

NITZAVIM – “Standing”

DEUTERONOMY (D’VARIM 29:10 – 30:20)

INTRODUCTION:

1. This portion begins, traditionally, on the last day of Moses’ life.
2. It comes on the heels of hearing the frightful warnings of Deut. 28 – the people were alarmed.
3. So, according to rabbis, Moses assures them that despite of previous sin, they are still standing before the LORD.
 - a. Which is to suggest that, in spite of future sins, God will not abandon Israel.
 - b. The punishments, in fact, are intended to restore them, not destroy them.
4. Everyone, including the little ones, were included in this address – they will carry on mandate.

CHAPTER 29: ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE

1. Verse 10: “You are standing today (נִצְבִים *nitzavim*) before the LORD.”
 - a. People assembled in entirety – divided into categories but showing responsibility of all.
 - b. Everyone is expected to do what they can do and what is their responsibility.
 - c. Even the strangers were assembled there and were expected to respond appropriately.
2. Verse 13-15: The covenant was presented to the fathers, to those present and those not present.
 - a. God and Israel are bound to one another.
 - b. He won’t desert them and they can’t have another god or become another nation.
3. Verse 14: Makes this covenant with those present and “also with him that is not here with us this day” – the covenant is with unborn generations.
 - a. This would mean that Moses’ words are for us as well.
4. Rabbi liken parents to trees and their children the branches.
 - a. Potential for all branches (by extension, fruit) is in the tree.
 - b. Future generations are in their parents and will bear fruit of that tree.
 - c. That is why so important that the “pure seed” give birth to the tree.
5. We see concept elsewhere in text: Levi paid tithes while still in loins of Abraham (Heb. 7:10).
 - a. Most dramatically in the words of Y’shua:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.” – John 15:5

6. He is the “tree” (vine) and we (the children) are the branches which produce fruit.
 - a. If we are in Him as child (branch) is in parent (tree).
 - b. But He must be in us – “and I in him” – as seed births the tree/branches/fruit.
7. Verse 16-19: Having lived in Egypt, Israel is acquainted with idolatry.
 - a. Coming into Canaan would bring people into contact with more vile habits.
 - b. People would be tempted to investigate and fall into other beliefs and philosophies.
8. Verse 17: “Their detestable idols” – (literally, “inanimate blocks”).
 - a. Made of wood and stone but covered with precious metal, i.e. gold and silver.

9. Verse 18: “Any among you, man, woman or tribe” with a “root bearing gall and wormwood.”
10. “Gall and wormwood” – “gall” from word ראש *rosh*, “wormwood” from לענה *l’anah*.
 - a. The word *rosh* typically associated with “head” – as in “heads” of grain.
 - b. The fruit that determines the seed, in this case a poisonous “head” or fruit.
 - c. The word *l’anah* is related to a word used for “curse.”
 - d. Thus this “root” bears poisonous fruit whose end is a curse.
11. Thus, Moses conveys the reason for witnessing these idols is to see end result – death.
 - a. In case anyone tempted to let another seed grow within them and produce deadly fruit.
 - b. That they would say, “I will be at peace though I walk as my heart sees fit” (v. 18).
 - c. People delude themselves into thinking “it can’t happen to me.”
12. This exemplifies what Scriptures teaches from beginning to end – only one good seed.
 - a. Not to mingle with corrupt seed: Tree of good and evil, wheat and tares.
 - b. Remember from earlier portions, men are trees/plants and bear good or bad fruit.

“For the tree of the field is man's food.” – Deuteronomy 20:19

13. “Food” is not present in the text – tree of the field is man.

“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” – Matthew 3:10

14. John is speaking of men who do not produce the one and only “good fruit.”
 - a. Y’shua underscores this concept indicating there are some not planted by God.

