

A Messianic Jewish Commentary on Parashah

Nitzavim (You are Standing)

Deuteronomy 29:10 – 30:20, Isaiah 61:10-63:9, Romans 10:1-12

“You are standing (nitzavim) this day all of you before the Lord your God...that you should enter into the covenant of the Lord your God....” (Deuteronomy 29:9-11)

This is a momentous occasion – the people of Israel are standing before God, about to enter into a covenant – a solemn oath – with Almighty God. This covenant states that God will establish Israel unto Himself as a people, and that He will be Israel’s God,

Moses spoke these words to the people standing before him – the heads of tribes, elders, officers, all the men of Israel, the little ones, the wives, and the strangers. This covenant included everyone – from the greatest to the least.

However, a promise is made that this covenant is not merely established with the people standing before the Lord this day, but also with those not present. Moses foresees a day, through the Holy Spirit, when others would enter into this covenant with the God of Israel.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul, shaliach (apostle) to the Gentiles, explains that non-Jews were formerly “excluded from citizenship in Israel and **foreigners to the covenants of the promise**, without hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12-13)

But now in Messiah Yeshua those who once were far away have now been brought near by the blood of Messiah. (Ephesians 2:13-14)

God proclaimed, through the Hebrew Prophet, Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah), that He would establish a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

The Torah would be in our mind and written on our hearts; and He would be our God and we would be His people. All would know Him – **from the greatest to the least** – **and He would remember our sins no more.** (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

What a wonderful covenant we have with our God. All of us can be in a relationship with God – even the very least of His people. I am comforted with the knowledge that we don’t need to be some kind of “*spiritual superstars*” to belong to God.

Also we don’t need to be of a privileged social class or lineage to be fully accepted and included in the family of God. Halleluyah! Those not of Jewish birth, who have been brought into the covenant through the blood of Yeshua, are:

“no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Messiah Yeshua himself as the chief cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:19-21)

We cannot, however, as the Scriptures state, claim the awesome privileges of the Covenant and at the same time continue to walk in the stubbornness of our own hearts, living a lifestyle of sin. (Deuteronomy 29:18)

This principle is confirmed in the New Testament which states that there is no sacrifice for a person who stubbornly persists in sin, even while knowing the truth of God’s word:

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,” (Hebrews 10:26)

Especially at this time, as we prepare for the fall mo’adim (appointed times) of Yom Tru’ah (Day of sounding the shofar) and Yom kippur (Day of Atonement), we need to examine our lives for any unrighteousness.

Socrates has been quoted as saying, *“The unexamined life is not worth living.”*

Moses sees a day in the future of Israel when, due to their sin, the anger of the Lord will be kindled against the people and **all the curses of the Mosaic Covenant** will come to **‘lie upon him’** (Deuteronomy 29:19).

The Hebrew root of the word used in this verse can also mean to ‘beat’ or ‘strike’ and can be used to portray the crouching of a wild beast at the moment of pouncing upon its prey. So too will God’s wrath pounce upon the one who is doing evil, and yet unaware of the imminent danger.

Indeed, the Word of God did come to pass, and in future generations, the whole land lay desolate and barren, like Sodom and Gomorrah and its people sent to languish in exile. People in the nations would ask, **“Why has the Lord done this to His land?”**

And people will answer, **“Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt...”** (Deuteronomy 19:23-24)

The Lord, in His righteous anger, wrath and indignation, uprooted the people of Israel out of their land and scattered them throughout the earth – to become *the ‘wandering Jews’* in every nation.

The good news, however, is that our God is a merciful God. He did not hold onto His anger forever, but even at the time of Moses, promised that one day the children of Israel would return to God – and to their land.

The Prophets told of a day that God would **‘turn their captivity**, and having compassion on His people, would gather them back into the land of their Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). When the Lord brought us out of our captivity, it was like a dream come true – we were filled with joy and came back to the Land singing of the mercies of the Lord.



