

Nitzavim

נצבים

“Standing”

Deuteronomy 29:9 – 30:20

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion is arguably the climax of the book of Deuteronomy. Moses has led the Israelites in the renewal of their covenant with God and has implored them to be obedient to God’s commands. You can sense the emotion that Moses feels for the future of the people he has led for the past forty years.

1. Renewal of the Covenant - 29:9-29

a) According to this pivotal passage, exactly who was standing, listening to Moses? Why were they standing there? What was God preparing to do?

Those standing included the leaders of Israel (“chief men, elders, and officials”) and all the other men with their women and children as well as aliens. They were listening to Moses, preparing to enter into a covenant with God (a renewal of the covenant at Mount Sinai). God was preparing to enter into the covenant and bring about the promises he made to their forefathers.

b) What promise was God fulfilling as he entered into the covenant with the Israelites? Other than God and those Israelites present, who else did the covenant apply to?

God was promising to be their God and take Israel as his people, as he promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant also applied to “those who are not here today” (verse 14), that is, future generations - us!.

c) What specific evil did Moses warn of in verses 16-18? What was in the heart of a person who committed this evil? How did God deal with such a person?

God specifically warned against the worship of other gods, the sin that seemed to continuously plague Israel. The person that falls into this sin thinks that they will be protected by the blessing God offers to Israel and therefore is free to do as they please. When such a person sinned by worshiping other gods, he inadvertently endangered the whole community. God says that he will not forgive such a person.

Scripture Link:

In addition to the Israelites, there were “aliens” living among them. These included Egyptians (see **Exodus 12:38** and **Numbers 11:4**) as well as Midianites, such as Moses’ father-in-law and his family (see **Numbers 10:29**). These people were adopted into the nation of Israel. God has always accepted those who choose to be counted as His children.

One distinguishing characteristic of God’s covenants is that they are eternal, everlasting, and without end. With that in mind, who do you think “those who are not here today” (verse 17) might be?

Scripture Link:

See **Genesis 19** for the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim.

The Bible teaches that God is omniscient, knowing all things, even things that have not yet happened. However, God chooses to **reveal** certain things to his people through His word and by His prophets.

Notice that chapter 30 begins with the words “When all these blessings and curses” It’s as if Moses already knows that the calamities described in the previous chapters will indeed fall on the Israelites. In spite of this, Moses encourages them that God will NOT forget His covenant with them and that in the end, they will again be blessed by Him.

Scripture Link:

Circumcision of the heart is not just a New Testament concept. It is explained in **Deuteronomy 10:16** and here in verse 6, God states that He will perform that circumcision. Paul explains how the Holy Spirit does this in **Romans 2:28-29** and in **Colossians 2:11-12**.

d) If (or when) Israel committed the evil spoken about by Moses, what would be the consequences? To what historical event does Moses compare this? What conclusions will other nations come to? Has this occurred? If so, when?

Moses said that if Israel fell into the sin of worshipping other gods, then their descendants would see terrible calamity, much like Sodom and Gomorrah. Other nations will ask why God has been so angry with this people and their land. This certainly happened during the Babylonian captivity of Judah and, it could be argued, that it continued even up to the present state of Israel.

e) What do you think is meant by verse 29? What are the “secret things” and what are the “things revealed”?

The secret things are probably Israel’s future. These things God knew but did not reveal to Moses. The revealed things were his Torah, which was sufficient to keep Israel safe from the curses detailed here.

2. Prosperity after Turning to YHWH - 30:1-10

a) According to verse 1, what does Moses predict will happen to the Israelites? Did this indeed happen to the Israelites? If so, when?

In this verse, Moses seems to say that both the blessings and curses will fall upon Israel and that they will eventually be dispersed among the nations. This happened to the northern kingdom of Israel in ~722 b.c. Also, later the southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians. However, many of them returned to Israel. It happened again in 70 ad.

b) What did Moses say would happen after the event in verse 1? What causes this to happen? Has this happened to the Israelites? If so, when?

Moses says God will restore the descendants of the Israelites to the land when, in their captivity, they return to YHWH and obey Him with all their heart and soul. God says He will cause this to happen. Some argue that this happened after the Babylonian captivity. However, a more global version occurred with the creation of the modern state of Israel.

c) Read verses 4-6. Has this happened yet? How will the hearts of their descendants be “circumcised”? What will be the effect of this? Do you think this is the same event spoken of in Jeremiah 31:27-37?

In recent years, God has been gathering His people from all parts of the world. God says that He will circumcise the hearts of His people so that they will love Him (verse 6). This may be happening in part, however much more can be expected.

3. Offer of Life or Death - 30:11-20

a) According to Moses, is it possible to obey YHWH's commandments? Basically, what does it take for us to do this?

Yes, it is possible to obey God's commands. All one must do is love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and to study His commands to do them. (By diligently and honestly working to keep God's commands, one leads the kind of righteous life that God intends.)

b) What are the consequences when we either choose to love God and obey His commands or not?

The consequences of obedience are life and prosperity and the consequences of disobedience are death and destruction (verse 15).

c) Who did Moses call as witnesses to the renewal of the covenant between God and the Israelites? What does He exhort the Israelites to do?

Moses called heaven and earth as witnesses (verse 19). He encouraged the Israelites to choose life and blessings by being obedient to God's Torah.

In this climactic passage, you can feel the emotion in God's words (as spoken by Moses) to the Israelites. He begs them to be obedient to God's commands so that they may enjoy His blessings.

"This day . . . I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life . . ."

Deuteronomy 30:19

Digging deeper

1. Carefully read Deuteronomy 30:1-6. With the creation of the modern state of Israel, it would seem that this is happening today. Has all Israel been regathered? Now read Ephesians 2:11-22. As believers in Yeshua, we become citizens of Israel (Ephesians 2:19). Do we now share in the promises God made to Israel? What implications do you think this might have on your future?

Certainly many Jews have been regathered in Israel. As believers in Yeshua, we are also heirs to God's promises (Ephesians 3:6). Thus, we can expect to somehow be involved in the restoration spoken of by Moses. (Also, we know that when northern kingdom of Israel was conquered and dispersed by the Assyrians in ~721 bc, those Israelites lost their identity (see Hosea). Thus many Gentiles today could actually be descendants of those Israelites.) (NOTE: Ephesians 2:15 seems to indicate that Yeshua "abolished" the law. However, from Matthew 5:17, we know that he did not "abolish" the Torah but "fulfilled" it. A better understanding might be that Yeshua removed the penalty of the law for those who believe in Him and therefore have the Torah written on their hearts. He also "abolished" the barrier that separated Jews from Gentiles.)

Scripture Link:

In Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus, he states, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,..."

Ephesians 2:19

Scripture Link:

In **John 1:1-18**, the Apostle opens his gospel with a somewhat cryptic statement concerning the Word of God. After studying **Deuteronomy 30:11-20**, do John's words take on additional meaning for you?

2. Re-read Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Now read Romans 10:1-13 where Paul quotes Moses' words. What "word" is Moses referring to? How does Paul interpret this "word"? Are they the same? Does this add to your understanding of God's "word"?

The "word" that Moses is referring to is the Torah. In the Romans' passage, Paul says that this "word" is the word of faith, that Yeshua is the Messiah of God whom He raised from the dead for the salvation of all who believe. This then equates Yeshua with the Torah. See also John 1 where he says that the "... Word was God" (verse 1) and "The Word became flesh...." (verse 14).

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 61:10–63:9

Brit Hadashah : Romans 9:30-10:13; Hebrews 12:14-15