

Ha'Chazarah - החזרה



Rosh Chodesh Av

May it be Your will, O LORD, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, that You inaugurate this month of Av upon us for goodness and for blessing.

Abba, Father, may You give us long life,
a life of peace – *Shalom*
a life of goodness – *Tovah*
a life of blessing – *Bracha*
a life of sustenance - *Parnassa*
a life of physical health – *Hilutz Atzamot*
a life in which there is a fear of heaven and fear of sin - *Yirat Shamayim ve' Yirat Chet*
a life in which there is no humiliation – *Ein Busha u'Chlimah*
a life of wealth and honor – *Osher ve'Kavod*
a life in which we will have love of Torah and awe and reverence of G-d
- *Ahavat Torah ve'Yirat HaShem*
a life walked more fully for Your glory in *Adoneinu Yeshua*, our Messiah and Lord.
Amen. *Selah*.

¹ Baruch Nachshon

A. Av - A Paradoxical Month

To ignore the paradox is to miss the truth.²

The three week fast that began on the 17 of *Tammuz*, continues into the month of *Av*. To most of us this seems a bit paradoxical as this period of mourning coincides with summer playtime and family fun. *Av* is a month riddled with paradoxical details and reveals the tension that paradox creates.

The name of the month literally means 'a father'. We see an example in Psalm 103:13, *K'rachem av al banim...* "As a father is merciful to his children, so has YHWH shown mercy to those who fear Him." We can rest in the knowledge that our lives are in the hands of a loving and faithful Father who has us securely in His care.

On the other hand, the 9th of *Av* – *Tisha b'Av* – is a day of deep mourning and fasting. It marks the destruction of both the First and Second Temples as well as the tragic exile of the majority of G-d's people from the Land in 70 AD. *Tisha b'Av* also commemorates the many persecutions and pogroms, Crusades and Inquisitions perpetrated against the Jews throughout the centuries that followed.

Interestingly, the ninth of *Av* always falls on the same day of the week as the first day of Passover of the same year. And yet, Passover is a festival of freedom and redemption while *Tisha b'Av* commemorates bondage and destruction.³ We can deduce that the matzah and bitter herbs of Passover, as well as representing the remembrance of slavery in Egypt, are also a reminder of the long and bitter exile from the Land of Israel.

It is only due to our Father's great mercy that the Jewish people have endured and survived much torment and persecution in foreign lands. In recent generations, G-d's people around the world have heard the sound of His great trumpet, *shofar*, calling them back to His Land where they belong. *Tisha b'Av*, however, is still observed with mourning and fasting for the full Redemption has not yet come and Israel continues to suffer unrelenting and egregious attacks from the enemy. Nonetheless, the hope of two

² Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, 10

³ Zvi Rysman, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Months*, Artscroll Series, NY, 2009, 168

thousand years has been fulfilled and in that we rejoice. Through all the long years of exile, at the conclusion of every Passover Seder the prayer of hope is proclaimed: *Le'Shana ha'ba'ah b'Yerushalayim!* "Next year in Jerusalem!" What added joy we experience as we now can say in Israel, "This year in Jerusalem!"

Pause and Reflect 1

Every great truth about G-d is a paradox.⁴

The Hebrew knew he did not know all the answers. His position was "under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 8:17), so his words were few (5:2). He refused to over-systematize or force harmonization on the enigmas of G-d's truth or puzzles of the universe. He realized that no one could straighten what G-d has made crooked (7:13). All things, therefore, did not need to be fully rational. The Hebrew mind was willing to accept the truths taught on both sides of the paradox; it recognized that mystery and apparent contradictions are often signs of the divine. Stated precisely, the Hebrews knew the wisdom of learning to trust in matters that they could not fully understand.⁵

[Note: This excerpt should also be read in the present tense. The Hebrew (person, mindset) knows that he does not know all the answers. Is willing, recognizes, etc.]

Av is a month split in two, the waxing moon one of mourning and sorrow, the waning moon one of comfort and love, two splits each a whole, creating a tension.

