



Parasha Nitzavim

September 4, 2021

Torah: Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20
Haftarah: Isaiah 61:10-63:9
Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 10:1-13

Our *Torah* portion today is *Nitzavim*, the last *Torah* portion of Hebrew Year 5781. 5782 begins at sundown on Monday. There are only a few more *pashiyot* before we finish reading Deuteronomy and begin again in Genesis. These readings are our guide. The *parasha* plus our reading from the *Haftarah*, the Prophets, and a chosen reading from the writings of Yeshua's *sh'lichim*, His Apostles, are the starting points for our message each week. These Scripture portions are ancient and as we follow them, we are in step with Judaism worldwide.

Nitzavim means "Standing," and refers to those who were standing before Moses as Israel prepared to enter Canaan. 9 "You are standing today, all of you, before Adonai your God—the heads of your tribes, your elders, your officials, all the men of Israel, 10 your children, your wives, and the outsider within your camp (from your woodchopper to your water carrier" (Deuteronomy 29:9-10 TLV). Moses goes on to say that they are to cross over into ADONAI's covenant, that is, affirm their covenant with Him as they are about to enter Canaan, the Land of Promise. This is the second generation, the first has died out, and these were not at Mount Sinai. As they affirm the covenant, ADONAI will be their G-d, just as He had promised them and their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We know that the covenant which ADONAI made with Israel at Sinai and reaffirmed with this generation was different than the covenant through which we relate to Him today. Our *parasha* last week described the "curse of *Torah*," the "curse of the Law," which was the result of disobedience to the Covenant made at Sinai. In that covenant, both an individual Israelite and also the whole nation of Israel had to be obedient to the *Torah* or suffer the curse of *Torah*. The result of the curse was to be cut off from ADONAI's protection, something which He promised if they turned away. They did violate His *Torah* increasingly, but ADONAI was merciful and gave them reprieve after reprieve. But, eventually they had reached such a sinful state that He had no other choice. He punished them by having the northern Kingdom of Israel carried away by the Assyrians and the Kingdom of Judah taken captive to Babylon. Something which some don't realize though, is that there was and is no atonement in keeping the *Torah*, even if you could keep it all perfectly. Under the Covenant at Sinai, the individual Israelite's atonement came through the Levitical system of Priests and sacrifices. ADONAI chose Aaron and his descendants to be *kohanim*, priests, and to be the channel of atonement for the people. Through daily sacrifices for sin and the yearly *Yom Kippur* sacrifices, Day of Atonement sacrifices, Israel would remain under the powerful protective covering of their G-d.

We who have trusted Yeshua are also covenant members, Jew and Gentile alike, covenant members of the New Covenant. When Yeshua died on the cross, the New Covenant was cut, a blood covenant which ADONAI made with Israel, the Jews. Those of us who are

Yeshua's Gentile followers have entered into G-d's covenant with Israel through the blessing of Abraham which was that all the people of the earth will be blessed through him, but specifically through his seed, his descendant, Yeshua. That is what *Sha'ul*, Paul, calls the mystery of the Gospel. 4 *"When you read this, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Messiah— 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, as it has now been revealed by the Ruach to His holy emissaries and prophets. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are joint heirs and fellow members of the same body and co-sharers of the promise in Messiah Yeshua through the Good News."* (Ephesians 3:4-6 TLV). We are joint heirs with the Jews, Israel in the flesh, and through our covenant relationship are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel according to Paul in Ephesians 2.

The primary difference in the two covenants, the one made at Sinai and the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah in chapter 31, is a change of priesthood. As the writer of Hebrews says: 11 *Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for based on it the people had been given the Torah), what further need was there for a different kohen to arise— designated according to the order of Melechizedek , not according to the order of Aaron? 12 For whenever the priesthood is altered, out of necessity an alteration of law also takes place."* (Hebrews 7:11-12 TLV). There was a change of priesthood from Aaron's sons to Yeshua whose priesthood is an eternal priesthood, a priesthood after the order of *Malkitzedek*. The next verses explain the change of law which was necessary. The change of law took the priesthood away from the Tribe of Levi and installed Yeshua from the Tribe of Judah as *Kohen HaGadol*, the High Priest. So now, the covenant we are under, the New Covenant, is a covenant with better promises. And, Yeshua, our sin offering, our mediator and our High Priest, took the curse of *Torah* for us. *Sha'ul* wrote: 13 *"Messiah liberated us from Torah's curse, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")"*— (Galatians 3:13 TLV). He was referring to Deuteronomy regarding a criminal hanged on a tree: 23...*for anyone hanged (on a tree) is a curse of God* (Deuteronomy 21:23b TLV). We discussed this in detail last *Shabbat*. If you are interested in looking deeper into the Curse of the Law, you will find it on YouTube and the written message on our website. What it means is that we who have trusted in Yeshua no longer face the curse of being outside of ADONAI's will because of disobeying *Torah*. Yeshua took the curse for us.

