

Notes: Shabbat – January 7 2017

Start: 10 AM

Order of service:

1. Meet and greet
2. Introduction
3. Announcements
4. Liturgy – Ma to vu, Sh'ma, Avenu
5. Music
6. Message
7. Time of prayer
8. Aaronic Blessing
9. Kiddush
10. Oneg

Introduction: No Excuses

In continuing on the theme that Jeri conveyed earlier (see below), I want to emphasize a few points for which we will look at Moshe in Parashah Shemot:

Adonai garners Moshe's attention at the bush that burns and is not consumed, by which Moshe goes to investigate. Upon arriving at the bush, Moshe hears...

Exo 3:4 When Adonai saw that he had gone over to see, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moshe! Moshe!" He answered, "Here I am."

Exo 3:5 He said, "Don't come any closer! Take your sandals off your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Exo 3:6 I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya`akov." Moshe covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Exo 3:7 Adonai said, "I have seen how my people are being oppressed in Egypt and heard their cry for release from their slavemasters, because I know their pain."

Exo 3:8 I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that country to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the place of the Kena`ani, Hitti, Emori, P'rizi, Hivi and Y'vusi."

He heard the voice of Adonai speaking to him directly, in which his first reaction was of fear, covering his face. At this point Moshe likely knew more about all the other gods than that of the "the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya`akov." Yet, there was still a fear, a reverence to even look upon Adonai.

Exo 3:9 Yes, the cry of the people of Isra'el has come to me, and I have seen how terribly the Egyptians oppress them."

Exo 3:10 Therefore, now, come; and I will send you to Pharaoh; so that you can lead my people, the descendants of Isra'el, out of Egypt."

Exo 3:11 Moshe said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the people of Isra'el out of Egypt?"

Excuse 1 – Who am I?

We tend to look at ourselves as being insignificant when we were created in the likeness of Adonai. By diminishing who we are, we make the excuse of being insignificant and irrelevant, yet if that were truly the case, why is Adonai seeking our attention?

Response 1 – I am with you!

Exo 3:12 He replied, "I will surely be with you. Your sign that I have sent you will be that when you have led the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Excuse 2 – Who am I, part 2:

Exo 3:13 Moshe said to God, "Look, when I appear before the people of Isra'el and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you'; and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?"

We tend to dwell on our insecurity and perceived insignificance, yet Adonai does not.

Exo 3:14 God said to Moshe, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh [*I am/will be what I am/will be*]," and added, "Here is what to say to the people of Isra'el: 'Ehyeh [*I Am or I Will Be*] has sent me to you.' "

Exo 3:15 God said further to Moshe, "Say this to the people of Isra'el: 'Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh (יהוה) [*Adonai*], the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya`akov, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered generation after generation.

Exo 3:16 Go, gather the leaders of Isra'el together, and say to them, 'Adonai, the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya`akov, has appeared to me and said, "I have been paying close attention to you and have seen what is being done to you in Egypt;

Exo 3:17 and I have said that I will lead you up out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Kena`ani, Hitti, Emori, P'rizi, Hivi and Y'vusi, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' "

Exo 3:18 They will heed what you say. Then you will come, you and the leaders of Isra'el, before the king of Egypt; and you will tell him, 'Adonai, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now, please, let us go three days' journey into the desert; so that we can sacrifice to Adonai our God.'

Exo 3:19 I know that the king of Egypt will not let you leave unless he is forced to do so.

Exo 3:20 But I will reach out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will do there. After that, he will let you go.

Exo 3:21 Moreover, I will make the Egyptians so well-disposed toward this people that when you go, you won't go empty-handed.

Exo 3:22 Rather, all the women will ask their neighbors and house guests for silver and gold jewelry and clothing, with which you will dress your own sons and daughters. In this way you will plunder the Egyptians."

When we are uncertain, Adonai is certain. It is when we truly discern Adonai's instruction that we should follow Him without question, yet it is us who get in the way, through doubt, fear, insecurity.

