

Who is Our First Love?

After these many weeks of messages which have been designed by ABBA B'Shamayim for teaching, correction and reproving, it is time for something less biting and more heart-warming. So today's message from Abba is entitled, *Who is Our First Love?*

Abba Father, You truly are the perfect Father; You love Your children with a love unfathomable by those who cling to You. I'm sure we mere mortals could not comprehend Your complete love, even though You explain and show it to us, which You do both through revelation and through Torah. Help us today, please, to draw closer to you and become more intimate with you, as Your Word is shared with us today. In your blessed Name we pray.

Let's begin today's message with a word from Adonai Elohim Tzivaot. I ask you to close your eyes and put your name in the blank, before His proclamation: *You belong to Me.* (paraphrase of 1 John 4:4) In 1 John 4, we read, *You, children, are from God and have overcome the false prophets, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* (1 John 4:4) What does it mean to belong to Adonai? First, it is vital to know we are His by His initiative, not ours. How do we know this? First we go to Genesis 17, where we are told, *I am establishing my covenant between Me and you, along with your descendants after you, generation after generation, as an everlasting covenant, to be God for you and for your descendants after you.* (Genesis 17:7) He has called us to be His children, through the Covenant He made with Avraham, our Patriarch. And then we read in John 1, *But to as many as did receive him, to those who put their trust in his person and power, he gave the right to become children of God, not because of bloodline,*

physical impulse or human intention, but because of God. (John 1:12,13) We who have received Him, which means He placed Himself on our paths, we, who have placed our trust in Him, have received the honour and distinction of being called His children. Growing up in a 'Christian Home' does not make us Believers. Remember Adonai does not have grandchildren, only children, and coming into His family requires us to respond to His initial seeking of us. What a wonderful message of hope, knowing His Work has brought us into His promise of Salvation, as we see in 1 Peter 1, *Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope.*

I have engraved you on the palms of my hands (Isaiah 49:16) What does it mean to be engraved into Adonai's Palm? Just as a tattoo is a permanent inscription of ink into skin, so we have been indelibly reproduced into the palms of Our Abba's hands – we will never be forgotten by Him, for each one of us who claims Him as our Abba, is right there for Him to see. There is no mistaking our relationship with Him. This is the ultimate in intimate connection; He loves us so much, He never wishes to forget us or lose touch with us and, so, He engraved or carved our names into His body. Do you understand how intimate this action is? Even though we may forget Him from time-to-time or take Him for granted, He will never forget us nor take us for granted. And place this into your heart; before He wrote engraved us into the palms of His hands, He knew what sins we would commit; He knew how we would hurt Him and others around us and, yet, He took you and me into His life and made us so special in His eyes, He engraved us, not just our names but us, into the palms of His hand. HalleluYah!

I have molded you in the secret of the earth. (paraphrase of psalm 139:15)
King David spoke for all of us, when he penned, *My bones were not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.* (Psalm 139:15) I find it immensely comfortable, knowing I have been made in the image of My Abba, the Ruler of the universe, in such a way as to be both unique and in His spiritual Image. He has molded each one of us in this way, from the sacred and pure clay of creation.

The word picture of the potter and His clay is one with rich and fulfilling meaning to us all; the first instance of this image may be found in Genesis 2, where, *ADONAI, God, formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living being.* (Genesis 2:5) Isaiah 29 puts our being directly into the ownership of the Almighty God, *Is the potter not better than the clay? Does something made say of its maker, "He didn't make me"? Does the product say of its producer, "He has no discernment"?* (Isaiah 29:16) Clearly, when Adonai Elohim says to us, *You belong to Me*, we are His possession, the product of the Creation of His hands. Does that convey to you the intimacy of His relationship with us? Could there be any clearer expression of how He wishes to relate to us? Forget all the theology, all the rhetoric of our age and of ages past – merely place this idea of His having created each and every one of us, forming us in secret, molding each one of us in secret, in the potter's private place.