But, because the Curse of *Torah* has no effect on us who have trusted Yeshua, that doesn't mean that we are no longer to obey G-d's commands. ADONAI told Israel: 15 *"See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil. 16 What I am commanding you today is to love Adonai your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His mitzvot, statutes and ordinances. Then you will live and multiply, and Adonai your God will bless you in the land you are going in to possess."* (Deuteronomy 30:15-16 TLV). That was specifically for Israel under the Covenant at Sinai, not for us. But, we are given a choice today even as ancient Israel had a choice. Keeping laws will not save us, but obedience is our loving response to Yeshua who died for us. We are saved by grace and nothing else. But after we are saved, obedience should be our response. Paul said: 13 *"For it is not the hearers of Torah who are righteous before God; rather, it is the doers of Torah who will be justified."* (Romans 2:13 TLV). Then he said: 28 *"For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance."* (Romans 3:28 TLV). That's what we said: "by faith alone through G-d's grace." But, then he says: 31 *"Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah."* (Romans 3:31 TLV). *Torah* shows us what sin is, what G-d wants us to do and not to do. Whether we obey *Torah* or not has nothing to do with our salvation. If we are saved, we are saved. But, we have a choice. ADONAI has given us free will and we are free to choose Yeshua or reject Him, something which really grieves Him if we do. But,

it's our choice. If a person rejects Him, His taking of the curse is of no effect for them. Those who reject Yeshua receive the curse, complete separation from G-d for eternity.

But, personal obedience is something different. We should not think that just because we have made Yeshua our Savior, have trusted in Him, that obedience is not necessary. There's a great debate about that in the body of Messiah today. Some say: "yes, there are some commandments we must obey." Another group says "grace is all you need. You don't need to do anything." A few say that we are to keep all. That's our position. But, what is all? All is those commands which have not been activated by the lack of a Levitical priesthood and a Temple. And today, because there is no Levitical priesthood and no Temple, the major portion of *Torah* has been rendered inactive. It was ADONAI's doing. He rendered it inactive by anointing Yeshua as our High Priest when He died on the stake. Yeshua fulfilled this verse in Daniel: *27 Then he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.* (Daniel 9:27a TLV). Who did this? It wasn't the AntiChrist, it was Yeshua. He stopped the offering in the middle of the week by His death on the stake and by becoming the only effective sacrifice for sin. The priests continued to offer sin sacrifices for another forty years, but they had no effect. Only Yeshua's blood could now atone for sin. Now, without a Temple, we can no longer keep those commands. And, it was ADONAI Himself who took them away by having the Romans destroy the 2nd Temple just as He used the Babylonians to destroy the 1st Temple. By doing this, G-d has shown us exactly which commands He wants us to obey; those which don't require a Levitical priesthood or Temple.

Every person must decide how they are to walk out their salvation. Yeshua has given us that freedom. When He and His disciples were at Caesarea Philipi, He asked them a question. He asked: *13... "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"* (Matthew 16:13b TLV). The disciples said this and that and then *Shimon Kefa*, Simon Peter, said: *16... "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* *17 Yeshua said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven!"* (Matthew 16:16b-17 TLV). Yeshua then said that He would build His Ecclesia, His body of believers on the solid rock of that truth, the truth that He, Yeshua, is *Mashiach BenElohim*, Messiah the Son of the Living G-d. And then He said: *19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven."* (Matthew 16:19 TLV). We'll continue with that in just a moment.

It was wonderful to have our son Vincent and his sons Jakob and Nathan join our worship team today. It was a powerful time of worship as we joined together from different streams of Messiah's body. We have a number of other guests with us today from Vincent's home church, Lifepoint Church, including Pastor Richard. Welcome to you all. It is great to have you here to worship with us today.

I am certain that what some of you have heard thus far has been different. But, I especially want you to know that this message was not prepared in order to present our theology to you, our guests. This is normal every week fare at *Beit Shalom*. As you just heard, we believe and also practice the whole Bible. When I teach things of this nature, I also point out that we are not prescribing this for the whole body of Messiah, nor are we judging anyone. We are lovers and not fighters and we want to be at peace with everyone.