This paradoxical month is a perfect time to step out of our neat and ordered Greek perspective with its nicely tied down answers and to romance the paradoxical tensions of Hebraic thought. Unlike a dichotomy where one is split into two, a paradox allows two

⁴Graham Cook

⁵ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 152

to become one yet remain two - for example Yeshua both the 'Lamb of G-d'⁶ and the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah'⁷.

Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book...and, lo, in the midst of the throne...stood a Lamb as it had been slain.⁸

Or in Genesis where G-d takes one person - Adam - and makes two in order that two may become one.

The Hebrew mind could [can] handle this dynamic tension of the language of paradox, confident that "all is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven"^{9,10}.

(a) What happens when we try to put a logical straightjacket on Divine Paradox?

(b) What are some of the paradoxes of Yeshua which help you see Him as a man. Which ones help you see Him as divine?

The Semites of Bible times did not simply think Truth - they experienced truth. Truth is as much encounter as it is propositions. This experiential perspective on reality explains, in part, why Judaism never really developed vast systems of thought. It also allows us to understand how Judaism could live with the tensions and paradoxes surrounding block logic. To the Jew, the deed was [is, etc.] always more important than the creed. He was not stymied by language that appeared contradictory from a human point of view. Neither did he feel compelled to reconcile what seemed irreconcilable. He believed that G-d ultimately was greater than any human attempt at systematizing truth. "Walking in the truth" (2 John 4) and "living the truth" (1 John 1:6) were a higher priority than rationally analyzing the truth.

⁶ John 1:29

⁷ Revelation 5:5

⁸ Revelation 5:5-6

⁹ Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 33b

¹⁰ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 151-152

In the words of the renowned biblical scholar Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, "We [Jews] are practical. We are more interested in discovering what G-d wants man to do than we are in describing G-d's essence... As a teacher, I never try to solve questions because most questions are unsolvable." He concludes, "Judaism is never afraid of contradictions... it acknowledges that full reconciliation of the two is possible only in G-d. He is the coincidence of opposites."^{11 12}

(c) Within the church, how have paradoxical issues been a catalyst to people worshipping the Bible of G-d rather than the G-d of the Bible?

(d) How do paradoxes bring balance?

(e) How does G-d use paradox as an invitation to wrestle with Him?

(f) How can only paradox reveal the Divine?

We are back to back with *Elul* - our first month in which we met together with the King in the field. We have traveled together through the cycles of righteousness¹³ and are on the cusp of a new journey. This is a perfect time to look back in order to move forward.

(g) Take a glance back at each Feast and find a paradox within it. In the tension of each paradox, what truth do you discover?

- *Pesach* / Passover – deliverance and freedom.
- *Chag Hamotzi* / Unleavened Bread - salvation from bondage and sin.
- *Bikkurim* / FirstFruits – new life in the resurrected life of Yeshua the Messiah.
- *Shavuot* / Pentecost – covenant relationship, revelation of G-d and His Word, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ Quoted in Paul R. Carlson, *O Christian! O Jew!*, 142-43

¹² Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 153

¹³ See page 15.

- *Yom Teru'ah* / Rosh HaShana – honor and service to the King, in thought, word and deed.
- *Yom Kippur* / Atonement – repentance, atonement and reconciliation.
- *Sukkot* / Tabernacles – unity, intimacy, and joy.
- *Hanukkah* / Dedication – spiritual redemption, the victory of light over darkness, and purity over adulteration.
- *Purim* – physical redemption, the uniqueness and “choseness” of our physical selves.



B. AV - A Day of Love

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.¹⁴

The Hebrew idiom designating “paradox” (נְשִׂיָּאת הַפְּכוּיִם) also stems from the same root as *nasa* (*nun - sin - aleph*). Literally, this idiom means “lifting opposites,” implying that the ability to sustain a paradox (mental or otherwise) reflects an ability to hold and simultaneously carry apparent opposites in order to unite and synthesize them.