Excuse 3 - doubt

Exo 4:1 Moshe replied, "But I'm certain they won't believe me, and they won't listen to what I say, because they'll say, 'Adonai did not appear to you.' "

Doubt we are capable

Yet, Adonai doesn't doubt us and provides us with all we require...

Exo 4:2 Adonai answered him, "What is that in your hand?" and he said, "A staff."

Exo 4:3 He said, "Throw it on the ground!" and he threw it on the ground. It turned into a snake, and Moshe

recoiled from it.

Exo 4:4 Then Adonai said to Moshe, "Put your hand out and take it by the tail." He reached out with his hand and took hold of it, and it became a staff in his hand.

Exo 4:5 "This is so that they will believe that Adonai, the God of their fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya`akov, has appeared to you!"

Exo 4:6 Furthermore Adonai said to him, "Now put your hand inside your coat." He put his hand in his coat; and when he took it out his hand was leprous, as white as snow.

Exo 4:7 Then God said, "Now put your hand back in your coat." He put his hand back in his coat; and when he took it out, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.

Exo 4:8 "If they won't believe you or heed the evidence of the first sign, they will be convinced by the second.

Exo 4:9 But if they aren't persuaded even by both these signs and still won't listen to what you say, then take some water from the river, and pour it on the ground. The water you take from the river will turn into blood on the dry land."

Adonai provides Moshe with three signs to convey to the people if at first they don't believe Moshe when he tells them who has sent him.

Excuse 4 – our abilities

Exo 4:10 Moshe said to Adonai, "Oh, Adonai, I'm a terrible speaker. I always have been, and I'm no better now, even after you've spoken to your servant! My words come slowly, my tongue moves slowly."

Exo 4:11 Adonai answered him, "Who gives a person a mouth? Who makes a person dumb or deaf, keen-sighted or blind? Isn't it I, Adonai?"

Exo 4:12 Now, therefore, go; and I will be with your mouth and will teach you what to say."

Exo 4:13 But he replied, "Please, Lord, send someone else – anyone you want!"

Exo 4:14 At this, Adonai's anger blazed up against Moshe; he said, "Don't you have a brother, Aharon the Levi? I know that he's a good speaker. In fact, here he is now, coming out to meet you; and he'll be happy to see you.

Exo 4:15 You will speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and his, teaching you both what to do.

Exo 4:16 Thus he will be your spokesman to the people, in effect; for you, he will be a mouth; and for him, you will be like God.

Exo 4:17 Now take this staff in your hand, because you need it to perform the signs."

Moshe provide Adonai excuse after excuse as to why he was the wrong man for the mission, yet Adonai would hear none of it.

Are you making excuses for yourself?

Guess what, Adonai doesn't want to hear your excuses, He wants you, because He has called you.

He has opened your eyes to who He is, just as He did with Moshe.

So, when Adonai's commands have been placed upon your heart, do you make excuses?

I want to remind you of this passage of scripture...

Exo 20:3 ☞ "You are to have no other gods before me.

Exo 20:4 You are not to make for yourselves a carved image or any kind of representation of anything in heaven above, on the earth beneath or in the water below the shoreline.

Exo 20:5 You are not to bow down to them or serve them; for I, Adonai your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

Exo 20:6 but displaying grace to the thousandth generation of those who love me and obey my mitzvot.

I am starting with this passage, because of the broad reaching nature...

You will have no other gods before me.

Nothing is to be placed before Adonai in our lives.

When we make excuses, we open a door that we should never open. That door is the door that protects our relationship with Him. That door leads to a weakening of our relationship.

Yeshua challenges the excuses of those whose commitment is weak. To the excuses of those who reject him altogether, as at Luke 14:17-20, He responds with fury and withdraws his offer.

Luk 14:17 When the time came for the banquet, he sent his slave to tell those who had been invited, 'Come! Everything is ready!'

Luk 14:18 But they responded with a chorus of excuses. The first said to him, 'I've just bought a field, and I have to go out and see it. Please accept my apologies.'

Luk 14:19 Another said, 'I've just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to test them out. Please accept my apologies.'

Luk 14:20 Still another said, 'I have just gotten married, so I can't come.'

