

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

September 8th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Discussion



God's Face in the Clouds

Parsha Nitsavim

Deuteronomy 29:10 - 30:20

אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כִּלְפָנַי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Atem nitsavim ha-yom kul'chem lifney Adonai Eloheychem

You are standing today all of you before the face of the Lord your God

רְאִשֵׁיכֶם שְׂבִטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְשׂוֹטְרֵיכֶם כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

rasheichem shiv'teichem zik'neichem v'shotreichem kol eesh Yisra'el...

your chiefs, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, even all the men of Israel...

לְמַעַן הַקִּים-אֶתְּךָ הַיּוֹם | לֹא לָעַם וְהוּא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים כַּאֲשֶׁר

Lema'an hakim-otecha hayom lo l'am v'hu yiheyeh-lecha l'Elohim ka'asher

He is establishing you today as His people, so that He may be your God, just as

דִּבַּר-לְךָ וּכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב:

diber-lach v'cha'asher nishba la'avoteycha l'-Avraham l'-Yitschak ul'-Ya'akov.

He promised you, and as He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.



The Torah portion, Nitsavim, "you are standing," begins and ends with emphasis on **the relationship of God's people with God**. Moses began by reminding God's people that the reason they were standing before God that day was due to His covenantal safe keeping and provision for them. At the end of the Torah portion, Moses told the people that God had set two paths before them. One would lead to life and prosperity in their "promised land." The other would lead to death and adversity in the land. Moses exhorted the people to **choose the path** of life by loving, obeying, and holding fast to God. Traditionally this portion is read around the time of **Rosh Hashana** and **Yom Kippur**, when the Jewish people take stock of their lives; non-Messianic Jews hoping their mitzvot done in the past year are sufficient for God to "inscribe them in His book of Life" for another year; Messianic Jews having the assurance of God's promises to those who have apprehended the atonement for sin offered by Messiah, Yeshua. Moses called on his people to return to God in repentance and offered them God's physical rewards of peace and security in the land of their inheritance and the promise of a future life with Messiah.

Enter Into Covenant With God

God's people stood at the brink of entering into the land promised to them by God as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were camped in their tribal positions. Each tribe had its chain of authority; chiefs, elders, officers, etc. Each family had its individual members. Moses called on each individual to stand that day before their God and renew their covenant relationship with Him. Last week's Torah portion listed the corporate blessings that would follow from obedience, worship, and service to God alone. Specific curses, which were the antithesis of the blessings, would occur if God's people turned from Him to follow other gods. This Torah portion, **Nitsavim**, **exhorts each individual member of God's people and the aliens living among them to stand before God and enter into a covenantal relationship with God**. Prior to this time, corporate decisions to trust God were sufficient. Now each individual was accountable for his (her) choice.... even the wives and the "little ones." How ironic! Earlier (Numbers 13), ten of the twelve tribal leaders, whom Moses sent to "spy out the land," stood before the Lord their God and stated their disbelief and distrust in God's ability to take them into the land He promised to give them. Their excuse was that "their wives and little ones would become plunder" (**Numbers 14:3**). Now their children and grandchildren individually stood before the Lord their God with the same choice: To follow God, trust in Him, and enter into His covenant or to turn their hearts away from Him. Their decisions would affect both them and future generations. **Today, each of us also makes the choice whether to enter into covenant with God through love and obedience.** Each of us must decide whether to serve only Him or to "go with the flow" and follow the ways of the world. When God promised the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants, God interposed His oath to confirm His promise and to provide hope for future generations; that His covenant with them is based upon His unchangeable nature (**Hebrews 6:13-18**). **Today, when we enter into covenant with God through acceptance of the sacrificial blood atonement of Messiah, we do so with the same unalterable assurance of the oath of God,** "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek' (**Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:15-24**)." **Acceptance of our High Priest, Yeshua, enters us into a covenantal relationship with God based upon Messiah's finished work.**