What Yeshua said at Caesarea Philippi is the point I'm making. The keys to the kingdom are the authority to forbid and permit, also known as binding and loosing. For

whatever else that may mean today, at the time that Yeshua spoke it, it was not something new. He didn't invent binding and loosing, although He obviously knew about it from before the foundation of the earth. What He was referring to was authority, authority to make decisions for the body of believers. This was a Pharisaical thing. The Sages of the Pharisees bound and loosed. There were two great houses of Jewish thought from a generation before Yeshua, *Beit Hillel*, the House of Hillel and *Beit Shammai*, the House of Shammai. They were led by the great rabbis *Hillel* and *Shammai*. They most always disagreed, with one loosing and the other binding, or vice versa. Usually, this had to do with how *Torah* was to be carried out. That is our understanding of what Yeshua said to Peter: "I give you the authority to bind and loose. I give you the authority to make decisions about how those under your leadership will interpret and follow Scripture and I will approve it from heaven." That is what I believe it meant when Yeshua spoke it, the *p'shat*, the plain meaning of the statement. And, this authority which was initially given to Peter, was passed down to leaders through the centuries. And this, I believe is still true for us today. Each leader has the authority to bind and loose, what to teach to those followers of Yeshua who are entrusted to them, and to decide how to interpret and to follow Scripture. What we are teaching today is only for us. And, we know that G-d has given that same authority to other leaders in Yeshua's body. Each of us must stand before our Creator for our choices. That is how we understand binding and loosing in its original form. Whatever else it may mean today is in proportion to your faith.

Our prayer for Yeshua's body is for unity and love. We here, don't consider ourselves to be any more special than any other follower of Yeshua because of what we believe. We are just one part of His body. And, it will ultimately be through Yeshua that all of us who have so many different beliefs today that we will be molded into a body without spot or wrinkle and ready for His return.

To clarify, lest anyone misunderstands, not eating pork won't save you. Worshipping on Saturday won't save you. Our salvation comes only through Yeshua's shed blood on the cross and nothing else. But, what we do after we are saved does have an effect on our eternity with Yeshua. Obeying *Torah* and doing good deeds brings us rewards after we have risen to join Yeshua in the air in our new resurrection bodies. There is an old, old hymn, *Will There Be Any Stars*, The chorus goes like this: *Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown When at evening the sun goeth down? When I wake with the blest in the mansions of rest, Will there be any stars in my crown?* The good things that we do in this life, as well as, being obedient to our Messiah's commands are stars in our crown, the crown that we will receive when we have entered into our rest. Even if our crown has so many stars it looks like a college quarterbacks football helmet, it won't get us saved. The dividends for stars in our crown are paid in eternity.

There are two words in today's *parasha* which are important. They are in Moses comment regarding the oath of covenant and what some might do after accepting it: 18 "Now when someone hears the words of this oath and in his heart considers himself blessed, thinking, 'Shalom will be mine, even though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart'—thus sweeping away the moist with the dry— 19 Adonai will be unwilling to forgive him." (Deuteronomy 29:18-19a TLV). This seems to be saying that a person who disregards the oath of covenant will not be forgiven by ADONAI. As stated earlier, this command only applied to Israel under the Covenant at Sinai and is in reference to the curse of the *Torah*. There is a phrase within this verse which is hard to understand: *thus sweeping away the moist with the dry*.

I have read this Scripture many times, but this is the first time that I noticed these two words, moist and dry. When I read it this week, it actually jumped out at me because it triggered a memory of something I read years ago. It was the word “dry.” Sometimes I can’t remember what I had for lunch, but at other times I amaze myself. It was from a book written by Dr. Robert Lindsey, a very amazing man. I’d like to tell you a little bit about him. As a young man right out of college, he went to Israel, was there for several years and then returned to Oklahoma to further his education. During his time back in Oklahoma, he got married, became a Baptist pastor and got his PhD. He took his whole family back to Israel in the late 1940s to take up his new position as pastor of the Narkis Street Baptist Church in Jerusalem. His children grew up in Jerusalem, spoke Hebrew like natives and also served in the Israeli Defense Force just like the young Jews. Incidentally, Narkis Baptist Church is still there and today in addition to being a Baptist Church, it also serves as the home of several Messianic Jewish congregations. *Beit Shalom* led a tour to Israel at Passover time in 2008 and we had the privilege of joining one of the Messianic congregations for their Passover *seder* in the Baptist church building. It was a memorable time for me. I actually spent the majority of the service on my back in a back room. But, that’s another story. I later found out that my problem was gall bladder, but it wasn’t any fun when it was happening.