Jewish immigrants walking to Palestine 1930

“When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.” (Psalm 126:1-2)

Thank you to all those who helped us, or other Jewish people to come home! This is cause for great joy and gladness.

No longer do the nations come and look at the desolate, barren land and think of the terrible wrath of the Lord which He poured out upon the Land and people.

Now when the nations come to Israel, they eyewitness the amazing miracles God has performed - the deserts are blooming like a rose - like the Garden of Eden - and the Jewish people are coming home. Anyone can see that God has done great things for Israel.



Then they said among the nations, **“The Lord has done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad.**” (Psalm 126:3)

God has such wonderful promises for Israel that He is now bringing to pass before our very eyes! He has restored the land to fruitfulness and is bringing His people back from all four corners of the earth.

“But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home... and I will cause many people to live on you—yes, all of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.” (Ezekiel 36:8-11)

Jewish people living in the Diaspora were never meant to find comfort and security there; it is a shameful sign of divine punishment that God's people live outside the Land. The prophet Ezekiel said it brings a **'reproach on God's name'**:

And wherever they went among the nations they **profaned My holy name**, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.' (Ezekiel 36:21)

The Lord in His mercy promised in these Scriptures as well as through all the Hebrew Prophets that **"If any of you are dispersed in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there will the Lord your God gather you and from there will He fetch you.**

And the Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it." (Deuteronomy 30:1-5)



Yemenite Jews coming to Israel

This parashah concludes with a call to a life of blessing through remaining faithful to God. He sets before us **"life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed;"** (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Our life is in the Lord our God and if we will listen to His voice, and **'cleave to Him**, then He will bless us and the generations that come after us. The Hebrew word used for **cleave** comes from the root word for glue. We need to stick to the Lord like glue!

We need to remain attached to the vine in order to be nourished with everything we need for life. Yeshua said, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." (John 15:4)

God has set certain principles in His word that bring life and others that bring death. Giving thanks, being grateful and content, having faith, trusting in the Lord, and obeying Him – these bring life; whereas complaining and arguing, selfishness, unbelief and disobedience bring death and destruction into our lives. God so much wants us to make choices that lead to a life of blessing – not just for ourselves but also for our 'seed' – for the generations to come.

Haftorah Nitzavim:

On this Shabbat before Rosh Hashana, we enter into an intense preparation for the coming 'Days of Awe' – the ten days between Yom Zikaron Tru'ah and Yom Kippur. For the past seven weeks since Tisha B'av, the remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temples, all the prophetic messages in the haftorot have focused on comfort and consolation.

The Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, comforts the exiles of Israel that God has forgiven their sins and, in His mercy, will bring them back to their Land. The haftarah for this week, Nitzavim, is the climax of these seven messages of comfort, and is a special message for all those who have ears to hear.

This prophetic portion of Scripture which is read and studied this Shabbat omits the first portion of the 61st chapter of Isaiah, which is an important Messianic Prophecy. Whether or this is a deliberate move to keep the knowledge of Yeshua from the common people or not is debatable. However, for this reason, it is important that we read and study the entire Bible and not rely only on these Torah portions which leave out these crucial Messianic prophecies.

This prophecy from Isaiah 61:1 is exactly the passage that Yeshua spoke in the Synagogue on the Sabbath (Shabbat) to proclaimed Himself Messiah (Luke 4:16-19):

¹ **The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...**

Yeshua has proclaimed to us "The Year of the LORD's Favor."

The rest of the passages which Yeshua did not read is for future fulfillment:

... and the day of vengeance of our God, (when Yeshua returns and takes vengeance on the enemies of Israel)

**to comfort all who mourn,
³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.**

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor.

⁴ **They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.**

⁵ Strangers will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.

