

High Holyday Prayer Focus: the 13 Attributes of Compassion

With Rabbi Josh Jacobs-Velde

Text 1) Exodus 33:17-23 (trans. is

mostly JPS)

(17) And YHWH said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have known you by name.” (18) He said, “Oh, let me behold Your Presence!” (19) And He answered, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name YHWH, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show. (20) But,” He said, “you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live.”

(21) And YHWH said, “See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock (22) and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. (23) Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen.”

שמות ל"ג:י"ז-כ"ג

(יז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה גַם
אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעֲשֶׂה
כִּי־מָצָאתָ חוֹן בְּעֵינַי וְאִדְעָה בְּשֵׁם: (יח)
וַיֹּאמֶר הַרְאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבוֹדְךָ: (יט)
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶעְבִּיר כָּל־טוֹבִי עַל־פְּנֶיךָ
וְקִרְאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְחִנַּתִּי
אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר
אֲרַחֵם: (כ) וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת
אֶת־פָּנַי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי:

(כא) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי
וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל־הַצּוּר: (כב) וְהָיָה בְּעַבְרֹת
כַּבְּדִי וְשִׁמְתִיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשִׁכַּתִּי
כַּפֵּי עֲלֶיךָ עַד־עֲבָרִי: (כג) וְהִסְרֹתִי
אֶת־כַּפֵּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֵרַי וּפְנֵי לֹא
יִרְאוּ: (ד)

Exodus 34:1-9

1) And YHWH said to Moses: “Carve two tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered. (2) Be ready by morning, and in the morning come up to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to Me, on the top of the mountain. (3) No one else shall come up with you, and no one else shall be seen anywhere on the mountain; neither shall the flocks and the herds graze at the foot of this mountain.” (4) So Moses carved two tablets of stone, like the first, and early in the morning he went up on Mount Sinai, as YHWH had commanded him, taking the two stone tablets with him.

(5) And YHWH came down in a cloud; He/he stood with Him/him there, and proclaimed the name YHWH. (6) And YHWH passed before him and proclaimed: “YHWH! YHWH! EL compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, (7) extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity

שמות ל"ד:א'-ט'

(א) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פְּסֹל־לָךְ שְׁנַי־לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּפָרָאשִׁנַּיִם וְכַתְּבֵתְיָ עַל־הַלַּחַת אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל־הַלַּחַת הָרִאשׁוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַרְתָּ: (ב) וְהָיָה נָכוֹן לִבְקֹר וְעַלִּיתָ בִּבְקֹר אֶל־הָרַ סִינַי וְנִצַּבְתָּ לִּי שָׁם עַל־רֹאשׁ הָהָר: (ג) וְאִישׁ לֹא־יַעֲלֶה עִמָּךְ וְגַם־אִישׁ אֶל־יְרֵא בְּכָל־הָהָר גַּם־הַצֹּאֵן וְהַבְּקָר אֶל־יָרְעוּ אֶל־מֹול הָהָר הַהוּא: (ד) וַיִּפְסֹל שְׁנַי־לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּפָרָאשִׁנַּיִם וַיִּשְׁפֹּם מֹשֶׁה בִּבְקֹר וַיַּעַל אֶל־הָרַ סִינַי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ שְׁנַי לַחַת אֲבָנִים:

(ה) וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: (ו) וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה וְעַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה וְיְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְתַגּוּן אַרְוֵה אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חַסֵּד וְאַמֶּת | (ז) נִצָּר חַסֵּד לְאֱלֹפִים נִשְׂא עֲוֹן וּפְשָׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פִקּוּד | עֲוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל־בְּנֵי וְעַל־בְּנֵי עַל־שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל־רַבְעִים:

of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations.”

(8) Moses hastened to bow low to the ground in homage, (9) and said, “If I have gained Your favor, Adonai, pray, let Adonai go in our midst, even though this is a stiff-necked people. **Pardon our iniquity and our sin**, and take us for Your own!”

(ח) וַיִּמְהַר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְדוּ אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה׃
(ט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי מִצְּאֵתִי יְהוָה בְּעֵינָיִךְ
אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה־נָּא אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבָּנוּ כִּי
עִם־קִשְׁי־עַרְףְּךָ הוּא וְסָלַחְתָּ לְעֹונָנוּ
וּלְחַטֹּאתֵינוּ וּנְחַלְתָּנוּ׃

Text 2

1) יְהוָה

2) יְהוָה

3) אֵל (general name for God, not specifically Jewish)

4) רַחוּם (compassionate, connected to “*rechem/womb*”)

5) וְחַנּוּן (gracious, giving freely of favor/*chinam*)

6) אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם (patient/slow to anger, lit. “long-nosed”)

7) וְרַב־חַסֵּד (abundant in kindness/love)

8) וְאֱמֶת (and truth)

9) נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפֵיִם (extending kindness/love to the thousandth generation)

10) נֹשֵׂא עֲוֹן (forgiving sin/misdeed, lit. “carrying” sin, wrongs done knowingly)

11) וְפֹשֵׁעַ (and [forgiving] rebellious misdeeds)

12) וְחַטָּאָה (and [forgiving] unintentional sin)

13) וְנִקְיָה (and cleansing/making pure)

Text 3

ללכת בכל דרכיו - אלו דרכי הקב"ה, שנ' (שמות לד) ה' ה' אל רחום וחנון, ארץ אפים ורב חסד ואמת, נוצר חסד לאלפים, נושא עון ופשע וחטאה ונקה... וכי היאך אפשר לו

לאדם להיקרא בשמו של הקב"ה? אלא מה המקום נקרא רחום וחנון - אף אתה הוי רחום
וחנון ועשה מתנת חנם לכל. מה הקב"ה נקרא צדיק, שנ' (תהלים קמה) צדיק ה' בכל
דרכיו וחסיד בכל מעשיו - אף אתה הוי צדיק. הקב"ה נקרא חסיד, שנאמ' וחסיד בכל
מעשיו - אף אתה הוי חסיד...

(Devarim 11:22) "to walk in God's ways": What are the ways of the Holy Blessed One? (Shemot 34:6-7) "YHVH, YHVH, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in love and truth, extending lovingkindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving transgression, offense, and sin, and cleansing This means that just as *HaMakom* (the Omnipresent, the Place) is called "compassionate and gracious," you, too, be compassionate and gracious, and give freely to all. Just as the Blessed Holy One is called righteous/just (*tzadik*) as it says "righteous in all God's ways" (*Ashrey/Ps. 145:17*) so you too must be righteous. Just as the Blessed Holy One is loving, as it says "loving in all God's actions" (*ibid.*) you too must be loving. (*Midrash Sifre, Deuteronomy 49, 3rd century CE, Israel/Bavel*)