Luk 14:21 The slave came and reported these things to his master. "Then the owner of the house, in a rage, told his slave, 'Quick, go out into the streets and alleys of the city; and bring in the poor, the disfigured, the blind and the crippled!'

Luk 14:24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet! "

Yeshua offers this response in a Parable, relating His message and His response to those who make excuses regarding acceptance.

On a more serious note, you have a similar response towards those that identify themselves as believers...

Mat 7:22 On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?'

Mat 7:23 Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

Mat 7:24 "So, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on bedrock.

Lawlessness, Greek *anomia*, "absence of law, absence of *Torah*." Hence **you workers of lawlessness** means "you who act as if there were no *Torah*"; it confirms Yeshua's teaching on the permanence of the *Torah* ([Mat 5:17-20](#)). The Greek word "*anomia*" can be rendered "wickedness," but doing so here skirts the Jewish context.

Yet are not recognized as believers because of their choices, even doing the works of Yeshua, he condemns them

In perspective, any kind of excuse seems foolish, like the excuses people put forth today:

"I can't believe in Yeshua because I'm Jewish" - but all the early believers were Jewish, as well as many since.

"I'll have to give up too much" - yet far less than what is to be gained.

"I'll lose my friends" -

Yeshua's response...

Mar 10:29 Yeshua said, "Yes! I tell you that there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News,

Mar 10:30 who will not receive a hundred times over, now, in the `olam hazeh, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands — with persecutions! — and in the `olam haba, eternal life.

To all the excuses the Bible has answers, but there is no guarantee people will accept them. Just as Moshe was uncertain as to whether the people would accept what he was saying.

By placing God first, over and above everyone and everything – He does honor the faithful...

How did Yeshua handle excuses from those He went to...

Luk 12:51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace in the Land? Not peace, I tell you, but division!

Luk 12:52 For from now on, a household of five will be divided, three against two, two against three.

Luk 12:53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

Yeshua is not to rule in glory at his first coming; he is not at that time to fulfill the Messianic prophecies of world peace, e.g., "They shall beat their swords into plowshares..." ([Isa 2:4](#), [Mic 4:3](#)).

For this reason he will **bring... division**: some will acknowledge him as Messiah, while others will not, so that families will be split down the middle over this issue, even to the point where theological differences will divide a family.

Both are believers, yet do not see or understand scripture from the same perspective.

We see other examples of excuses Yeshua encounters...

Luk 9:59 To another he said, "Follow me!" but the man replied, "Sir, first let me go away and bury my father."

Luk 9:60 Yeshua said, "Let the dead bury their own dead; you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God!"

Luk 9:61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, sir, but first let me say good-bye to the people at home."

Luk 9:62 To him Yeshua said, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and keeps looking back is fit to serve in the Kingdom of God."

"Let the dead bury their own dead" often is conveyed as the spiritual condition of Israel, in no way is this what Yeshua is referring to. The dead burying their own dead is referring to the second burial when the bones are moved from a sepulcher and buried in a grave.

This man felt it more important to do this, referring to reburying the remains of his father, who has been dead for a year than to follow Yeshua.

The synagogue is the center of the community.

There is much that can be said regarding the synagogue in relation to the Jewish community.

In being the center of the community, it was the destination for Shabbat:

Exo 20:8 ¶ "Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God.

It was the place you went to remember the Sabbath, and to keep it holy, that is set apart for God.

In remembering the Sabbath as Israel was instructed can be understood as follows:

1. A reminder of the giver of the Sabbath
2. A reminder of the creator of life and of the Sabbath

In each case, remembering the Sabbath brings us back to Adonai.

It was not a denominationally based institution, where if you believed in one view you would meet in one place and if you believed in another view you would meet in a different place. All would meet in one place considering the synagogue was the center of the Jewish community.

We see this dynamic several times in scripture...one such time is Acts 13:13 – 15:

Act 13:13 Having set sail from Paphos, Sha'ul and his companions arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There Yochanan left them and returned to Yerushalayim,

Act 13:14 but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Act 13:15 After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message, "Brothers, if any of you has a word of exhortation for the people, speak!"

