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His Love Endures Forever
Psalm 136: 1-26

His love endures forever DIG: This psalm is called “the Great Hallel” and is recited at the Pesach Seder. What is the purpose of the “call and response” to prayer? What types of “wonders” are listed? In what different spheres of life has ADONAI been actively involved? How so? How are the acts of verses 10 and 17-20 signs of God’s everlasting love? How can the refrain be translated? Is the refrain monotonous or does it center your thoughts?

REFLECT: Which one of the wonders listed here especially moves you to thanksgiving? Why do you think ADONAI so earnestly calls us to give thanks in his and other psalms? Is there anything you want to thank YHVH for? Why? Do you ever tell yourself that God’s love for you is conditional, dependent on your performance? How can you hold on to the reality that God’s love is unconditional and once you are saved, you are His child and He loves you?

Yes, indeed, His love endures forever.



The general theme of this **Psalm** is a call to praise **ADONAI** on account of what **He**, in nature and history, has revealed **Himself** to be. This is **the Great Hallel psalm**, which was associated with the Pesach Seder. While we do not know who wrote this **Psalm**, we do know that it was sung in **Solomon's Temple (Second Chronicles 7:3** and **6)**, and by **the armies** of **Jehoshaphat** when **they sung themselves** into victory **in the wilderness** of **Tekoa (Second Chronicles 20:20-21)**. The chief characteristic of **the Psalm**, so immediately apparent, is the recurrence, twenty-six times, of the refrain **for His love endures forever.** These lovely words are included in every verse. Being an expression of relationship, the word **love** (Hebrew: *chesed*) could be translated *faithfulness*, *kindness*, *goodness*, *mercy*, *love* or *compassion*, but primarily *loyalty* to a covenant (see the commentary **Ruth, to see link click Af – The Concept of Chesed**). The repetition of this phrase was for liturgical reasons. It was to be sung responsively, either by the Levitical singers or by the congregation.[187]

A. Call to Worship: These verses give us a threefold call to worship. Here, we are encouraged to: **Give thanks to ADONAI, for He is good** (1)**, His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods** (2)**, His love endures forever.** And **give thanks to the LORD of lords** (3)**, His love endures forever (Psalm 136:1-3).** In this exhortation we learn that we are to worship **ADONAI**, the personal **God of Isra'el (Exodus 3:14). He** is also **the God of gods**, there are **no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). He** is also **the LORD of lords,** there is no other dominion or authority above **Him**.

But why are we to worship *this* **God**? The answer is not merely because He exists. We are to worship **Him** because **He** has revealed **Himself** to us worthy of our worship. **He is good**; that is, **He** is perfect and brings all things to **His** perfection. But this is not the bottom line. Even more than **His goodness** is **His love**, which **endures forever**. **He** is the **God** who commits **Himself** unconditionally to **His** people and **never abandons** that commitment **(Deuteronomy 31:6-8)**. We change, the world changes, but **ADONAI endures forever** and **His love** never wavers toward us. No wonder we are to worship this **God**. But how are we to understand **His love**? The answer is given by surveying **God's** power in creation. In the created world where we live, **God** commits **Himself** to us.

> **B. Praise to the Creator:** It is of utmost importance for the Bible that the **God** of Redemption is also **the God of Creation**. It is from **His** throne that **He** brings all things into being. As **He** creates us, **He** addresses **His** court, which consists of the holy angels gathered before **Him**. This explains why **He** says in

the plural: **Let us make man in our image (Genesis 1:27).** Since **He** is **the Creator**, when **He redeems** us, **He** is not **redeeming** us from **creation; He** is **redeeming** us as **His** fallen **creation**.

The psalmist calls us to **give thanks to God, who alone does great wonders.** These **great wonders** or miracles are usually related to **His** mighty acts of redemption. Here, however, they are applied to **His** acts of **creation**. **He** is **the God** that **by His understanding made the heavens.** As **Proverbs** tells us: **ADONAI by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens (Proverbs 3:19).** What this means is that **He** has a divine plan in **creation**, which comes through **His wisdom**. **He also spread out the earth upon the waters, made the great lights, the sun to govern the day, the moon and stars to govern the night (Genesis 1:14-18).** In the creation, **YHVH** shows us **His** power, **His** order, and **His** sovereign plan for the world. It is also upheld by **Him**, and a sign of **His** covenant **love**. As we meditate on each facet of **His great wonders**, we are to remember that all of this comes from **Him** by reciting: **His love endures forever (Psalm 136:4-9).**[188]