**“Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.”
– Matthew 15:13**

15. Moses warns that idolatry is another seed that will grow into a poisonous and cursed fruit.
 - a. That “head” will then disseminate that seed through the nation.
 - b. That is why it must be “cut down” and/or “uprooted” and burned!
 - c. Don’t let your curiosity about other philosophies result in death.
16. Footnote: word for “tribe: is שבט *shevet*: also means “control, rod, scepter, branch, stick.”
 - a. It is phonetically related to word שבת *Shabbat*.
17. Verse 19: Person who thinks they can do as they please without consequence result in “the watered be swept away with the dry.”
 - a. To sweep away the well-watered soil with the dry soil.
 - b. Indicating that destruction will come to the community through sins of individuals.
 - c. When “tares” are tolerated in wheat, it means trouble for the wheat.
18. Applies to the individual as well: infers creeping addiction to sin.
 - a. Someone who sins without a strong desire to do so (watered), will give in to more sin.
 - b. He will develop a “thirst” for those sins (dry) and his situation will become grave.
 - c. Indulgence increases desire and desire hastens to be satiated by indulgence.
19. The sin of this person is so great and pervasive that God places the “curse” upon him.
 - a. The LORD also blots out his name from under heaven.
 - b. The word “curse” is אלה *alah* – also mentioned in Daniel 9:11 (curse of the Torah).
 - c. Because that one person exposes the entire nation to destruction.

- d. The power of one person reverberates throughout the nation.
20. This concept also applies to the individual tribe or tribes – Ibn Ezra wrote:

“If the sinners be a whole tribe, then shall it be sundered from the other tribes, and its members carried away into exile.”

21. This is what occurred to the northern kingdom commonly called Ephraim (2 Kings 17:6).

22. As a result of their sin and exile, the land will become unfruitful (v. 22)
- People will inquire as to why God did this to the land (v. 23).
 - Because they went after gods that had no power and had never shown any power.
 - The entire curse recorded in the Book is brought upon them.

23. In verse 29, Moses says:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

– Deuteronomy 29:29

24. The traditional understanding of this verse is the “hidden sins” are for God to deal with.
- No one is responsible for those sins except the sinner himself.
 - Revealed (sins) are dealt with by the nation at large in order to propagate obedience.
 - Revealed (sins) are considered as such by words of the Torah.
 - Slightly alternate view is secret sins are revealed to all as a warning.
 - Still another view:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God *and* the revealed things; for us and our children it is to carry out all the words of the Law.”

25. In the text, the words **לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד** *lanu ul'vaneinu ad* are dotted (14 other times in Tenakh).
- To indicate important homiletical teachings in the verse.
26. Consider the word “secret things” is derived from the Hebrew **סָתַר** *satar* – “to hide.”
- The word “revealed” is **נִגְלָתָהּ** *nig'lot* from the root **גָּלָה** *galah* - “to uncover.”
 - From this word is derived **הִתְגַּלּוּת** *hitgalut* – equivalent of Revelation.
 - The word **גָּלוּת** *galut* is the Hebrew equivalent of “exile” or “diaspora.”
25. We could deduce that the Revelation really speaks to the exile or, better, gathering of exile.
- Israel tried to “hide” their sins; they were “uncovered” and this led to “exile.”
 - Adam tried to “hide” among fig trees because he was “uncovered.”
 - He and Havah were exiled; in a sense “hidden” among the nations.
26. Rabbis believe that this verse hints at the redemption – the assimilated are hidden.
- Those hidden are known only to God but will be revealed and restored to the nation.

“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” – Romans 8:19

27. For the “sons of God” to be revealed they must first be hidden.
- Those who return to the LORD (Hos 6:1) are the “sons of the living God” (Hos.1:10).

b. The prophet then declares that:

“The children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!” – Hosea 1:11

28. That they “come up out of the land” suggests they are like seed hidden in ground that bursts forth (ascends) at the appointed time.

29. Jezreel (literally יזרעאל *Yiz'reel*) means “sown” and also “scattered” as seed is sown by scattering.

a. *Zerah* זרע (“seed”) forms root of this word – also name of first son born to Hosea.

b. Signifying Israel would be “scattered” among nations because of sins.

c. Would not be shown mercy (*lo' ruchamah*) and would not be His people (*lo'ammi*).

d. Yet, by being scattered they are simultaneously “sown” and “hidden” in ground.

30. In redemption all hidden, but to God, will be revealed and will “ascend” from nations of their exile (גלות *galut*) to the Land of Israel – and the day of *Yiz'reel* will be great.

a. The “one head” (ראש אחד *rosh echad*) is the Messiah.

31. Footnote: Consider spelling of *Yiz'reel* and *Yisrael* and the phonetic similarity.

a. *Yiz'reel* יזרעאל compared to *Yisrael* ישראל

b. Also, in Psalm 83, “hidden ones” (referring to God’ people) is צפניך *tze'funekha*.

c. The root of this word is same root as *Tzafnat Paneach* – name given to Joseph.

