

10-1-16 Message to Beit Adonai Yisroel

Torah Portion; Deuteronomy 29:10 (v9- English Bibles) – 30:20, (*Nitzavim*) “You are standing”

Haftarah: Isa 61:10 – 63:9

Suggested Acheron K’tuvim:

We Are Each Bound To One Another

Central question of this message: Have you resolved all offenses with one another?

Today’s portion is *Nitzavim*, which means “you are standing”. Its name comes from the first two words of the portion.

רְאִשֵׁיכֶם	אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	יְהוָה	לְפָנַי	כָּלְכֶם	הַיּוֹם	נִצַּבְתֶּם	אִתְּכֶם	⁹
your captains of	your God;	the Lord	before	all of you	this day	stand	Ye	
7218	430	3068	6440	3605	3117	5324	859	
יִשְׂרָאֵל:	אִישׁ	כָּל	וְשָׂרֵיכֶם	זְקֵנֵיכֶם	שְׁבֵטֵיכֶם			
Israel,	the men of	all	with	and your officers,	your elders,	your tribes,		
3478	376	3605	9999	7860	2205	7626		

Deut 29:10

10 "You stand today, all of you, before the Lord your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel,

As Moses is finishing his long sermon known to us as Devarim, and to the church as Deuteronomy, before him stands a multitude of people.

And they are the descendants of the “mixed multitude” which came out of Egypt just following the Passover. Their parents saw the Egyptian army give chase, were pinned against the sea, and crossed over on dry land. The memory of those days were still fresh in the hearts of Israel.

And I call the people gathered together before Moses “Israel” because that is the name that G-d called them – as He gave them the Torah at Mt. Horeb.

The parents of those gathered might have been from many nations as they ducked into the homes marked with the blood of the lamb on the lintel and doorposts. They might have been from many ethnicities as they sat at the first Passover table.

But as they emerged from those doorways along with the greater Hebrew people the next morning, they were assimilated into the single people of G-d, and nothing would change that fact.

The fellow who entered Egypt as an Ethiopian, with black skin, sat beside the son of a Levi who had olive skin. And they both sat with the privileged Egyptian who had skin of alabaster white.

You see, it's never been a matter of skin color with our people. It's always been a matter of the heart. So, when I hear people say that someone "looks Jewish", I often shake my head in amazement at their lack of understanding of what it actually means to be part of G-d's people.

There actually IS a "Jewish" look. When you love G-d so much, and walk with Him so closely, so that you take-on a certain "family resemblance" to Yeshua – that is when you have it.

When people know you as a "man of G-d" or a "woman of G-d", because of your holiness – that's when you have it.

And it is critical for all of us who are in this large family of faith to remember an important fact. We are bound together with one another. We are bound not only in faith, and sometimes common practices, but more importantly, we are bound together in love for one another.

Our sages read Deut 29:28 which says “the hidden things are for Hashem our G-d”. They concluded that this spoke of hidden sins that only G-d could see, but nonetheless damaged the entirety of the Jewish people.

They conclude that Torah obligates each Jew for the sins of every other Jew. They say this obligation springs from the statement, '*kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*'. They say all Jews are not merely called to care for one another. It is much more than that. They say that when one Jew sins, then the whole generation is damaged.

Thus, every single Jew is spiritually bound up with every other Jew, and every action we take, whether positive or negative, directly affects everyone else. When I fall, your knee bleeds. That being said, let's look at the most positive thing that any of us can do for the body of faith.

It involves one of the most obvious hallmarks of a true believer. Love.

1 John 4:11-21

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in

us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

What is one of the most visible evidences of love in the body of believers today? Unity.

Ps 133

133 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing — life forever.

There is a temptation in these days, as darkness begins to come upon our world, to pull-back into our own small groups – our own synagogues – and either ignore or even reject the congregations of other believers who don't walk as we walk. We must reject that temptation.

But there is also a temptation in these days to pull back within our own selves – to isolate ourselves – even from believers in our own synagogue or church. Worse yet, we leave the body of believers.

Why do people leave the fellowship of believers and either go to another fellowship, or quit going to any fellowship?

In 2006 Nathan Black (Christian Post) wrote an article in which he cited a study by LifeWay Research which set out a few reasons why people leave church.

There are a number of factors cited in the study. 59% of those responding to the survey indicated that their lifestyle simply got in the way of church attendance. That tells me that their faith was not deep enough so that G-d's word, and fellowship with other believers, became a priority in their lives. I believe you always find time to carry out your priorities. Their priority was not G-d. Simple as that.

But one finding is important. 37% left the church because they had become disenchanted with the pastor or the church itself.

17% said church members "seemed hypocritical" and "were judgmental of others". 12% said the "church was run by a clique that discouraged involvement."

In 2013, Benjamin Corey assembled ten reasons why he himself decided to leave churches. I am not going to name them all, but I want to focus on just a few.

- Inability to find community – (lack of love and care for one another as a family).
- Unresolved conflict – (failure to follow Scripture's formula).
- Controlling leaders – (Leaders who aren't humble servants).

