



**#51-52 Nitzavim-Vayelech Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30
and Teaching: Be a Faithful Servant; 2020
by Moshe Schwab**

Names

Kefa – Peter
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Ya'akov – James
Yeshua – Jesus (in Hebrew it means "Salvation")
Yehoshua – Joshua
Yĕhōvāh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
Yochanan – John

Terms

Cohen, Cohanim – Priest, priest
Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
Parashah – (portion) one of 54 parts of the Torah
Rosh Hashanah – Yom Teruah; Jewish New Year
Shabbat – the 7th day of the week; we are to rest
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

This week is a double portion of scripture, Nitzavim and Vayelech. Nitzavim means "you all are standing" and begins with all Israel standing before God. Nitzavim can also mean established and an associated word in Hebrew (matz'vah) means pillar. Ya'akov is referred to as a pillar in Galatians 2:9, an established one. Israel is there to enter into a relationship agreement (covenant) with God. Some say it is like an ancient treaty. He will be God to them and they will be His people. They saw the abominations in Egypt of wood, stone, and precious metals.

They were not to turn away from God, but keep His commandments so they would not be cursed. They may think everything will go well if they just do what they want to instead of God's way. This is an important point; it's our nature to think that doing things our own way will work out fine, but we are not to do that. If they don't keep God's commandments, the people will see their devastation and wonder what happened. They will know that they didn't follow God the way you were supposed to.

The things hidden belong to God, but God's instructions (Torah) which are revealed are to be kept. We should remember to keep God's commandments; God gave them to us for our own good. There are some things we do not know, but God has given us His wisdom to make us a "wise and understanding people" Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV. When they turn back to God, God will bless them for keeping His commandments.

Moshe tells them to choose life and keep God's commandments; they are not too hard for them. Mitzvah means commandment in Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB. "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you." There are some who say the Old Testament is too hard to do. It is not true. The extra commandments are too hard to observe. Yeshua referred to this verse and said His yoke is not too hard to keep. Yoke in Jewish understanding refers to the Torah, the Old Testament. Yeshua said about those who are doing signs in His name, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice

lawlessness!" Matthew 7:23 NKJV. The Greek word used for lawlessness is "anomia." Nomia was the word used by the ancient Rabbis for the Torah. Anomia (the "a" negates it) is not keeping the Torah. Yeshua tells those who don't keep the Torah to depart from Him. Moshe then tells them to cling (cleave, stay close) to God; we do that by keeping His commands.

The Haftarah for Nitzavim is Isaiah 61:10 to 63:9. The original Haftarah included the verses Yeshua read just after He finished fasting (Luke 4:18-19). These verses would be read the week just before Rosh Hashanah. So, if we allow for a couple weeks, when we count back approximately 40 days, we end up near Tisha B'av. Just before Rosh Hashanah, Yeshua quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 NKJV, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Yeshua said that these scriptures have been fulfilled. All of scripture has not been fulfilled yet. Some say that Yeshua has already fulfilled everything. The next part of the scripture, Isaiah 61:2b says, "And the day of vengeance of our God." The day of God's vengeance has not occurred yet. Not everything has been fulfilled; there is still more to come.

This Haftarah says that Israel will have everlasting joy and will be a people who do what is right (righteousness); a people of praise. All will see this and God will rejoice over them. They will enjoy the fruits of their labors. Clearly, God is not done with Israel as some say; those that say so are being deceitful. They often misinterpret the Bible because of their faulty theology.

God is not done with Israel

Vayelech means, "he went." Moshe is now 120 years old and God has told him that he will not cross over into the Land. So, what does he do with the time he has left? He serves others! Years ago I said to myself that I want to be like Moshe. We should all want to be like Moshe.

He tells Israel and Y'hoshua that God will go before them and to boldly enter the land. Moshe then wrote down the Torah, gave it to the Cohanim, and told them that they were to read it to the people every seven years on Sukkot. Moshe and Y'hoshua go to the tent of meeting and God tells them that someday the people of Israel would become a disobedient people. In this portion, they are encouraged to boldly trust in God and to do what God told them to do; there are consequences for doing what is wrong. These are all things that we need to apply and remember for our own lives.

Because they would someday disobey God, they were to write a song that the people should learn as a testimony. Yehováh commissions Y'hoshua as Israel's new leader and Moshe finishes writing the Torah which was to be kept by the Ark. Moshe assembles all the leaders and tells them they will provoke God with their evil and he teaches them the Ha'azinu that God told him to write. Recognizing that any one of us could fail, should make us humble and open to anything that can help us do what is "right and good" (Deuteronomy 6:18).

Our culture brainwashes us into accepting sin. This brainwashing works through alluring tactics (through lust), by force (by making us conform to sin, or us wanting to belong), and by lying (our culture is filled with lies which contradict God's commands). Yeshua said in John 8:44 NKJV, "**You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it**." Do what is "right and good" and don't follow lies.