CHAPTER 30: MOSES CONCLUDES HIS DISCOURSE

1. Verse 1: “Then you will take it to heart among all the nations where you have been dispersed.”

a. “And you will return to the LORD your God...with all your heart and soul.” (verse 2).

b. The “great commandment” – love the LORD with all your heart, soul and strength.

c. All this is to emphasize what was just noted – the redemption of those scattered.

2. This “taking to heart” occurs when Israel is scattered among the nations.

a. Nachmanides noted this would occur at about the Messianic era.

b. More than intellectually receiving His Word, they will receive it in their heart.

c. Will recognize need to repent and desire to “return to the LORD” (Hosea 6:1).

d. Their heart’s desire will be to “know Him.”

3. Verse 3: “the LORD will turn you captivity and have compassion, will return and gather you.”

a. Where there is repentance there is restoration.

b. When Israel repents with their hearts and returns, God extends His mercy.

c. He will re-gather all those “hidden” and “reveal” them for the return.

4. Term “will return” or “turn back” (captivity) is ושב *v'shav* and means, literally, that God will return with your captivity.

a. Infers God was “in exile” with His people watching over them; will return with them.

b. Verse 4: Even if they are in the ends of the earth, He will gather them from there.

5. Verse 6: “The LORD will circumcise your heart and heart of offspring to love the LORD.”

a. That they can love Him with heart and soul that they may live.

b. He does this in response to their repentance – He helps repentant hearts.

c. Helps with struggles our fallen nature always stumbles over.

6. Most rabbinical sources believe this great change of heart will occur in Messianic era.
 - a. Nachmanides links this to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31.

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” – Jeremiah 31:31-34

7. Verse 9: In that day, “the LORD will rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your forefathers.”

8. Verses 11-14: God makes the Torah accessible to all His people –within reach if you desire.

“For this commandment which I command you today is not too **mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, **in your mouth and in your heart**, that you may do it.”**

– Deuteronomy 30:11-14

9. Not too “mysterious.” Hebrew is נִפְלְאוֹת *n’filat*: literally “wonderful, hidden”

- a. i.e. “hard to understand.”

- b. It is not abstract or esoteric like the heathen mystery religions.

- c. In most cases, it is common sense – doesn’t have to be confusing like theology.

10. It is as close as being in your mouth and in your heart – where it is supposed to be.

- a. The believer can carry the Word with him everywhere he goes.

- b. Has to be in his heart, however: “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

- c. Our heart recognizes our sin and our mouth confesses it to God effecting repentance.

“When you roam, they (commandments) will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” – Proverbs 6:22-23

11. If in your heart, it will never leave you – likewise, Y’shua promised He would never forsake.

- a. In fact, Paul refers to this passage in Torah to point the way to Y’shua:

“The righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Messiah down from above) or, ‘who will descend into the abyss (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead). But what does it say? “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Y'shua and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” – Romans 10:6-9

12. Y'shua, the “goal” and fulfillment of the Torah has descended from heaven to make it plain.
13. Verse 15: “I have set before you life and good, death and evil” – given a choice.
 - a. To keep His commands is life and good; to disobey is death.
 - b. Romans 8:7 defines the carnal mind (flesh) as “enmity against God.”
 - c. Because it is “not subject to the law of God.”
14. Consequently, failure to submit to God's Torah is death.
 - a. Submission is “life and peace” and being considered “sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).
15. The choice is ours to make: “All is in the hands of God except the fear of God.”
 - a. It is within our control whether or not we will obey Him.
 - b. Parent desires obedience born of love.
 - c. Meaning of life is “sanctifying His Name” – submitting our will to His will.
16. Verse 19: “I call heaven and earth to bear witness against you” – eternal witnesses.
 - a. Perhaps the signs in the heavens and earth are saying something to His people.
 - b. Cosmic signs and earthly birth pangs are testifying.

“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” – Romans 8:19-22

17. The birthpangs and groaning lead to the “redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23).
 - a. Perhaps we could also say “the body.”
18. Y'shua said this:

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars (the heavens); and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming **on the earth, for the **powers of the heavens** will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your **redemption** draws near.” – Luke 21:25**

19. Perhaps today we are seeing how the heavens and earth are being used as witnesses.
 - a. Manifestations are intended to provoke God's people to repentance and redemption.
20. Verse 19: “Choose life that you may live and your seed”
 - a. My obedience benefits more than just me but future generations.
21. Verse 20: “To love God, to hearken to His voice, to cleave to Him” – is the purpose of life.
 - a. This is how we live – God is our life.
 - b. Y'shua purpose was that we may have life “in abundance.”