Dr. Lindsey was a very intelligent and perceptive man and the Holy Spirit used him to initiate something which is still very significant today. After being there a few years, Dr. Lindsey became friends with Professor David Flusser, an orthodox Jew who was the Professor of New Testament Studies at Hebrew University. An oxymoron, you would think, a Jew who didn’t believe in Jesus teaching New Testament. But, there was a lot more to Professor Flusser than met the eye. G-d gave him great insight into the New Testament Scriptures. And, he and Dr. Lindsey spent many hours discussing the Gospels. Dr. Lindsey became more and more proficient in Hebrew, and he had plenty of time to learn it because he spent almost fifty years in Jerusalem. In his study, he noticed something very interesting in the synoptic Gospels. He saw that even in the Greek, they had many Hebraic sentence constructions and many Jewish idioms. He came to believe as true what the Church father Origen and others said, that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. Over the years after many discussions, Lindsey and Flusser formed what is called today, The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Today, there are a number of scholars there doing research on the synoptic Gospels and over the years, volumes have been written. It’s all good stuff. Check it out.

To make a long story shorter, the word “dry” came to me from something I read in Dr. Lindsey’s 1990 book, *Jesus, Rabbi & Lord*. Dr. Lindsey died in 1995 and this book is now out of print. He quotes Luke 23 from his own translation of the passage. Yeshua was carrying His cross when He called out to the women who were following: *“Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t weep for me, but weep for your children. Behold, the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!’”* *“Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’ and to the hills, ‘cover us.’ ‘For if they do this to the green tree, what will they do to the dry?’* (Luke 23:26-31 Lindsey). Dr. Lindsey went on to say that he was indebted to his friend David Bivin, also a charter member of The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, for pointing out to him this Scripture: *“Behold, I will kindle a fire in you and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree.”* (Ezekiel 20:47ff Lindsey). This symbolism is explained in Ezekiel 21:4, that “the Almighty promises that He will cut off from you both righteous and wicked.” Yeshua was saying: “I am the “green tree,” the righteous one. He is righteous and the “dry tree” is wicked. Both will be cut off. He was on His way to die when He said this. They did it to Him and He

said, they'll do it to you too. Yeshua hinted at a Scripture to make a point which He did frequently. When He referred to Himself as "the Son of Man," he caused those listening to immediately think of Daniel 7:13 and 14 which describes one like a Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven and being given a kingship by the Ancient of Days. When He referred to Himself as Son of Man, He was in effect saying, "I am G-d's Son, the Messiah. This method of teaching is called *remez*, hinting at a Scripture to make a point. And, that's what Yeshua was doing by referring to the green tree and the dry. Those listening would immediately think of Ezekiel's words.

Here again is the verse from Deuteronomy 29: 29 —*thus sweeping away the moist with the dry*— (Deuteronomy 29:18b TLV). I couldn't find anything different in other Bible versions, except one, *The Complete Jewish Bible*. It says: **19** "If there is such a person, when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself secretly, saying to himself, 'I will be all right, even though I will stubbornly keep doing whatever I feel like doing; so that I, although "dry," [sinful,] will be added to the "watered" [righteous].' **20** But ADONAI will not forgive him." (Deuteronomy 29:19-20a CJB).

What Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 29 and what Yeshua said in Luke 23 are about the same subject. Moses said: "Don't think if you are not faithful to the covenant that you can ride on the coattails of the righteous for G-d will not forgive you. Here we have to distinguish between righteousness and judgment. Because Israel broke the covenant for so many years, ADONAI brought His righteous judgment on both the righteous and the guilty. They were all swept away by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. That is what Yeshua was saying to the women. "It would be better if you did not have children, for the days are coming when death will come to both the righteous and the unrighteous." He, the most righteous, was killed and, just forty years later, the Curse of the *Torah* was carried out on that generation when the Romans surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple, a fulfillment of Yeshua's words. In the process, according to Josephus, they killed more than one million Jews and took more than 600,000 into slavery. As a judgment of ADONAI, the moist, the righteous Jews, were swept away with the dry, the unrighteous Jews when the 1st and 2nd Temples were destroyed. The "curse of the Torah," G-d's judgment, came upon "the moist and the dry," "the green tree and the dry tree, the righteous and the unrighteous.