⁶ **And you will be called priests (cohanim) of the LORD,
you will be named ministers of our God.
You will feed on the wealth of nations,
and in their riches you will boast.**

⁷ **Instead of your shame
you will receive a double portion,
and instead of disgrace
you will rejoice in your inheritance.
And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,
and everlasting joy will be yours.**

⁸ **“For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them.**

⁹ Their descendants will be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples.
All who see them will acknowledge
that they are a people the LORD has blessed.”

¹⁰ I delight greatly in the LORD;

Wow! There is so much in here, I couldn't bear to leave it out; I hope that the Word of God will minister to each of your hearts through this prophetic word.

I believe that God wants us to raise our level of faith at this time to believe for a greater measure of His favor upon our lives as we enter the season of the fall feasts (mo'adim), which is traditionally considered in Judaism as 'Rosh Hashana' (New Year).

He is preparing to do a new thing in our lives! It is a season of re-birth and renewal – of rebuilding and restoring areas of our lives that have been long devastated - ruined and broken for a long time – even for generations! Halleluyah! I believe this is a prophetic word for God's people.

God loves justice and He will repay all the unfair and wrong things that have been done to us that we have endured with faith, patience and forgiveness. He will reward us with 'double for our trouble'. Anything that someone has meant for our harm, God will turn around for our advantage.

No longer will we go about with despair and heaviness – in mourning because of the oppression of the enemy - but we will walk in joy, in beauty and with praise to our God. All people will see and know that we are a people the Lord has blessed! Halleluyah!

Do you believe it? Because Yeshua said, “**all things are possible if you only believe**”! (Mark 9:23)

Many of us have been in 'survival mode' for a very long, long time; but God doesn't want us to merely survive – He wants us to thrive! We are to be like that tree planted by streams of water – that brings forth abundant fruit in season; whose leaves are always green and flourishing – and that all we do shall prosper. (Psalm 1:3)

As we drink deeply of the living water of His Spirit, may God grant us the faith to not merely hope, but to really believe that God will bring this to pass – that this is the 'set time for God's favor' (Psalm 102:13) .

Israel stands as a sign and beacon to all peoples everywhere of the wonderful grace and mercy of God. He can bring glorious restoration out of the worst destruction in each one of our lives. If we will give Him our ashes and mourning, He will give us beauty and oil of joy.

We have recently been going through some intense trials - but these have not been in vain. They are simply the 'birth pangs' to prepare us for the new thing God is now bringing forth into our lives!

Haftarat Nitzavim gives us three powerful images of **NEW BEGINNINGS**:

1) New Clothes:

“For God has clothed me in garments of triumph, wrapped me in a robe of victory, like a bridegroom adorned with a turban, like a bride bedecked in her finery” (Isaiah 61:10)

God is going to give us a whole new look – and whether male or female – we're going to look gorgeous! He is giving us a new beautiful wardrobe (yeah), fixing

up our hair and makeup, doing up the necklace of precious jewels around our neck, fussing with our appearance to make us look our best – a perfect Bride without spot or wrinkle.

This is the ultimate ‘reality makeover’. God’s Bride, Israel, is being prepared to meet her Beloved – YHVH **יהוה** God. Instead of defeat and despair, we are going to be clothed in triumph and victory!

Later in the haftorah, God appears, dressed as a warrior – his clothes stained in the blood of Israel’s enemies: Here is the proclaimed ‘day of vengeance of our God:

Who is this coming from Edom (descendants of Esau – terrorist faction of Islam),
from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?
Who is this, robed in splendor,
striding forward in the greatness of his strength?

“It is I, proclaiming victory,
mighty to save.”

Yeshua came the first time as a meek, sacrificial lamb, but He is returning as the Lion of Judah to save Israel and destroy her enemies – to have vengeance for Zion’s sake.

2) A NEW NAME (IDENTITY)

Just as God brought about a miraculous transformation in the nation of Israel, so will God give us a **‘new name’**.