This is the implied reason that the Hebrew word for “marriage” (נִשְׂוִין) *nissuin*, which stems from the same root as *nasa*. In marriage, two that are separate are joined into one. Marriage requires each partner to carry this paradox. The secret

¹⁴ 2 Peter 3:8

ingredient of marriage and of all the meanings of *nasa* we have seen is this ability to lift up and synthesize opposites thereby creating a holy and profound union that can reflect G-d, the ultimate paradox.¹⁵

Although the first half of the month is marked with sadness, the second half is brightened with joy. The fifteenth of *Av* – *Tu b'Av* – was celebrated as a joyous festival hundreds of years before the First Temple was built.

An account in the book of Judges relates how certain men of the tribe of Benjamin, which was situated in the Jerusalem area, had committed acts of rape and murder against members of the other tribes. In response, the tribes gathered together and attacked and destroyed the small tribe of Benjamin. Only 600 men escaped the battle and fled to the cliffs of Rimmon, which are situated northeast of Jerusalem. Later the tribes repented of the severity of their action and they made peace with the Benjaminites. Realizing that the men now needed to find wives in order to build up the tribe once again, they advised them to go to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant was housed, and to attend the celebration of an annual agricultural feast. They advised, “Go and hide in the vineyards and watch; if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and seize each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and return to the land of Benjamin (Judges 21:20-21).

The celebration was that of *Tu b'Av*, a grape harvest, at which time the white squill blooms all over Israel. The tall tapered stems, covered with small white flowers, stand out brightly against the yellow and brown fields at the end of a long, hot summer. They are a clear season marker, for *Tu b'Av* signals the summer solstice and there is a subtle change as the days start to shorten and clouds begin to appear in the sky, announcing the approaching rains of winter. The virgin maidens, to reflect the blossoming white squills, would don white dresses and dance in the vineyards of Shiloh, and wedding matches were made. To this day the fifteenth of *Av* is celebrated in Israel as “Sweetheart’s Day”!

¹⁵ Harav Titzchak Ginsburgh, *Parshat Naso: The Flow of Paradox*

Pause and Reflect 2

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.¹⁶

The last weeks of *Av* are marked by harvest and romance. They act as a prelude to the month of *Elul* and to the fall feasts which prophetically herald the return of the “Lion of Judah” and the “Marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Yeshua took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). Covenant is a relationship of unconditional love. Yeshua sealed, as it were, the *ketubah*, the wedding document, of the Torah presented by G-d to His people Israel at Sinai, with his blood. The Word of G-d was filled with life - the water became wine - to renew the commitment of G-d to His people and to seal it in the hearts of all who would hear and receive it. The Bride and Groom become one, joined and sealed by the love and grace of the Father.

Below are details of the ancient Hebrew marriage ceremony. Please consider each in reference to the Lord's feasts - where do they fit in? What is the parallel of each detail to us, Yeshua's bride? Where are we in light of the times?

1. *Shiddukhin*¹⁷ - the Match.

This is the first stage in the marriage process. The father of the groom selects a bride for his son.

Rabbinic literature describes G-d as the supreme Matchmaker, for whom the making of a successful match is as hard as the parting of the Red Sea.¹⁸

¹⁶ Revelation 19:7

¹⁷ See Genesis 24:1-4

¹⁸ Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 2a

All part of the *shiddukhin* are the girl's drinking of the cup of wine offered by the hopeful groom to be (a sign that the bride accepts the proposal), *Mohar*¹⁹ (a payment of the bride price - paid by the groom's father), *Mattan*²⁰ (love gifts given by the groom to the bride), and *Shiluchim*²¹ (brides dowry - part of her inheritance - given to the bride by her father to equip her for her new life).

2. ***Kiddushin***²² - setting the couple aside in betrothal (*Irrusin*).

Kiddushin, properly an act of "sanctification" or "consecration." The basic meaning behind the term kiddushin is "be set apart," "be holy." Thus, from the Hebraic perspective, marriage is a "sacred bond," "a holy relationship," "an act of being set apart unto G-d and each other."²³

*Ketubah*²⁴ (marriage contract) is read to the bride before she makes her final commitment to the groom.