This month, the month of *Elul*, the month before the month of *Tishrei* and *Rosh Hashanah* is traditionally a month of introspection. Each of us looks inward at our own hearts and at our relationship with Yeshua. One of our major prayers for the coming High Holy Days is for the salvation of all Israel. I shared this with the congregation last week, but it bears repeating today because it ties in with what we just discussed from Deuteronomy and Luke.

Sha'ul said: 16 "If the firstfruit is holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11:16 TLV). This is a reference to Numbers 15, verses 17-21, which tell how the grain offering was to be separated. Verse 20 says: 20 "You are to offer a cake from the first of your ground-up meal as an offering from your threshing floor—so you are to lift it up" (Numbers 15:20 TLV). The "first of your ground-up meal" is a firstfruits offering of grain and it was given to the priests. The firstfruit, the grain given to the priests was set apart, holy, and because it was holy, the remainder of the grain, the whole lump of dough from which it was separated, was also set apart, holy. The holiness of the firstfruits grain offering was determined by its use, only being eaten by the *kohanim*, the priests. 16 "If the firstfruit is holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches"

(Romans 11:16 TLV). In *Sha'ul's* example, the Jews of his day who knew Yeshua were the holy firstfruits who were set apart as an offering for our *Kohen HaGadol*, Yeshua our High Priest. But, the remainder of the lump of dough, the Jews who did not know Yeshua, were also set apart. Even though the majority of the Jews of this generation don't know Yeshua, yet they are holy, set apart by ADONAI. They are set apart, holy, because of the faith of their firstfruits brother and sister Jews and through the foreordaining of their salvation by ADONAI. He said through Jeremiah: 32 "*But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days*" —it is a declaration of Adonai— "I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people." (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). I have underlined the I's in this verse. ADONAI said that He would do it, He will save them. (also stated by *Sha'ul* in Romans 11:25-27). By trusting in Yeshua, the firstfruits of the Jews, those who have accepted Yeshua, have made their brothers and sisters holy and ADONAI will complete the job by making the rest of the batch of dough righteous in Yeshua. *Sha'ul* makes it very clear that in ADONAI's perfect time, the whole lump of dough, also pictured in his metaphor as olive tree branches, will become that for which they have been set apart to be, disciples of Yeshua.

Is this realistic? We see the modern nation of Israel much different than Jews do themselves. Pew Research has followed the changing beliefs, culture and views of Jews for the last twenty years. Their 2021 report is not as optimistic as we are. Only 55% of Jews said they feel somewhat attached to the nation of Israel while 42% do not feel attached at all. Younger Jews are more critical of Israel than older ones. 51%, 18-29 feel no attachment to Israel at all and 72% said that caring about Israel is not essential at all to being Jewish. Those of us in Messianic Judaism and Evangelical Christianity see it completely different. Our view is through the lens of G-d's Word which we hold as the highest authority about the future of the Jews. Even though a large percentage of Jews are not religious at all and have no affinity for what ADONAI is doing. They don't see Israel as a fulfillment of prophecy and have no concern for the things of G-d.

Nevertheless, ADONAI's word is true whether they believe it or not. He has judged and punished and is now restoring. What *Sha'ul* said about the firstfruits and the whole lump of dough means for them is that they will not be swept away by ADONAI's judgment as their ancestors under the curse of *Torah* were. In our *Haftarah* reading today, ADONAI said through Isaiah: 10 ... "*For in My fury I struck you, but in My favor I will show you mercy.*" (Isaiah 60:10b TLV). One day soon, they will mourn for Yeshua as one mourns for an only son, as we are told in Zechariah 12, and their righteousness will be near. As Yeshua left the Temple for the last time, He said to the Jews who did not acknowledge Him as Messiah: **<20>** 39 "*For I tell you, you will never see Me again until you say, 'Baruch ha-ba b'shem Adonai. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'*" (Matthew 23:39 TLV). All Israel will soon say "Blessed are You, Yeshua our Messiah!" For us who have already trusted Yeshua, the Curse of *Torah* has no hold on us because He gave His life for us and took the curse for us. And, it will soon have no hold on "all Israel," especially the dry. Their hearts will be changed and all Israel will be saved. Pray for the salvation of all Israel! **<21>** *Shabbat shalom!*