the nation of Israel to be strong and of good courage as they enter the Promised Land and face many enemies.

**“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”
(Deuteronomy 31:6)**

We are blessed to have godly leadership and authority in our lives who will not speak fear and doubt when we are on the verge of entering a new thing but will instead encourage us to be courageous by remembering that God will never leave or forsake us. We never fly solo.

The transfer of authority (in Hebrew 'samchut'), or ordination, is related to the word, **Smichah**, - a blanket, or something that covers. When we are 'ordained' we come under the covering of that person's blanket of authority.

This word comes from the root s-m-ch **nmo** which means **to trust, depend, or rely upon**. Ideally, we need to be able to trust in and rely upon those in authority over us. Our earthly authorities are not always completely righteous, but Yeshua is the head of the Body of Messiah and He is the One we can always trust and depend upon.

As with anything, there is a tendency for people to forget things that are not written down, therefore Moses finishes his scribing of all the Torah in a special scroll which he gives to the Levites to keep safely **in the Ark** of the Covenant.

Is it any wonder that there is such a determined search yet ongoing for this elusive Ark of the Covenant which contains such a precious treasure as Moses' original Torah scroll?

God gives a command that at the end of every seven years cycle, during the 'shmittah' year (year of release from debt), during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), all the people are to gather – men, women, children, and even the gerim (foreigners who have joined us) – to hear the words of the Torah.

This is called the mitzvah (commandment) of **kahal קהל**. A **kehilla** in Hebrew is a **community**; It is what we call our Messianic congregations. We were never meant to live our lives in isolation or as individual islands but within a community of fellow Believers.

The Word of God tells us that a man who isolates himself is not using good judgment.

Scripture exhorts us not to give up meeting together and even more so as the day of the Lord approaches: **“not forsaking our own assembling together, (as a kehilla), as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25)**

God, who knows the end from the beginning, already is aware of the reality that Israel will not stay faithful to Him but will become utterly corrupt and turn away from the good way Moses has taught them from God's word. As a consequence, Moses prophesies that evil will come upon Israel 'in the latter days'.

God knows our human tendency to be stiff-necked and rebellious. It is not only the ancient Israelites who suffer from this 'malady of a sin nature' but all of humankind who have been infected with the venom of the serpent from the Garden.

Therefore, God already had a plan in place to redeem, deliver, and save us from our sins and that plan came manifested in the flesh in Yeshua Hamshiach (the Messiah) who took all our sins upon Himself on the cross. Halleluyah!

“For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

HAFTORAH VAYELECH

The haftorah, or prophetic portion of Vayelech, occurs during a very special period of time between Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

This ten day period, called Yamim Nora'im (Days of Awe) are traditionally practiced as a time to get right with God and our fellow man through repentance and asking forgiveness.

This Sabbath is called “Shabbat Shuvah” or Sabbath of Repentance. Shuvah comes from the Hebrew word 'shuv' which means to return. The Prophet Hosea, exhorts the nation:

“Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall!” (Hosea 14:1)

Hosea urges the people to trust in God rather than any other force: powerful nations, horses or idols. Then God will also turn away from his anger and return to Israel in mercy with healing and restoration.

“I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily.” (Hosea 14:4-5)

God is waiting for each one of us to return to Him in 'tshuvah' (repentance) and to find Him waiting with open arms to pour out His love, healing and restoration freely upon us. What are we waiting for?

This Haftorah ends with a brief portion from the prophet Micah with a well known promise of forgiveness. It is this scripture which is recited when the Jewish people practice the custom of **Slichot** - a word related to Slichah, which is how we say 'sorry' in Hebrew. **Tashlich** is a tradition in which the Jewish people go to a river or live body of water and cast bread crumbs into the water while reciting the verse:

"He does not maintain His anger forever, for He is a lover of kindness. He will have mercy on us, He will grasp our iniquities and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18)



Photo: Hasidic Jews performing tashlikh on Rosh Hashanah, painting by Aleksander Gierymski, 1884

As with the prophet, Micah, we do not appeal to God's mercy based on our own righteousness but because of His faithfulness to the Covenant He swore with our Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Each and every follower of Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) is a member of the commonwealth of Israel and a partaker in the eternal everlasting covenant of mercy and peace with God.

At this time, we can praise and thank His name that we have found forgiveness in Him through the Messiah Yeshua. While some may trust in horses or chariots, we will trust in the name of our God.

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God." (Psalm 20:7)

May we lift up our voices and share the good news that we have forgiveness in a wonderful Savior, Yeshua Hamshiach, for as it is written in today's New Testament portion of Scripture,

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14)

Shabbat shalom! Love Hannah

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