

Ma Tovu

מֵה טֹבוֹ אֹהֲלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאֲנִי בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אָבוֹא בֵּיתְךָ,
אֲשַׁתְּחֹה אֶל הַיִּכַּל קִדְשֶׁךָ בִּירְאָתְךָ. יְיָ אֱהַבְתִּי מְעֹן בֵּיתְךָ, וּמְקוֹם מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדְךָ.
וְאֲנִי אֲשַׁתְּחֹה וְאֶכְרַעָה, אֲבָרְכָה לִפְנֵי יְיָ עֲשֵׂי. וְאֲנִי, תַּפְלְתִּי לָךְ יְיָ, עֵת רְצוֹן,
אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ, עֲנֵנִי בְּאֵמֶת יִשְׁעֶךָ.

Ma to-vu o-ha-le-kha ya-a-kov mish-k'no-te-kha yis-ra-el. Va-ani b'rov khas-d'kha a-vo
vei-te-kha esh-ta-kha-veh el hei-khal kod-sh'kha b'yir-a-te-kha a-do-nai a-hav-ti m'on
bei-te-kha u-m'kom mish-kan k'vo-de-kha va-a'ni esh-ta-kha-veh v'ekh-ra'ah ev-ra-kha
lif-nei a-do-nai o-si va-a'ni t'fi-la-ti l'kha a-do-nai eit ra-tzon e-lo-him b'rov khas-de-kha
a-nei-ni b'e-met yish-e-kha.

How good are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel. As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your house; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You. Adonai, I love the sanctuary of Your house, and the place where Your glory resides. I shall prostrate myself and bow, I shall bend the knee before Adonai, my Maker. As for me, may my prayer to You, Adonai, be at an opportune time; God, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation.

D'rash

How good are your tents—Tent symbolizes the committed relationship that is the foundation of family life. To be outside the tent is to be away from one's mate—physically, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. Our families approach the perfection of unity and harmony when we love our partners as ourselves, and when we personally assume the burden of our children's moral and ethical education in the face of ubiquitous corruption. **Jacob**—Because of its commitment to the moral purity of the family, which is the underpinning of community and nationhood, Israel was destined to survive and succeed. **Your dwellings, Israel**—This is confirmed in the description of Israel's tents not as beautiful but "good." **As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your house**—Your gift of free will has given me the choice to make my home a sanctuary, a place of prayer and study dedicated to Kiddush Hashem (the Sanctification of Your Name). **I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You**—In reverence and wonder at the canvas You have created, I will use in Your service all of the energy and spirit I can muster, reaching within and without, going beyond what is familiar and comfortable, to help shape Your creation as a work of art. **Adonai, I love the sanctuary of Your house, and the place where Your glory resides**—There is no greater joy than to be in the presence of Your righteousness, Your truth, Your justice, Your freedom, Your peace, and Your kindness. **I shall prostrate myself and bow, I shall bend the knee before Adonai my Maker**—I shall use up my life's time and energy to dwell where Your glory resides. I shall transform my own selfish appetites and desires l'sheim yikhud (for the sake of the unification). **As for me, may my prayer to You, Adonai, be at an opportune time; God, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation**—May it be Your will that I have not delayed too long in choosing life over death, in committing myself to jettison that which is deathly and dead within me for that which is alive and life-giving, so that I may—through the compassionate healing power of Your creation—be redeemed and saved.

Iyun Tefilla

MEETING PLACE

Climb to the top
Of a hill.
And like Balaam,
Look down,
At Israel's camps.
Open your mouth.
Allow the blessing
To fall from your lips.
Mah tovu ohalekha, Yaakov!
How good are your tents, Jacob!
Then look there,
On the east
And if your tribe is
Judah, Yisakhar or Zevulun,
You have found
Your place.
Your tent is there.
And if you are
Reuvein, Shimon or Gad,
Then you are on the south.
And if
Ephraim, M'nashe or Binyamin,
Then you and yours
Are on the west,
Or on the north,
If you are
Dan, Asher or Naphtali.
And if you are a Levite,
Then you are
In their midst.
And in your midst
A tent and an ark,
A place to meet with God.
And yet,
A meeting place is not
What makes for being good
Or getting near.
So do not cry:
Heikhal Hashem
The Temple of God,
The Temple of God!
As if it were a place
To hide.
But rather Jeremiah-like
Declare:
Let me
Become the place
Your Name
Shall touch

The earth!
Let me become
Your dwelling place!
Your tent!

Go to <http://www.gatherthepeople.org> for more congregational development and organizing tools.

© 2007 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda bat Sarah