> **C. Praise to the Redeemer:** Having dwelt on the wonder of creation, and having there found so many reasons for thanksgiving and praise, **the psalmist** now turns to another great wonder, the deliverance of **Isra'el** from **Egypt** from bondage. This section of **the Psalm** parallels **Psalm 135:8-9** where **the psalmist** exhorts us **to** praise **him who struck down the firstboth of Egypt.** This was the last and the greatest of the plagues (see the commentary on **Exodus By – At Midnight the LORD Struck Down all the Firstborn in Egypt**). **He brought Isra'el out from among them,** they would never again return to **Egyptian** bondage. Here is another instance of **the loving kindness** that **endures forever**, and another reason for praise. **YHVH** was **their Redeemer** from slavery. It was evident that only a divine power could have accomplished it. How right that the remembrance of **the exodus** should be an integral part of **the Great Hallel**, the **psalm** of praise.
>
> Having brought **His people** out from **Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm**, **Ha'Shem** then **divided the Sea of Reeds** for **them**. The waters obeyed their **Creator** and stood up in walls on either side of the pathway which **God** designed. **He brought Isra'el through the midst of it** to freedom, **but swept** the tyrant **Pharaoh**

and his army, pursuing with **their** horses and chariots **into the Sea of Reeds. The Redeemer** had fulfilled **His** promise that **His love endures forever (Psalm 136:10-15).**

D. Through the Wilderness: Deliverance from **Egypt** was not **ADONAI's** entire purpose for **His people**. **His** intention was to **lead His people through the wilderness**, but the inhospitable wilderness lay between **Egypt** and **Canaan**. This part of **the psalm** is analogous to **Psalm 135:10-12**. Having led **them** out, now **the LORD** led **them** on, until **their** way was barred by **great nations (Ps 135:10)** whose **kings** are described as great, mighty, and famous. These were **men** of valor, **men** of renown, mighty in battle. As in **Psalm 135**, two of them are particularly identified, **Sihon**, **king** of the Amorites, and **Og**, **king** of Bashan. Those **kings** blocked **Isra'el's** way to Canaan, and, despite **their** fame and might, **Ha'Shem struck them down**.

In the plan and purpose of **ADONAI**, **the land of Sihon** and **Og** was not legitimately theirs. **God** had reserved **it** for **Isra'el His firstborn**, and those who lived there were merely squatters. **The Land** had been **given to them as an inheritance,** an **inheritance** which would forever after be disputed by **the** Gentile **nations**. **His love endures forever (Psalm 136:16-22). Isra'el** was not only **His firstborn**, but also **His servant**. Those who had been the slaves of Pharaoh were now **servants** of **YHVH**. **The LORD** had demanded of Pharaoh: **Let My people go, that they may serve Me (Exodus 9:1** and **13, 10:3).** Pharaoh had oppressed **them**, but **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** would give **them** a land of **their** own: **His love endures forever.**

C. Praise to the Redeemer: It was not the greatness of **the children of Isra'el** that prompted **the LORD to free them from their enemies. They** were but **a** feeble **people**, a nation of slaves. But **He remembered their low estate.** It could be said of **them, "ADONAI did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples. But it was because you were the fewest of all peoples" (Deuteronomy 7:7).** In **His** sovereign grace, **He** had remembered **them**, and had **redeemed them** from **enemies** far greater than **they**. It was the reason for giving thanksgiving and praise:

His love endures forever (Psalm 136:23-24).

B. Praise to the Creator: He gives food to every creature. But great as **His love** for **Isra'el** might be, **ADONAI's** gracious **redemption** is not confined to **the apple of His eye**. This even goes beyond the boundaries of humanity. Another **Psalm** declares: **The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing (Psalm 145:15-16).** It is not only mankind, but animals and birds, also, reptiles and fish, and even the flying and creeping insects of the land, air, and sea, are still dependent upon **Him** who cares for us all. Yes, indeed, we can all enthusiastically join in the refrain: **His love endures forever (Psalm 136:25).**

A. Call to worship: The Great Hallel ends as it began, with a renewed appeal to grateful people to render due **thanksgiving to the God of heaven**. How wonderful is this, that the praise of those on **the earth** should ascend to **YHVH** in **heaven**. **Heaven and earth** in one accord, uniting in praise, cry out: **His love endures forever (Psalm 136:26).**[189]