¹⁹ See Genesis 24:53

²⁰ See Genesis 34:12

²¹ Among ancient peoples, dowry is commonly conceived as a daughter's share of inheritance in her father's possession. The sons succeed their father; the daughters leave him. In lieu of succession, therefore, the daughters on leaving receive their share of inheritance. This is probably the conception of Shiluhim, sending the girl away from the parental estate, a settlement on her in lieu of inheritance. "Next to the idea of succession and in the course of time superseding it, is the thought that dowry is a parental obligation in the interest of attracting suitors to the girls... One may seriously doubt, however, whether this particular conception of dowry is not altogether post-Biblical, for in Biblical days the position of the Jewish woman was such that bribes and baits were not offered to suitors but taken from them. The conception of dowry as an inducement to marriage is post-Biblical, and the duty upon the father to give dowry in that interest is one imposed on him by late tannatic legislation. Louis M. Epstein, *The Jewish Marriage Contract*, 90-91

²² See Exodus 19:10

²³ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 205

²⁴ Though the Bible does not specifically mention the marriage contract in connection with Jewish weddings, evidence of its existence as early as the fifth century B.C. may be found in contracts of this type coming from Elephantine in Egypt (cf. also Tob. 7:12-15). Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 204

3. *Nissu'in* - under the *chuppah*²⁵ (covering or protection) - the Marriage Ceremony.

In modern Hebrew, *nissu'in* is one of the several words translated “marriage.” *Nissu'in*, and the related form *nasu*, “married,” derive from the verb *nasa* - to lift up, to bear, to carry. *Nissu'in* suggests exactly the opposite of putting someone down. Indeed, marriage is graphically portrayed as lifting the other up. This concept is beautifully dramatized at traditional Jewish Weddings. After the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom are lifted up on chairs by their guests to the accompaniment of exuberant singing and dancing. Furthermore, *nissu'in* recalls a period in Jewish history when the people of a town would carry (*nasa*) the bride on a carriage from the home of her parents to her new home with her groom.²⁶

“And there was evening, and there was morning, one day.”²⁷

The evening before, or the morning of their meeting in the *chuppah*, the couple would, separately!, enter a *mikvah* (ritual immersion pool) as a symbol of ‘dying’ to their old life as a single person and emerging into their new life of covenant marriage.

As another ‘seal’ of this new life the bride and groom, in Jewish weddings today, share two cups of wine.

The joint partaking of the common cup in the modern Jewish marriage ceremony is a symbolic act on the part of the couple. It is a reminder that two individual lives have now, in some new way, become one...

The first cup is called the ‘cup of joy.’ It reminds the couple that when joys in life are shared, they are doubled. The second cup is the ‘cup of sacrifice.’ In the midst of their celebration, the bride and groom are sobered by recognizing that

²⁵ See Joel 1:15

Chuppah symbolizes the groom's home, and the bride's new domain. More specifically, the chuppah symbolizes the bridal chamber, where the marital act was consummated in ancient times. Maurice Lamm, *The Bridal Canopy (Chuppah)*

²⁶ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 213

²⁷ Genesis 1:5

burdens and problems will someday come into their marriage. But if these troubles are shared, they are halved...²⁸

4. **Mishteh** (derived from the verb *shatah* - to drink) - The Wedding Feast.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of G-d."²⁹

The use of wine at a Jewish wedding, as on the weekly Sabbath, symbolizes the sanctifying and separating of these institutions to G-d... it's special use in the life of G-d's covenant people must not be quickly or emotionally brushed aside.³⁰

A marriage feast was celebrated for seven days. Today the couple are invited to the homes of friends and family each evening. The record in the gospel of John seems to indicate that the family home would remain the center of the weeklong celebration.

From John Gill's commentary on John 2:6:

...so that such of these vessels, that held two of these measures, contained nine gallons, and such as held three of them, thirteen gallons and a half; and six of these contained a large quantity of wine, one with another: and which makes the following miracle the greater; and shows the liberality of Christ the more, in providing for the following days of the feast, for a marriage was kept seven days³¹; and for the family, some time after it was over.