Within the synagogue you would have both primary schools of thought reading scripture and debating its meaning.

The schools of Hillel & Shammai

Hillel and Shammai lived in the generation before Yeshua and were often on opposing sides when interpreting scripture.

The [Talmud](#) records over 300 differences of opinion between Beit Hillel (the House of Hillel) and Beit Shammai (the House of Shammai).

Hillel the Elder's friendly adversary was Shammai, a native of the Land of Israel about whom little is known except that he was a builder, known for the strictness of his views. He was reputed to be dour, quick-tempered and impatient. Both lived during the reign of [King Herod](#) (37-4 BCE), an oppressive period in Jewish history because of the [Roman](#) occupation of the Land of Israel.

Shammai was concerned that if Jews had too much contact with the Romans, the Jewish community would be weakened, and this attitude was reflected in his strict interpretation of Jewish law. Hillel did not share Shammai's fear and therefore was more liberal in his view of law.

This takes us to Hebrews 10:24 – 25:

Heb 10:24 And let us keep paying attention to one another, in order to spur each other on to love and good deeds,

Heb 10:25 not neglecting our own congregational meetings, as some have made a practice of doing, but, rather, encouraging each other. And let us do this all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Not neglecting our congregational meetings (Greek *episunagogeên*; one could render the phrase, "not neglecting to synagogue ourselves together").

"Hillel said, 'Do not separate yourself from the community.' " (Avot 2:4)

Indicating that the synagogue is what connects the community.

It is the heart that connects all the arteries and veins. At its center, pumping blood to all extremities of the body, oxygenating the blood, giving it life.

Blood without oxygen congeals, whereas blood with oxygen flows and distributes life to the body.

This is the intention of the synagogue in the first century.

This is one of the purposes of Kehilah Portland.

Unfortunately, this image is not always seen, let alone embraced.

Taking this image further...

How many of you use your heart selectively, meaning only when you need it?

How many of you say, my lungs need more attention today, so I will focus on them?

You can't isolate what functions in your body. Likewise, choosing when to attend is trying to do the same thing.

At this point in our history we only meet once a week, but we make the most out of this one meeting.

We are moving towards a midweek meeting whereby what we are unable to address on Shabbat, we will now be able to spend additional time together, addressing other areas of scripture.

We will not be meeting just for the sake of meeting, but our purpose of meeting is to further equip and strengthen you in your walk with Messiah.

David Stern makes the following observation...

Many believers not only neglect to meet regularly with a congregation of believers but suppose it unnecessary. This is a very serious mistake, indeed a heresy which endangers their salvation – consider the following:

Joh 13:34 "I am giving you a new command: that you keep on loving each other. In the same way that I have loved you, you are also to keep on loving each other.

Joh 13:35 Everyone will know that you are my talmidim by the fact that you have love for each other."

1Jn 3:10 Here is how one can distinguish clearly between God's children and those of the Adversary: everyone who does not continue doing what is right is not from God. Likewise, anyone who fails to keep loving his brother is not from God.

1Jn 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning: that we should love each other

1Jn 3:12 and not be like Kayin, who was from the Evil One and murdered his own brother. Why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

1Jn 3:14 We, for our part, know that we have passed from death to life because we keep loving the brothers. The person who fails to keep on loving is still under the power of death.

1Jn 3:18 Children, let us love not with words and talk, but with actions and in reality!

1Jn 4:7 Beloved friends, let us love one another; because love is from God; and everyone who loves has God as his Father and knows God.

1Jn 4:8 Those who do not love, do not know God; because God is love.

Why am I sharing these verses with you?

Because biblical religion or what we call a biblical lifestyle is socially oriented.

How does one endanger their salvation by not remaining faithful in attendance, or by putting other things ahead of it?

I have used this term before... "weak sheep".

It is described in who we are and what we do...

Beit tefilah – a house of prayer

Beit midrash – a house of study

Beit hallel – a house of praise.

This is where you gain your nourishment, strengthen your faith with like minded believers and equip yourselves to endure the other six days of the week.