If you have ever made anything you value, with your own hands, do you remember that moment of delight, when you examined it and proclaimed it to be the best formed pot, jewelry box, origami bird, original oil painting, glass sculpture, or whatever you were making? Can you imagine that moment of

delight, of sheer joy, when Adonai Elohim made you and me and declared us to be perfect in His sight? And indeed, that is how He viewed us, when we were formed, no matter what deviation from the norm of society with which we came into this world.

Just last week, I read in the Free Press, the obituary of Alexander “Sandy” Turnbull, an 83 year-old man. This was not just any obituary, however; this was the life story of a man with developmental delays who took it upon himself to do God’s work. Several times per month, he would go to Grant Park Mall and pass out pencils to adults and quarters to children. When asked what he was doing, Sandy would reply, “I’m praying for you; it’s my job”. God uses us with the special skills or attributes He has given us.

When our human nature takes control and we start walking our own ways, our own paths without Him, can you imagine the heartbreak He feels? But listen to the words of His prophet, Isaiah, as he pleads on our behalf, *But now, ADONAI, you are our father; we are the clay, you are our potter; and we are all the work of your hands. Do not be so very angry, ADONAI! Don’t remember crime forever. Look, please, we are all your people.* (Isaiah 64:7,8) Hear the pleading to reform us, to reshape us into His image once more, just as the potter reforms the misshapen clay, before it is discarded forever. And He has reformed each one of us here today; each one who has called out to Him for forgiveness and redemption. He loves us so much, He sent Himself into the body of a man, Adonai Yeshua, Who took on our sins, placed upon Himself the punishments for our iniquities. He loves us so much, He was willing to suffer the cruelty of the whip and the piercing pain of the nails and the suffocating crush of the execution stake. **How much Love is that?**

In the Song of Solomon, we read the line, *My darling is mine, and I am his.* (Song of Solomon 2:16) In this short, eight chapter, book of praise, we hear Adonai Yeshua Himself speaking to His bride, the one to whom He has become betrothed. Many spiritual leaders will not touch this book, because of its erotic nature. What they fail to realize is God's Love **is** erotic; it is filled with passion. His love for us is not a platonic, passionless love many of the religious would want us to believe it to be. It follows the tradition of Biblical weddings.

We need look no further than Genesis, to see the three steps of a biblical wedding: first, we look to Isaac and Rebecca – Stage One is the signing of the Ketubah, the covenant of marriage. This was accomplished when Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, spoke with Rebecca's brother, Lavan. At the moment Lavan and B'tu'el said to Eliezer, *Since this comes from ADONAI, we can't say anything to you either bad or good. Rivkah is here in front of you; take her and go. Let her be your master's son's wife, as ADONAI has said,* (Genesis 24:50,51) the Ketubah was signed orally. At this point they were 100% married and only a divorce, if it happened to exist at that time, could separate them. As part of the Ketubah ceremony, the bride price was negotiated. In Isaac's marriage to Rebecca, Avraham provided a very handsome bride price to Lavan and B'tu'el, a treasure so great, they didn't complain or negotiate for more.

The second stage of a biblical wedding was consummation. Here, the bride and groom went into a private place and consummated their union, signifying to Adonai and man they were one flesh. This was followed by a celebration, a feast lasting usually many days. This was the process followed by Ya'akov, when he married Leah. The seven days of feasting, following their consummation, also celebrated the consummation of Ya'akov's marriage to Rachel.