²⁸ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 210-211

²⁹ Revelation 18:9

³⁰ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 210

³¹ Maimon.Hilchot *Ishot*, c. 10. sect. 12, 13

B. Shimon and Judgement

In keeping with the initial sadness of the month is the fact that the tribe of *Shimon* (Simeon), associated with *Av*, is the only tribe that was not blessed by Jacob on his deathbed or later by Moses. Jacob denounces both Shimon and Levi for their rage and murderous attack on the town of Shechem to avenge the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 49:5-7). Levi was redeemed and blessed by Moses, but Shimon forfeited this blessing due to the tribe's flagrant immoral conduct with the foreign women at Shittim (Numbers 25:1-6, 17). Later, once established in the Land, this behavior also cost the tribe the privilege of ever having a judge of Israel appointed from their ranks.³²

Ironically, in Jewish commentary it is considered that all Shimon's deeds were motivated by a standard of strict justice. He judged others and easily found them guilty. It is considered that it was he who "sentenced" his brother Joseph and threw him in the pit (Genesis 37:19-20). This is highlighted when the brothers first appear before Joseph, now Viceroy of Egypt, and Shimon is the only one he holds back as a hostage. Also, in judging Shechem guilty, Shimon instigated the retaliation and attack in angry vengeance. Although he may have had a keen sense of justice, it is this trait of anger that precludes Shimon and his tribe from producing a true judge in Israel.

Anger will always distort any fair and balanced judgment. Anger also prevents a person from truly rejoicing in one's service and worship of the Lord, and eventually can cause one to become isolated from other people. Justice, to be true, must be tempered with mercy and weighed from a basis of trust and joy in the Lord. We can therefore appreciate the wisdom of Jacob when he cannot bless the judgmental anger of this tribe and he says: "I will separate them within Jacob, and I will disperse them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7). Their hope lay in that while mingling with the other tribes their anger might be diffused and they might learn to interact with others in peace and to serve the Lord with joy.

The month of *Av* ultimately represents the balance of elements we deal with constantly on our journey through life – sadness and joy, justice and mercy, anger and grace, discord and unity, what is hidden and what is revealed. Undergirding us through it all is the knowledge that our Father is in control and He is preparing the way before us. In His

³² Zvi Rysman, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Months*, 170

abundant love and mercy He is bringing us to full Redemption, when, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah, “death will be swallowed up forever and the reproach of His people He will take away from all the earth” (25:8). His Kingdom will be established in the earth and the dwelling of G-d will rest in Jerusalem and He will be with those who are His, and “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Thus, ultimately, the month of *Av* celebrates the constant truth of new life in the One who is the Source of all life. Interestingly, in rabbinic literature *Tisha b’Av*, the day of great mourning, is the date reckoned to be the birth date of the Messiah – the Savior-King who brings new life. We can indeed rejoice in “the Lamb in the midst of the throne” who is our Shepherd and who guides us to “springs of living water” that bring mercy, grace, hope and truth (Revelation 7:17).

Pause and Reflect 4

He is a “coming-down” G-d, passionate in pursuit of a people to bear His name and partner with Him in His redemptive agenda for the earth.³³

We hear the words of our Shepherd, “follow me.” But somehow, when we become quiet and listen to the sound of Yeshua’s sandaled feet, we realize that He is behind us rather than before us. To our surprise, rather than following, we are being pursued.

Not my enemies, but goodness and grace shall pursue me all the days of my life..³⁴

To be pursued implies that we have turned or moved away. This month of the Father acts as a prelude to *Elul*. It helps prepare our hearts for the season of *teshuvah* (repentance) that approaches.

³³ Dwight Pryor, *G-d in Pursuit of a People*

³⁴ Psalm 26:3

G-d pursues me everywhere,
Enmeshes me in glances,
And blinds my sightless back like flaming sun.

G-d, like a forest dense, pursues me.
My lips are ever tender, mute, so amazed,
So like a child lost in an ancient sacred grove.

G-d pursues me like a silent shudder.
I wish for tranquility and rest -- He urges; come!
And see -- how visions walk like the homeless on the streets.

My thoughts walk about like a vagrant mystery --
Walks through the world's long corridor.
At times I see G-d's featureless face hovering over me.