Neglecting such things leads to weak sheep, sick sheep, and sheep that go astray.

It is when you are not attached to a congregation that you can be led astray, you are susceptible to bad teachings, doctrines and even heresies.

Scripture does not emphasize individual salvation over salvation as a community. Both are required, in order to form a strong and healthy body that are believers in Messiah Yeshua.

Eph 4:11 Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries, some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers.

Eph 4:12 Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah,
Eph 4:13 until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection.

Individuals comprise a community just as individuals comprise Israel.

Israel was not judged by the actions of individuals but by the actions of individuals within the nation.

They experienced fallout as a nation.

Even the righteous had to endure the punishment of exile, caused by the many.

Adonai says that there is always a faithful remnant...

Rom 11:4 But what is God's answer to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not knelt down to Baal."

Rom 11:5 It's the same way in the present age: there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

Today's message that over emphasizes a personal savior deemphasizes what scripture emphasizes.

From David Stern's commentary...

The *Tanakh* speaks of the *kahal* (assembly) and the *'edah* (congregation), the New Covenant writings speak of the *ekklêsia* (called-out community, "church") and the Body of the Messiah, and both of the people of God. These are not mystical ideas. True, there is a worldwide spiritual unity of all believers throughout all time which transcends their physically gathering together. But the emphasis in the *Tanakh* is on the common historical destiny of God's people and their need to treat each other with justice and mercy. The New Covenant is no less concerned with the group; it commands believers to love each other in real, practical ways and to build up the Body of the Messiah. This necessitates personal involvement, relationship, communication and working together for the Kingdom of God; and these are impossible challenges unless God's people meet together often.

In the last few decades, extreme forms of individualism spawned in the secular world have infected the Messianic Community and produced efforts to discredit the importance of believers' meeting together. Unabashed selfishness, championed by writers such as Ayn Rand and Robert Ringgren (*Looking Out For #1*), has become an acceptable part of popular culture. As the emptiness of outward conformity was exposed by sociologists like David Riesman (*The Lonely Crowd*), its opposite number, self-preoccupation, took its place; drug abuse and the turn toward Eastern religions are symptoms. First welcomed as a step toward consciousness-raising (Charles Reich, *The Greening of America*), such absorption with self was quickly recognized as escapist and destructive of the social fabric (Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*).

In addition to these influences from the secular world, believers often bring with them from their childhood a distaste for organized religion, which leads them to throw out the baby (fellowship, working together) with the bathwater (dead institutional forms, perfunctory attendance at meetings without genuine communion). Television preaching and home study materials further facilitate passive "blessing" without active involvement. Thus many professed believers suppose that their personal tie to God is the only element of their religious life that matters. But without purposeful contact with other believers, fruitful work for the Kingdom soon ceases, prayer becomes dry, the world shrinks, not only social conscience but even social awareness succumbs, and the person quickly withdraws into a world of his own in which costless discipleship and cheap grace prevail.

A different but related perversion of true congregational meeting consists in moving from one *kehillah* (Hebrew, "congregation") to another without becoming committed to any. People who do this delude themselves if they suppose they are **not neglecting congregational meetings**, for such "butterflies" can neither become close to any one group nor work with other people toward a common goal.

1Pe 2:5 you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be cohanim set apart for God to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him through Yeshua the Messiah.

"Living stones being built into a spiritual house" (**1Pe 2:5**) do not move about from window to wall to ceiling. Paul did not spend long in any one place, but he was a faithful member of one local congregation (Antioch), who sent him on his journeys with the laying on of hands and evaluated what he accomplished; he did not proceed on his own initiative, and he did not interpret the Holy Spirit's command by himself (**Act 13:1-4**, **Act. 14:25-Act. 15:2**, **Act 15:35-40**). The time has come for God's people to understand that spirituality means what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called, in the title of his book, *Life Together*.

All of this should be easy for Jewish believers to understand, since Judaism fosters a strong communal feeling that fits well with the exhortation of this verse.