I have read a significant amount on why people leave churches, and I am beginning to see a few reasons that just seem to pop-up time and again. Let me distill them down into only three statements for us to consider today.

1. The congregation is cold and unloving – no welcoming and accepting “community” or “family” feeling.
2. Unresolved offenses by a fellow church member – especially a leader.
3. They had a zeal for service, but were prohibited from having a place to plug-in with their spiritual gift or natural talent.

Let me hasten to say that BAY is the most welcoming and accepting community of believers that I have encountered. Are we perfect in that area? No. We can improve. So, please don't ignore that area! Excel in that aspect of love!

What I want to discuss today are the second and third reasons in that list. First, let's look at unresolved injuries.

2. Unresolved offenses by a fellow church member – especially a leader.

We are all individuals. We have different sensitivities, different styles. That diversity gives our congregations amazing strength and depth. But it also can cause friction between us.

I have told you on several past occasions that if you hang around with me long enough, I will break your heart. Well, I am certain that since the day I first brought a message to BAY back on the 27th of September 2009, I have irritated some (or maybe all) of you.

You have also heard me tell you that when that happens, you must come to me and explain to me what I did and how it affected you. Then, as I am convicted of error, you will see me repent to you and do what I can to make it right. If not, then bring that fact to another elder of this congregation and let's keep the process moving toward resolution.

But that doesn't only apply to me. It applies to *all of us*. But what is the process that we are to follow to resolve offenses?

First, we are to categorize the offense into one of two categories: Is it a sin? Is it just a matter of personal sensitivity?

If it's a matter of personal sensitivity or personal preference, it's not really important at all. You should forget it, if you can. If not, then you can approach the person and simply ask "why do you do that?" Then you can have a conversation (as brothers or sisters) in love. You might just learn something.

If it's a matter of sin, then I suggest division of that issue into one of two categories. First, is it a matter of great urgency or there will be great loss? I call those "The child is in the street" issues. There's not time for much contemplation. Action is necessary, and now.

The other category is "all other issues", and is a very large group. With this category there is time for prayer and meditation.

Part of that time of prayer and meditation should be dedicated to the "getting the log out of your own eye" process, which leads to better vision. (Mat. 7:1-5). Ask yourself if you had any part in creating the problem in the first place. If so, then maybe you will discover that you are the one who needs to be the first to repent.

The next thing to do during that time of meditation should be decide whether you should simply forgive it, forget it and move on. That is an

amazing demonstration of love. Not every offense should be the subject of a confrontation. Pick your issues carefully.

Prov 10:12

12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.

Ok. Let's say that you have been offended by the actions of another, and have determined that it's a sin. And it's not a matter of such urgency that you must take immediate action. What do you do?

Don't go to others telling them about the offense. (Prov 11:13, 2 Cor 12:19). That's gossip. That's *loshan hara*. It damages the other person and gains you nothing. If you go to an elder asking for assistance in the process, that's fine. But once you tell of the issue, then be prepared to quickly be going to the other person to engage in the scriptural process.

Here's a good process to follow: First, do some reading in Scripture. Establish a Scriptural basis for claiming it was a sin. Do it on paper. Write at the top precisely what happened. Under that write how it offended you. Under that write what you could have done that would have prevented the offense, and how you might have contributed to the problem in the first place. Under that write all the scriptures which speak

to these offenses. That way, when you meet with the person, you won't have your mind go blank.

Make part of your Scripture study a detailed reading of Mat 18: 15-17, which sets out the process of discussion on the matter.

Go to that person early. Don't let a lot of time pass. After an offense, and before the resolution, your heart will be under attack by Satan. He will have you engaging in imaginary conversations in your mind with the other person, and those conversations will form a crack where the wedge will be placed to drive you apart. (Eph 4:26-27).

If you go to that person with tears in your eyes for your own offense, then you are not yet ready to go to that person. If you go to that person with tears in your eyes for the effect that this person's sin has on his relationship with G-d, then you are ready. You see, it's not really about you and your offense, after all.

Matthew 18 isn't hard to understand...but it seems quite hard to do.

Matt 18:15-17

15 "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

Note that the first step is a private conversation. Do this in person, if you are able. Here's where you can use the paper you have created. Be open to hearing a different version of the facts. People who are involved in the very same event often have different impressions of what happened at the time. Don't argue, just listen.

Keep talking, but most of all, keep listening. Keep working toward a resolution. You just might find out that you misunderstood what happened, or maybe you were wrong in another issue. Or maybe you are right, and your brother/sister will repent. Either way, G-d wins.

If you can't agree on what actually happened, or whether it is a sin, then it's time to gather witnesses. Others might have seen the event, and can offer testimony to what happened. Bring them into the private conversation. They should be able to resolve the issue of what

happened, and whether an offense actually was committed. Then, that should break-through the logjam.

If that doesn't work, then bring the matter to the elders of the congregation, and we will get involved. It may get to the point where we bring the entire matter before the entire congregation. We hope not, but that is the next step. I don't have any problem taking this step. It's painful, but when necessary, it must be done.