The Ha'azinu is to remind Israel that someday they will provoke God with their evil. While we like to hear and sing about good things, we also need to hear the complete story. We also need to apply ourselves to doing what is right and good. Rabbi Shaul says in Galatians that we shouldn't be deluded, "A person reaps what he sows;" Galatians 6:7 NKJV. If a person sows what is bad, God sees that. Sow good and God will reward us with eternal life. A pretty good trade off; we do what is good, we are rewarded for doing good in the present, and then get rewarded with eternal life with a good God.

It says in Hebrews 10:28-31 NKJV, "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

God will forgive us if we repent

While this may be difficult to hear, it is what the Bible says. We should also understand that God will forgive us if we repent. So, don't remain in your sin, but repent and decide you will follow God and do what is right. Shaul says to stand in Ephesians 6. So, STAND UP and get back on your feet spiritually! Yochanan said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" 1 John 1:9 NKJV. If God cleanses us of our sin, He will not hold them against us. Psalms 103:11-13: "For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him." Instead of failing, why not remain faithful. We are told to be strong in this portion. Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV says, "Be strong and of good courage."

The Haftarah for Vayelech is Hosea 14:2-10, Micah 7:18-20 (Joel 2:15-27 is included if this portion is during the 10 days of repentance. That Shabbat is called Shabbat Shuvah which means Shabbat of return; meaning return to God, teshuvah). In the Haftarah, Hosea uses pictorial imagery and He tells Israel to return to God; nothing but God can save us and make us:

Lilly – beautiful	Tree roots – stable	Olive tree – prosperous
Fragrance – pleasant	Shadow – protected	Grain – fertile
Vine – cover the land	Wine – have joy	

Ephraim will even repent of its idols because of what God is doing in Israel. It makes sense; God's ways are fruitful and right; those who do what is right will have life through them, but the sinful will stumble.

In Micah it says that God will forgive for He is merciful. He will have compassion and cast their sins into the depths of the sea. On Yom Teruah, we sometimes do a ceremony where we throw bread into a body of water or river and as the bread gets carried away (or sometimes eaten by birds), we think of our sins going away. It says in Micah that God will keep His promise of truth and mercy that has been promised to the children of Abraham and Jacob. This portion occurs before Rosh Hashanah this year. For my comments on Joel, see my previous teaching on these portions.

For Further Study

Be a Faithful Servant

(A practical teaching to accompany the Torah teaching, Nitzavim-Vayelech)

While Praying:

- * God is powerful and His works are beautiful. We can each take part in what God is doing through His power.
- * Our lives are to be centered and attached faithfully to God.
- * Work at being wholly clean people and don't carry a stained life with us.
- * Be ornamented with keeping the norm spiritually and not at being a deviant.

During this season leading up to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), we are to think about our lives and how we are doing spiritually. Last year we talked about spiritual warfare which is an important part of staying faithful. We also need to trust in God and His power. In our Torah study we mentioned that we are to cleave to God. We are to stay close to God and stay away from sin. In this Torah study, we also mentioned how we are not to rely on our own thinking and think our own ways are okay. Instead we should keep doing things God's way. Don't depart from God. Serve God; be a faithful servant.

God is powerful and His works are beautiful. We can each take part in what God is doing through His power.

The scriptures sometimes have so much to teach us. How amazing is God's creation. Somehow it just happens there is dry ground on the earth. If land was level all over the earth, the earth would be covered with water. How did we end up with dry ground? God spoke it into existence, "Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear;' and it was so;" Genesis 1:9 NKJV.

God's creation is beautiful; it reflects who He is. Psalms 111:2-4 NKJV says, "The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. His work is honorable and

glorious, And His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." It's true, isn't it. The sciences study the creation of God. That statement should rankle a few scientists. In a number of cases, science can only speculate. Look how long it took man to figure out how to go to Mars. Science moves at a snails pace, doesn't it. When God spoke things into existence, it just happened. God can do that because He is God. Mankind takes a long time to get anything done; mankind is nothing compared to God.

God is God and We Are Not

What's amazing about a relationship with God is that we can participate with God in life. If we keep His commandments, He blesses that and there is power associated with our obedience. The Torah says we can either have God's blessings or be cursed. If we do things our own way, we miss out on the power that God can put on our lives through our obedience. Sometimes, the consequences of doing what is wrong is not so severe, but just one big mistake can mess up our lives badly. Why not receive blessings instead of curses!

As believers in the Messiah, we also participate in the spiritual gifting that God gives us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is good and so are God's gifts that are associated with the Holy Spirit. We need to be reminded of these things. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Luke 11:13 NKJV. Notice the exclamation point. Even the translators thought this verse was important.

Shaul says that the spiritual gifts are to be used by the believers. We see them doing this in 1 Corinthians 14:26 NKJV, "Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." Shaul might be pointing out that their meetings were a little tedious, but notice how different they were than our modern meetings. The early believers used their spiritual gifts!