“No longer will you be called **Forsaken (Azuva)**, neither shall your land any more be called **Desolate (Sh’mamah)**; but you shall be called, **‘My delight is in her** (Heftzi-bah) and your land, **Married** (Be’ulah) ; for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married.” (Isaiah 62:2-4)

In the Bible, a name change is a sign of a major change or transformation. Abram and Sarai’s name was changed into Abraham and Sarah by adding the Hebrew letter hey ה. This Hebrew letter symbolizes God’s name. With the addition of God’s name to their own, they were able to be fertile and fulfill their destiny.

Jacob’s name was also changed from Yaacov (which can mean ‘heel’ but also ‘deceiver’) into Yisrael – prince of God or ‘straight/honest’ (Yashar) with God.

God wants to change our name – to know our true identity in the Messiah: righteous, holy, redeemed, forgiven, free, friend of God. (Note: Please read the article, [I will Change your name](http://www.voiceforisrael.net) on the website: www.voiceforisrael.net)

Once we truly know who we are 'in Him', we will begin to act differently, like true children of God; others will see us and related to us differently and our whole lives will be transformed. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7)

3) The third image is that of NEW LOVE AND INTIMACY

The Hebrew root word, Baal, which occurs several times in Isaiah 62:4-5), can mean either 'marry' or 'have sexual intercourse'. God loves Israel and He loves us as a Bridegroom loves His bride.

We are the beautiful Bride of the Messiah, a **'crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord - a royal diadem (precious gem)** - and He rejoices over us: **"As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."** (Isaiah 62:3,5)

God is so intimate with us that He dresses us with new garments, like a mother with a little child, He names us with a new name, as the parent of a new baby; and he rejoices over us, as a lover when making love to His Bride.

The next verses speak of the 'Watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem'.

Will you be a **'watchman' upon the walls of Jerusalem** who will pray continually, day and night, until God establishes Jerusalem and makes her a praise in the earth? (Isaiah 62:6-7)

A Hebrew word for watchman is **notzer**, which is also the word used for **'Christian'**, a follower of **Yeshua of Natzeret** (Nazareth)!

Will you call out for Jewish people to come out of captivity in the nations and to come home to the Land of Israel? Will you clear away the stones and obstacles, proclaiming to the daughters of Zion: **"Behold, your salvation (Yeshua comes..."** (Isaiah 62:1-11)

Then they shall also be called by a new name: "Holy people, Redeemed of the Lord,..."

This haftorah ends with the words, **"In all their affliction, He was afflicted."** (Isa. 62:9)

God is not a far-off entity who stands aloof when we go through suffering and pain; God experiences our anguish and suffers with us when we hurt.

When my daughter, Courtney, was in the throes of labor pains, I was right there with her, holding her hands, stroking her forehead, encouraging her that she was doing great and that soon her baby would be born.

On our journey of transformation, as we at times go through the fires and floods of affliction, we can find comfort in the knowledge that God is with us and He cares for us. He will never leave us or forsake us and in all of our affliction He is afflicted.

Isaiah writes of the Messiah that He was a **‘man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief.’** (Isa. 53:3) I am sure that he knows what it feels like to cry oneself to sleep out of sheer loneliness; that he understands when we feel literally pulled apart at the seams by everyone’s conflicting demands, and burdened by a heavy load of responsibilities.

One of the names of God is **YHVH Shamah** – God is There. Sometimes that’s all we need – to know that He is ‘there for us’. He is still ‘God with us’ – Emanu – El.

Yes, God wants to restore, rebuild, renew, and even avenge....but as we reflect on this past year, if we see pain and anguish, let us remember that we have, in God, a mother who dresses us, a parent who names us and a lover who adores us.

This may not take away the hurt. God doesn’t always instantly ‘fix’ every broken thing in our lives, but God is always there for us to comfort and encourage.

Perhaps this is all we need to find the courage to begin again – to walk into the new thing that God has prepared for His Beloved.

Shabbat Shalom!

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