What if the offense is committed by the rabbi, or an elder? Well Matthew 18 is still a good place to begin, but there is another verse that also governs.

1 Tim 5:17-22

17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. 20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of

sinning. 21 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

I will use myself as the example. If I have sinned against you, then certainly others have seen it. First come to me with your offense, following Matt 18. If for some reason you and I don't agree that I have sinned, then bring two or three witnesses who also saw my sin. That should resolve the matter.

If not, then you and the other witnesses should appear before the rest of the elders to make an accusation of sin against me. They will determine what is to happen next. If they sustain the accusation, then they will rebuke me. If I continue in sin, they will rebuke me "in the presence of all" (before the congregation), so that everyone will know that no elder is excused from the consequences of sin.

Now let's move to the third common complaint that leads people to leave congregations.

3. They had a zeal for service, but were prohibited from having a place to plug-in with their spiritual gift or natural talent.

1 Cor 12:4-11 contains a listing of a number of gifts of the Spirit, but that list is not exhaustive.

A natural talent is something that is a natural part of your makeup, and you are good at. For instance, Magic Johnson can play basketball. He's got a natural talent, and has used that to make a lot of money.

A Spiritual gift often has no relationship to a natural talent. It is a gift of G-d that shows up in a person's life when it is needed to edify the body.

No matter whether a person comes to our congregation with a natural talent, or a Spiritual gift, that person should find a place to apply it to the advancement of G-d's kingdom in this congregation.

In fact, if you are here at BAY only to learn about G-d and not be active in His service...then I pray that your season of rest will soon pass, and you will begin to utilize your natural talents, and your Spiritual gifts, to advance His kingdom in this place.

When is it appropriate that you should offer your talent or gift in this place? That depends on a number of variables, and there is no set formula or set time in Scripture.

It probably isn't appropriate to offer your gift on the first day here. But at some point it's utterly appropriate that you do so. The Spirit should guide you... and guide your elders... into a verification of what talent (or gift) you do have, and how it might be best used to build-up the congregation. Your elders wish to protect your congregation from the consequences of ordaining someone too quickly into a ministry opportunity (1 Tim 5:22). We know that sometimes the talent or gift has not yet matured to the point it is truly edifying, or there is another issue that we can see. But on the other hand, a proven talent or gift should be given free expression to edify the body.

Understand that you might need to be the first to speak-up regarding your desire for service. Your elders are consumed with spiritual matters and unfortunately we overlook some issues. Please presume ignorance, and not disdain, with us. Be assured that there is nobody we wish to suppress in an appropriate expression of their talent or gift in this body.

I can tell you that I have faced this very frustration myself. I have had remarkable successes in business. I have been the vice-president of a small oil company. I have a doctorate degree. I did quite well in the military, ending my time in the Army as a Chief of a major division in Special Operations Command. I have been an upper manager in two

international ministries. I have taught in a number of churches, and led more Passover celebrations than I can recall. I set up a tour company to take believers to the holy lands, and arranged tours of all the Bible lands. I was chosen to lead a break-out session at a UMJC national convention. I don't say these things to be haughty, but to illustrate that the world (and even the church) valued what I had to offer.

I served in a Messianic congregation in another city for better than a decade, in various smaller capacities, but I was never elevated to the status of elder. That bothered me, because I felt I was being either ignored or pushed aside by leadership. I had so much to offer, and it seemed that only unbelievers or other congregations wanted to bring my talents to bear. Mat 13:57-58 (prophet not without honor) kept going through my mind.

I finally got to the point where I asked for a meeting with the elders. I sat before those elders and told them that I was "ready to step-up to a higher level of service". Remarkably, they heard my request with enthusiasm, and told me that they had been considering me anyhow, and would use this opportunity to do that very thing now.

What I didn't tell them was the rest of what was rolling through my mind - that if they declined my offer of greater service, I had resolved to

leave the congregation and begin anew in another congregation where I might not encounter this “glass ceiling”.

You see, if I had come before them as being “entitled”, or in a pushy manner, they would have sent me packing... and I would have lost the opportunity. My pride would have caused me to leave that congregation, and Satan would have won.

We are coming in a few days to Rosh Hashana. The sound of the shofar has been heard for a month now, reminding us to prepare our hearts for this season.

It is time for us to develop a sense of urgency in matters of personal relationships with one another. If there are unresolved issues with someone else in this congregation – whether in the seats, or on the bima – then it is time now to resolve them.

Matt 5:23-24

23 "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar, and go

your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

This passage tells us that G-d really doesn't want to hear from you if you have unresolved issues with someone else in the body.

Do you see the common motivation that by necessity must underlie all these issues? Love.

Only if you apply love can you go to your brother or sister to discuss an offense.

Only in love can you offer your talent or gift to the congregation

Cepha seems to have given us very good advice on these areas. And I want to close with this passage.

1 Peter 4:7-11

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another

without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Verses for *Nitzavim*

1 John 4:11-21

Ps 133

Prov 10:12

Matt 18:15-17

1 Tim 5:17-22

Matt 5:23-24

1 Peter 4:7-11