Beware of Wormwood

Moses admonished the people to beware of those around them; individuals, families, or even whole tribes, who turn their hearts away from following God. Moses had already encountered such people, who advocated turning back into Egypt, rather than following God's direction into the "promised land" (**Exodus 14:11-12, 16:3; Numbers 14:4**). Moses used the illustration of "a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood" (29:18). Wormwood was known for the bitterness of its pulp. **Hebrews 12:15** warns against a "root of bitterness springing up (that) causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." The context from Deuteronomy reminds the people that although they are part of God's covenant people, they are not free to turn to other gods nor to plant seeds of rebellion or bitterness among others, causing them to turn away from God. Today we use the term "lashon hara" to describe those who tell tails, spread gossip, or speak evil about others. Moses describes these people as so determined to spread their grumbling and dissatisfaction to others that they boast saying, "I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry" (29:19). Their stubbornness of heart convinces them that they can walk contrary to God's law and sow their seeds of discontent ("lashon hara") among others without penalty because they are part of God's unalterable covenant. Moses admonishes this person, "...the Lord will single him out for adversity according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law" (29:21). Instead, we are to "pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

The Connection Between Repentance & Loving God by Obeying His Voice

The unconditional covenant God established with His people, allowing them to stand before Him as righteous, having been justified through the blood of the lamb, demands that His disobedient people ... "return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all Your heart and soul..." (30:2). **Repentance**, as they return to God, "v'shavta," a contraction of "tashuva," is given emphasis as God's people return to Him in Chapter 30 and in these days, as we approach Yom Kippur. As God's people return to him in repentance and renewed obedience, God promised to regather and restore them from their captivity from "the ends of the earth" (verse 4) and also from their captivity to sin. The Hebrew word translated in verses 8 & 10 as "return" is "tashuv," which means "repent." God's people are to "turn" in repentance to the Lord with all their heart and soul. The idea is that in accepting God's provision of atonement, one is overcome with the desire to **repent (turn 180 degrees) from ways that are contrary to God's ways and obey God's voice with all our heart and soul**.

Some people feel that God will never "rejoice over you (the Jewish people) for good" (verse 9) because the Jewish people as a nation have not "turned in repentance and obedience to Him. They point out the apparent conditional statement of verse 10 beginning with "if you obey..." and "if you turn to the Lord your God..." to suggest that God would only be able to rejoice over those who will repent....those in the church. However, it should be noted that the Hebrew word, "ki," translated "if" in verse 10 actually means "when." The same Hebrew word is translated "when" in 30:1. The Torah portion from last week, "Ki Tavo," is translated "When you enter in...." A different Hebrew word, "im" is used, when the translation calls for the conditional phrase, "if." "Im" is used as a conditional phrase and correctly translated "if" in verses 4 and 17 of Chapter 30.

However, in verse 10, **Moses is stating with certainty that God will rejoice over His Jewish people, when they return to him in repentance and obedience.**

Moses continues and tells the people that God's "commandment" ("mitsvah") is not too difficult for them to understand and keep. It was accessible for them, written on stone by Moses. There was no need to look to heaven for interpretation or to travel across the sea for its interpretation (or for Rabbinic interpretation). **God's law was put into their mouth and hearts by Moses, so that they could understand and observe it**. Therefore Moses gives the people two choices: 1) They can choose life and prosperity by loving the Lord, walking in His ways, and keeping His law. 2) They can

choose death and adversity, if ("im") they do not obey God, and their heart turns to worship other gods. **Moses exhorts the people to choose life by loving, obeying, and holding fast to God.** When they enter into the land, maintaining their relationship with God will prolong their lives and length of days in the land of their inheritance.

Shabbat Shalom



Rosh Hashanah Service
Sunday, September 9th, 6:30 PM



Tashlich -- Rosh Hashanah
Monday, September 10th, 1 PM
we will travel to the River



Yom Kippur Service
Kol Nidre
Friday, September 18th, 6:30 PM