Early believers sang (psalms), had teachings, revelation (prophecy, words of knowledge and wisdom), and speaking in tongues with interpretation. They used the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit

We have different lists of spiritual gifts. There are probably many spiritual gifts. Remember, the Rabbis made incomplete lists. For example, it would be tedious to list every commandment so they would list a few of them. That's why we have different lists. The Rabbis would often summarize or give 2 answers to a question; for example love God and your neighbor. Hillel said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."¹ That is two commands. Hillel was a Jewish rabbi who lived in the 1st century. Notice how he summarized the Torah. He wasn't saying not to obey the whole Torah by his summary and neither was Yeshua when He summarized.

Do you see how much we need to understand the Bible in its Jewish context? The Bible even

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_the_Elder

says the Gentiles were to learn and keep the Torah. Referring to the Gentiles: "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Acts 15:21 NKJV. It's sad how people can read the Bible and not understand it properly. Let's read about some of the spiritual gifts. To learn more about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how to use them go to: <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/prayer-class>. This is really important. The Holy Spirit even saved my life at least a couple of times!

1 Corinthians 12:4-10 NKJV lists a number of gifts:

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues." Here, the gifts are called a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Many of these gifts were used in the Old Testament portion including other gifts like inspiration to do different kinds of work.

In Romans 12:4-8 NKJV they are called gifts (charisma):

"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

Ephesians 4:11 NKJV lists some gifts:

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Israel had all these gifts in the Old Testament portion; some of the prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah were apostles; they were sent. An apostle is someone who is sent; it is a common gift according to Ephesians. Shaul said, "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles;" Romans 16:7 NKJV (Junia is a woman's name). Some churches spiritualize the word apostle to mean something that it is not; They are doing that out of pride, and they are being deceitful and controlling. These are some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but there are others; we know that because we have different lists of gifts. These gifts bring the power of God into the assembly of believers. Just like God's creation is beautiful, His spiritual gifts are both powerful and beautiful. Again, go to: <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/prayer-class> for more teachings on the gifts/manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Our lives are to be centered and attached faithfully to God.

When we make something the center of our attention, we are keeping our eyes on it; we are to keep our eyes on the things of God and recognize His presence. God sees all we do. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good."

In our portion for today it says, "That you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life;" Deuteronomy 30:20 NKJV. What a great scripture. Obey God, cling to Him, stay close to Him; He is our life. He is the one who gave us life, and we can choose to be with Him for eternity.

Work at being wholly clean people and don't carry a stained life with us.

Have you ever had to walk around with a stain on your clothing? What about a stained spiritual life? I was at a business conference once and at lunch time, a bird had stained my shirt without me knowing it. One of the millionaires who were there was kind enough to tell me and he even tried to use some water and a napkin to clean it. I was amazed by his caring attitude. Perhaps that was the secret to his success. Do what is right and good and God will bless you the bible says.

Ya'akov tells us to get rid of the sin in our lives, have clean thoughts, and think of doing what is right. Resist the devil and draw near to God. James 4:7-10 says, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Ya'akov tells us we need to get serious about life and to be humble; we need to be willing to do what is right in the sight of an all knowing God.

"Draw Near to God and He will Draw Near to You"

We are not fooling God; we can't fool God. In fact, the Bible says God will not be mocked. Galatians 6:7 NKJV says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." God knows what's going on. Shaul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." God expects us to get with it; don't walk around with spiritual stain.

Be ornamented with keeping the norm spiritually and not at being a deviant.

People often identify people who are spiritual outcasts and keep their distance. Even unbelievers can sense a person who is deviant and not want to associate with them. Also, though we may hide our faults to others, God knows who we are. Yeshua didn't mince words when it came to sin. He said about those who sinned, "For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness;" Matthew 23:27-28 NKJV.

Some can be the slickest and nicest people, but their innermost thoughts could be filled with all kinds of worthless sinful desires. Yeshua said in Luke 6:45 NKJV, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil." Are we doing good and keeping God's commandments? God knows, so make sure you clean up your life. Yeshua also said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven;" Matthew 5:16 NKJV.

Remember good works in Jewish thought is to keep God's commandments. Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah to the world.

Now is a good time to set your life straight. We are coming up on Yom Kippur when we make a general confession of sins. Ya'akov said, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12 NKJV. Psalms 1:1-2 NKJV says, "Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." Let us serve Yehovah and be His blessed people.

Psalms 100:2-5

Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

Serve Yĕhōvāh² with Gladness

Some things God has hidden the Bible says, but we have His word to follow and we should do what we know and keep His commandments. We need to take care to continue to follow God; what God has given His believers is by no means a small matter. What God created is beautiful, His commandments are a blessing for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit is also good. God has given us gifts associated with the Holy Spirit and the early believers used them. We need to recognize that God's knows us and sees us; we should stay close to Him. No one can fool God; we shouldn't identify ourselves with those who are defiant or deviant. We should set our lives straight, and serve God and be faithful.

² In over 2363 manuscripts, God's name is pointed as Yĕhōvāh; once as Yehoveh; never as Yahweh.