

I LOVE YOU AND I WILL NOT BE DISGUSTED BY YOU

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Bechukosai

I Love You and I Will Not Be Disgusted by You

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 98, "Chermei Tzibur" A Ban on Living in Germany? Good Shabbos!

This week's parsha contains the first of the two Tochachas [Chastisements] that are present in the Torah. G-d warns us about what will be if we do not keep the Torah. The curses enumerated are very graphic - and if one, after hearing of all the terrible tragedies which have befallen the Jewish people, now has doubts about Emunah [faith (in G-d)], all he has to do is read this chapter and he will realize that everything that has been warned of in these curses has unfortunately been fulfilled. Unbelievable descriptions such as women having to eat their children in order to survive are things that have unfortunately occurred in our own lifetime.

But, before the Tochacha begins, there is a relatively small parsha of Bracha [Blessing] -- what will be if we keep the mitzvos. The Torah enumerates many wonderful things. We will have plenty, there will be peace in the land, we will be able to conquer our enemies, we will become populous and prosperous -- all the wonderful things.

And then G-d promises us that He will live with us: "And I will place my Mishkan in your midst..." [Vayikra 26:11] (This is a blessing, that unfortunately, after 2000 years of not having a Beis HaMikdash, we cannot even contemplate; but it is a tremendous blessing to be able to feel G-d's holiness in our midst.) However, that same pasuk which begins by speaking of G-d placing His Mishkan in our midst ends with the words "...and I will not detest you" (v'lo sig-al nafshi eschem).

The commentaries are bothered by this pasuk; it does not seem to make any sense. When G-d is telling us how much He loves us and He is promising us all the Brochos, is this the place to conclude with the sentiment "I will not despise you?"

Imagine a fellow proposes to a girl. After going out on a number of dates, he is finally ready to "pop

the big question." He begins, "I am going to love you, I am going to cherish you, I am going to take care of you..." and then he concludes, "...and I am not going to be disgusted by you either." Imagine... How far would that would get him?

That, at first glance, would seem to be what this pasuk is saying. The words "sig-al nafshi" have connotations of being nauseating and despicable! What does the pasuk mean?

I saw a beautiful insight in the Shemen HaTov. The Shemen HaTov explains that it is a wonderful thing when two people love each other. However, unfortunately, we know that when two people have loved each other and then they fall apart, there is no greater hatred than love spurned.

In general, people who divorce are unfortunately the best example of people who hate each other. People who loved each other and shared everything, but Heaven Forbid get divorced, are at war with each other. Too often, they get down in the gutter and try to destroy each other. Nothing is worse than former lovers who now hate each other.

This pasuk is saying that G-d is promising that he will love and cherish and take care of the Jewish people. However, G-d prophesizes that He Knows that they will not be faithful and He will have to chase them out of Eretz Yisroel. The Sages and the Medrashim use the analogy of a husband and wife who have to separate to explain G-d's need to drive the Jewish people out of their land.

G-d then informs us that when He splits with us -- it will not be a bitter divorce. Even then, I will never come to hate you. I will never detest you. Even when I have to send you out and we need to -- so to speak -- divorce, I will always love you, I will never detest you. This is the greatest blessing.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin [7a] gives a powerful description: "When our love was strong, we could have slept on the blade of a sword, but now that our love is not strong there is no bed in the world that is big enough to hold us both."

G-d however says, that is not the way it will be when He finds it necessary to discipline the Jewish people. He will never detest us. We will always be special. This is a special Bracha. That is why it appears in the Brochos and not in the Curses.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion in this series are:

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