And where are we in the stages of our marriage to Adonai Elohim Tzivaot. Beloved, we are still in the betrothal stage. The Ketubah, the Marriage Covenant, was prepared for us and we agreed to it at the base of Mt. Sinai, as we read in Exodus 19: *Moshe came, summoned the leaders of the people and presented them with all these words which ADONAI had ordered him to say. All the people answered as one, "Everything ADONAI has said, we will do."* (Exodus 19:7,8) At that moment we became betrothed to Him and, within the boundaries of Scripture, were completely married, as we read in Isaiah 54: *For your husband is your Maker, ADONAI-Tzva'ot is his name. The Holy One of Isra'el is your Redeemer.* (Isaiah 54:4) And what was the bride price? Once again, what God gave for our hand in marriage was so great, such a magnificent treasure which could never be replicated nor imitated was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Adonai Yeshua – the Promise of Eternal Life with our Husband. Listen to what is shared with us in Jude 1, *But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith, and pray in union with the Ruach HaKadosh. Thus keep yourselves in God's love, as you wait for our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to give you the mercy that leads to eternal life.* (Jude 1:20,21) Will there be consummation? Absolutely there will be; what we don't know, though, is the form in which our consummation with Adonai Yeshua will occur. Listen to what we are told in Revelation 19, *For the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb, and his Bride has prepared herself - fine linen, bright and clean has been given her to wear.* (Revelation 19:7,8)

The third and final stage of the wedding ceremony will be the wedding feast. Once more we journey to Revelation 19, *The angel said to me, "Write: 'How*

blessed are those who have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb!"

(Revelation 19:9) Following the biblical process of wedding, the feast of the Lamb and His Bride will occur after the consummation. How blessed we will be, when we gather with all others who constitute the Bride of Adonai Yeshua, to celebrate our being wed to Adonai Yeshua, the Holy One of Israel, the Ruler of the universe.

You belong to My intimate home (Paraphrase of Ephesians 2:6,7) What does it mean to belong to His intimate home? Adonai Yeshua provides us with a very strong clue, when He said to His disciples, at the moment of His ascension, as we read in John 14: *Since I am going and preparing a place for you, I will return to take you with me; so that where I am, you may be also.* (John 14:3) The actual wording used by Rav Sha'ul in Ephesians 2 is, *God raised us up with the Messiah Yeshua and seated us with him in heaven, in order to exhibit in the ages to come how infinitely rich is his grace, how great is his kindness toward us who are united with the Messiah Yeshua.* (Ephesians 2: 6,7) Dear Ones, we do belong to Adonai's intimate home; He has prepared a place for us and we will be going there, when our Dear Husband comes for us. In the meantime, like the five sensible bridesmaids in Adonai Yeshua's parable, found in Matthew 25, we will be waiting anxiously and intentional in our anticipation of His return. We will be focused on being salt and light for Him, helping others recognize their place in His Eternal Kingdom.

Finally, it is important to hear His promise: *I will be faithful to you.* (paraphrase of Psalm 91:4) Listen to His promise, in Psalm 91: *He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and protection.* (Psalm 91:4) This is a promise we may count on, for He

assured us, (*Adonai*) *Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever.*

(Hebrews 13:8) His love for us will outlast the earth and the heavens; His love is eternal and we may absorb that promise into our hearts, minds and souls, recognizing He will always be there for us, just as He has always been there for us and is there for us right this very moment. Our First Love is waiting to come collect His bride.

Until that moment, Beloved,, let's listen to the depth and breadth of His Love for us:

You are My child

You are written in the palms of My hand

I have molded you in the secret of the earth

I have knitted you together in your mother's womb

You belong to Me.

I am yours; you are Mine.

I have called you from eternity and you are the one who is held safe and embraced in love from eternity to eternity.

You belong to Me; and I am holding you safe and I want you to know that whatever happens to you, I am always there.

I was always there; I am always there; I will always be there and hold you in my embrace.

You are Mine.

You are My child.

You belong to my home. You belong to my intimate life and I will never let you go.

I will be faithful to you.

Abba Father, our great and Loving Abba. How we long to be held close to you, within the protection of your Love. Until that day, we know we can count on your promises to keep us safe, even to the point of death. We know You will keep your promises to us, for that is Who You are. I pray we may continue serving You in all the ways You would have us serve You. Help us to be Your light to the nations, providing ways through which they may draw closer to Your Torah, Your Truth, Your Faithful Love. In Your precious Name we pray.