

My Presence Will Go with You

Իմ Ներկայութիւնս Քեզի Հետ Պիտի Երթայ

Exodus 33:12-19

Happy New Year! Shnorhavor Nor Daree! It is an Armenian tradition to celebrate the New Year's Eve with the whole family and make good wishes. Growing up, I used to wait for that night. Santa would arrive from Ararad, and along with many gifts, he would bring us news from Armenia. We would all listen to him attentively and pray for our homeland Armenia. At midnight, we used to turn off the lights, sing Hayr Mer (the Lord's Prayer) and give each other New Year's wishes.

There are people who think that if the first day of the year goes well, the whole year will. Some gamble to check their luck in the coming year. Many people who are curious about the future go to fortune tellers or read their books. These are only myths and mean nothing. They are not biblical, actually even satanic.

I will look to the Bible for guidance. Word of God has guided people in history and will guide us today in 2021. Today I will concentrate on Moses and the Israelites.

God Guiding Moses:

Exodus 33

¹² Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

¹⁴ The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

¹⁵ Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." (Exodus 33:12-17 NIV 11)

-Moses was tired. Moses faced challenges from the people he was leading when they made and worshiped a golden calf, when they grumbled, when they kept questioning if God was with them or not. On the other hand, Moses had a promise from God that He was going to take them to the Promised Land. Things went out of hand (please read Exodus chapters 31-32), and now God is sending them to the Promised Land with an angel to lead them and not God himself. (33:1-3).

Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people... (Exd 33:3 NIV 11)

Sometimes I feel our world makes us "**stiff-necked**" people, which means people who will not seek God's will in their lives. They won't trust God. Stubborn...

-Moses got scared. Am I going alone? Are people coming with me? Why an angel? Why not God?

Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' (Exd 33:12 NIV11)

Moses wants some certainty that the LORD will still protect them, not him alone, the Lord will be with them (13-15)

Moses speaking to God:

If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." (Exd 33:13 NIV11)

"If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways" (13a)

In my words: "God, I need you every day. There is so much confusion and ambiguity, Lord teach me your ways. You and I have an intimate relationship. I have found favor in your sight, but please teach me how to know your ways and lead these people."

Let me tell you that this is an excellent way to start the year.

Lord teach me your ways.

Why?

1. Because His ways are not necessarily my ways. His ways are the best, and the right ones... I want to ask Him daily: "Lord, teach me your ways..."
2. Teach us collectively as the church body to know your ways. The church is the community of the believers. We are the body of the Christ, and Christ is our head. Lord teach us your ways daily
It is daily commitment

-Then God says:

"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (14)

God gives Moses the most comforting promise for the future - the promise of presence and guidance.

In Hebrew, the word "presence" literally is "face" (My face will go with you).

Moses' response: He wants assurance and certainty:

"If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us from here" (15).

The word if, unless is used.

Moses wants assurance that without the presence of the Lord, he and his people are not willing go anywhere...

3. Are you ready to be led by God?

Unfortunately, the Israelites were not so eager to **know the ways of the Lord**. They just wanted to see **the acts of the Lord**. They just wanted to see **the mighty miracles of the Lord**.

We find this in the Gospel of John too. People wanted signs from Jesus. And Jesus was interested to see beyond the sign.

What are the real meanings of those signs?

What were they indicating?

Unfortunately, many of us are not very much interested in the ways of the Lord. Why? It is tough to walk in His ways. It could be not the way you wanted to go. Yet, many are interested in the "deeds", miracles, and acts of the Lord. There is nothing wrong in knowing the deeds of the Lord. But it is like eating the cake without baking it. Study the life of the Israelites in the OT. They always wanted some signs. God gave them signs and performed miracles. Yet,

they were always complaining. But look at Moses; he was so close to God, God even called him “friend” (as a man speaks with his friend) (vs. 11). God promised him saying:

“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (14)

I read the OT with new glasses; we live post-resurrection.

Jesus did the same thing.

He came to lead us; he became our shepherd, the Good Shepherd who leads, finds pastures, finds us a place for rest, and protects us.

Today we also celebrate Armenian Christmas.

Jesus is saying to us: **My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest...**

What are you looking for in 2021?

Are you interested in His ways, or you just simply want to see His “deeds”?

How certain does 2021 look?

What guarantees do we have in 2021?

Well, just think about our year that passed. We usually print our monthly calendar in our church publication *Pilgrim’s Progress*. We stopped doing that starting April 2020. Suddenly people couldn’t plan things ahead of time.

In the month of December, I presented to the council the events of year 2021. I put the important dates of banquets, merchant luncheon, DVBS, and more in my annual calendar. Can I even make plans?

All dates of weddings, concerts, business meetings were canceled.

In fact, if you look to the calendar of January 2021 it is empty.

Look to your personal calendar, it is empty, except maybe doctor appointments, if they are extremely important...

We live day by day.

Our lives are like that of the Israelites: in uncertainty.

The best way to start the year: **“If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways” (13a)**

Moses had an intimate relationship with God.

And the LORD said to Moses, **“I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.”** (Exodus 33:17 NIV 11)

I want to have that kind of a relationship with God.

King David wrote in his Psalm 16

**Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:9-11 NIV11)**
There is joy in the presence of God
Eternal pleasure.

We all waited for 2020 to end. I get it. Yet 2021 is the same as 2020, there is nothing new under the sun.
I wish a better year. I wish no war in Armenia. I wish end of pandemic.
Yet, my hope is in the Lord. When we live under the guidance of God every day there is something new our lives. Every day is a new day....

I quoted this last year and I will do it again:
“Towards the unknown future in the hands the all-knowing God.”
Let us approach the Table of the Lord.

Amen