



**Parshat Noah**  
**Isaiah 54:1 - 55:5**  
**October 16, 2015 / 26 Tishre 5775**

Did you know that the prophet Isaiah was a crooner? Look at these timeless lyrics:

***Ki he-harim yamushu, v'hag'va'ot t'mutena*** – For the mountains may move, and the hills be shaken / ***V'chaldi mei-itech lo yamush*** – But My love will never move from you. ***U-v'rit shlomi lo tamut, amar M'rachameich Adonai*** – Nor shall My covenant of friendship be shaken, says Adonai, who accepts you back with love” (Isaiah 54:10, from this week’s haftarah for Parashat Noah).

Wait, you may ask: Was that Isaiah, or was it George and Ira Gershwin? One of my Bible professors at the Jewish Theological Seminary once remarked that these same lyrics were immortalized by the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, and others. Here’s a different translation of the Hebrew above:

“In time, the Rockies may crumble, Gibraltar may tumble – they’re only made of clay... But OUR LOVE IS HERE TO STAY.”

Does that sound more familiar? Do you see the resemblance? It’s not just the lyric that is timeless—the lyric itself is about the sentiment of timelessness. Do we not all long for the unending, limitless, unconditional love that Isaiah, Ella, and others describe? In Judaism, we have a word for this type of boundless love: CHESSED. (It’s in Isaiah’s original as “chaldi – My [God’s] love.”)

When we talk about chessed, this special love that God has for us, and that we have for some of our dearest loved ones – this is not something we take lightly. Think about it: Who are the people whom you would love, no matter what? Who are the people whose love you can count on, similarly regardless of any wrongdoing or disappointment you may have committed?

Now, sharing chessed, the kind of love that is “here to stay,” does NOT always mean that we will agree with the person we love so deeply in this way. It does NOT mean that we will never get angry at that person. Indeed, I know two sisters who are famous for screaming at one another so fiercely – but who maintain that they can ONLY do this BECAUSE they both understand that it is a given, how absolute their love is for one another!

God is saying (through Isaiah’s prophecy), “I will love you no matter what. As if I were your Parent, you will drive Me crazy, we will have our differences, we may not speak for a bit – but

ultimately, I will love you. And even if you are angry and hurt and not ready to come back to Me, you can always know that I will love you.” And, like this deep, timeless love between people, God only asks one thing of us: That ultimately, we DO try to come back. We do attempt to return, and reconcile – because the love is more important than any differences that may come between.

Do we have relationships whose foundational bedrock has crumbled? Can we shore them up, re-affirming that love that Isaiah and Gershwin both described? We all have relationships that are in need of a tune-up. Many of us have relationships that are in need of a complete overhaul. And unfortunately, as we know, some human relationships are irreparable. The beauty of Isaiah's message is the reminder that our relationship with God can be made whole again. God accepts us back with chessed, with a warm embrace of unending love.

I pray that as we come out of the holiday season and into a New Year of re-birth and renewal, that we can join Isaiah and those other crooners, to re-kindle those relationships, those loves that are indeed, “here to stay.”

*This week's Unraveller is provided by Rabbi Eric Yanoff, Rabbi at Adath Israel, Merion Station, PA.*

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