G-d pursues me in the streetcars and cafes
Every shining apple is my crystal sphere to see
How mysteries are born and vision came to be.³⁵

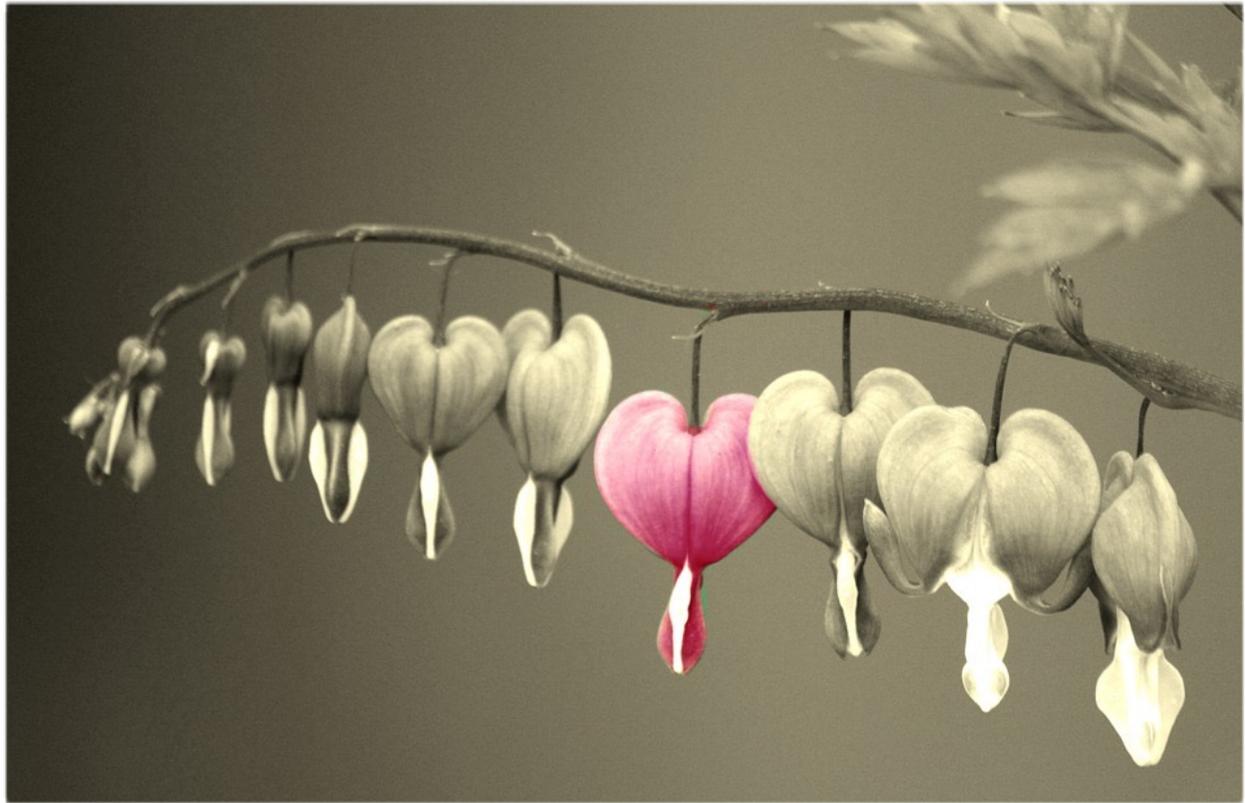
What does it mean to you, that G-d is passionate about you and actively pursuing³⁶ you? How does that understanding affect your daily repentance?



³⁵ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *G-d Pursues Me Everywhere*

This poem is often read on *Tisha B'Av* - the ninth of *Av* - the most sorrowful day of the three weeks of sorrow beginning in the month of Tammuz.

³⁶ This is a much stronger word than implied in many translations. The Hebrew word is *radaph* and means to pursue ardently, to run after, to chase.



For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers, neither what exists nor what is coming, neither powers above nor powers below, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of G-d which comes to us through the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord.³⁷

³⁷ Romans 8:38-39

"He leads me in cycles of righteousness, for His Name's sake." Psalm 23:3

"We are set free by the blood of the Lamb, Yeshua, to walk in the Spirit of grace in paths of righteousness, to the glory of the Father." Dwight A. Pryor



"Be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new nature (your redeemed self) created in God's image, in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 4:23-24