

I Love You Lord

♪ *I love You Lord, and I lift my voice to worship You. O my soul rejoice! Take joy my King in what You hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear* ♪” (Laurie Adams-Klein, 1978)

The year 2022 is around the corner. Have you thought about your *new year’s resolutions*? What should we consider doing in this pivotal new year? May 2020 signaled a new normal in the life of our congregation. In this coming year, at the deepest level possible, shouldn’t we really ask *Do I really really love You, Yeshua*? It is possible that we get into the *doing and living* a Messianic Lifestyle in such a committed way that our most intimate feelings of love get *concealed* and *wane*? How am I *Abiding in You*?

The fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John details how *Yeshua* felt about love – His love and His Father’s love. Our Lord and Master said that we are to keep His commandments the same way that He kept His Father’s commandments so we can stay in His love:

9“Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love! 10If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. 11These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be full. 12“This is My commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. 14You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15“I am no longer calling you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. Now I have called you friends, because everything I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16“You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I selected you so that you would go and produce fruit, and your fruit would remain. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. 17“These things I command you, so that you may love one another” (John 15:9-17).

Clearly, *Yeshua* gave us a pattern for loving Him, full of His joy and in the fellowship of true friendship, even in the face of losing our own lives. The pattern of love includes keeping His (and His Father’s) commandments, fruit bearing, and communicating with the Father in such a way that *“the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name”*. Such communication is characteristic of sons and daughters (very intimate family members), and not of servants. No wonder Scripture states we are to *“love the Lord your God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.”* This is part of the first and great commandment.

BTW, the word translated *friend* in John 15:14-15 is the Greek word *philos* (Strong’s 5384) which means: *‘dear and friend, actively, fond.’* To find the corresponding Hebrew word, we consider James 2:23: *“The Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘and he (Abraham) was called God’s friend.’”* (*“Are You not our God who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and gave it to the descendants of Your friend Abraham forever (Abraham ohabcha b’Elohim Leolam)?”* (2 Chro. 20:7) This expression, *Friend of God*, is also found in Isaiah 41:8: *“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, My friend.”* The word translated *my friend* (i.e., *God’s friend*) comes from the *Paal Hebrew* verb *ahav* (אהב) which means to have affection for. What a privilege to be able to make and have friends!

When we were teens making and having friends meant everything. We delighted ourselves in many friends and we felt like those friends would be with us forever. I had many, many friends in High School but I do not remember many of their names today. When I look at my HS yearbook, I often remind myself: *that was you and those were your friends...* Really? How come I do not remember any of them? What happened? I must be losing it. The truth is that I haven’t remembered them since I was in college. I did see my high school friends on the summer of 2015 but only connected with a small few.

I was left to ask *were they really my friends*? Yes, they were, but at a much lower level of friendship. Realizing that friendships are arranged in levels was a total surprise to me. Being the passionate individual

that I am (and I have lots of company in *Kol Simcha*) when I gave myself to a friend, I did it with all my energy! Discovering that not everyone will ultimately be a close or an intimate friend was a total surprise.

Are we really *Yeshua's* (and *Adonai's*) friends? Scripture says we are. At what level will we be pleased with our friendship with Him? Can we be discerning and strive to become a friend of God at the deepest possible level forever? Are we also one another's friends, striving together to grow in friendship and love? I believe so. Thus, as we approach 2022 let us consider our *friendships*, those we have with one another, with our family members, and with God.

The Modern Hebrew word for friend, *chaver*, was made popular throughout the world by President Bill Clinton in his eulogy for Israeli Prime Minister *Yitzhak Rabin: Shalom, chaver* (Goodbye friend). Are we really *chaverim* at *Kol Simcha*? I want to think so. At this point in time we really need *genuine friends, friends of God that are also family*. I praise the Almighty for your friendship. I believe for many of us here today, there have been few such friendships ever. Like *Yeshua*, I call you friends, because everything I have heard from My Father in heaven concerning you, I have made known to you as your rabbi and we are fellow laborers in His *Kol Simcha Gainesville* vineyard. I think that we are routinely in a high *Level of Friendship*, but I pray that we will move *to an even deeper level of friendship in Messiah* where we can sharpen one another as *iron sharpens iron*. In closing, I want to introduce you to my very best friend ever: "*His mouth is sweetness. Yes, he is totally desirable. This is my lover! Yes, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem in Kol Simcha*" (SOS: 5:16). *His name is Yeshua*.

♪*When you're down and troubled, and you need (a helping hand) some loving care. And nothing, O nothing is going right. Close your eyes and think of me, and soon I will be there to brighten up even your darkest night. You just call out my name, and you know wherever I am I'll come running to see you again. Winter, spring, summer, or fall, all you have to do is call and I'll be there. You've got a friend. If the sky above you grows dark and full of clouds, and that old north wind begins to blow. Keep your head together and call my name out loud. Soon you'll hear me knocking at your door. Ain't it good to know that you've got a friend when people can be so cold? They'll hurt you, and desert you and take your soul if you let them. Oh, but don't you let them*" ♪ (Carole King sung by James Taylor 1971) www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WJ1cf3nrLE

♪*Shalom, chaverim. Shalom, chaverim. Shalom, shalom. L'hitraot, l'hitraot, Shalom, shalom. Farewell, my friends. Farewell, my friends. Have peace, have peace. Till we meet again, till we meet again, have peace* ♪ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImAIzsLUq5g>

May this be your best day and best year ever! Shabbat Shalom!