Let me further emphasize that I do understand things do happen and that there are extenuating circumstances. However,

These are the verses that immediately follow Hebrews 10:24 – 25:

Heb 10:26 For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

There was no sacrifice for forgiveness of intentional sin under Moses, and Yeshua's sacrifice doesn't apply to anyone who does not repent of their transgressions either.

Heb 10:27 but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies.

Heb 10:28 Someone who disregards the Torah of Moshe is put to death without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses.

Heb 10:29 Think how much worse will be the punishment deserved by someone who has trampled underfoot the Son of God; who has treated as something common the blood of the covenant which made him holy; and who has insulted the Spirit, giver of God's grace!

Heb 10:30 For the One we know is the One who said, "Vengeance is my responsibility; I will repay," and then said, "Adonai will judge his people."

Heb 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

As you see the Day approaching. "The Day" is the Day of Judgment, and the phrase leads into a warning

for believers.

The gathering together of believers for the purpose of equipping is of vital importance. As mentioned earlier, neglecting such a thing leads to weak sheep, sick sheep and sheep that are easily lead astray.

Keep in mind this verse...

[Mat 16:24](#) Then Yeshua told his talmidim, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him say 'No' to himself, take up his execution-stake, and keep following me.

The KJV says “deny yourselves”

It is not me first and God to follow, but the exact opposite. God first and I follow Him.

Those of you who are attending on a regular basis have accepted our beliefs as a congregation. If you haven't, then you are likely here for the wrong reasons. Part of our beliefs as a congregation is Shabbat. It is the primary day we meet, worship, study and fellowship as a congregation.

I have said many times, “you miss a little, you miss a lot” Meaning that missing one week means that there are teachings and interactions during the teachings that could be valuable insight that may not be provide in my sermon notes.

You are gaining an understanding of the vision of the congregation.

You are being equipped to serve the one who you follow – Yeshua.

At times I am not certain if it is frustration or disappointment or maybe it is a combination of both, but, when people give me this reason or that reason why they won't be here, I am greatly saddened.

When there is a conflict and you are to be in two places at the same time, do you ask yourself...

Is what you are doing in place of attending Shabbat service more important?

Is what you are doing only able to be done on one day or at one time?

I feel I need to remind everyone what Shabbat is...This is what Leviticus says about it...

[Lev 23:3](#) " Work is to be done on six days; but the seventh day is a Shabbat of complete rest, a holy convocation; you are not to do any kind of work; it is a Shabbat for Adonai, even in your homes.

Shabbat is not just a day of rest, but there is a command attached to it to gather together.

Convocation – action of calling people together for a large assembly

Holy – dedicated / consecrated to God

something that is sacred

I would not ask anyone in the congregation to do more that I am willing to do myself.

Each and every Shabbat is important. As your Rabbi, I take seriously the responsibility that Adonai has given me to do. Shepherding this congregation.

A comment was made that family comes first, to which I responded no. If you look at Adonai's instructions and how they are structured, also conveys the order in which we are to live our lives.

The first four commandments relate to Adonai and our relationship with Him.

The fourth commandment also relates to Adonai, but instructs us regarding our worship – Shabbat is a Holy convocation.

The fifth is our first commandment that relates to our relationship with others. We are instructed to honor our Father and Mother.

Commandments 6 – 10 instruct us regarding our conduct towards others.

When we live according to this order, Adonai will bless those who follow Him.

We are to deny ourselves, meaning denying how we think we are do do things, want to do things, in favor of doing things as Adonai instructs.

So, where are your priorities in relation to other things that may come up.

Are you putting family ahead of a Holy convocation?

With those who have to work on Shabbat, there is a challenge here because unless you are your own boss, you are under the authority of another person. I say this because I don't want to be misunderstood.

There are times when Shabbat must be set aside or there are other things that Adonai considers of greater priority.

Brit Milah, circumcision is to be performed on the 8th day regardless if it is done on Shabbat.

Sometimes it is not always practical to have Shabbat, such as during a time of war.

On other occasions, you may be in a position where you are doing good and serving others.

The greater issue is when you place a priority on something that isn't a priority.

I know of circumstances that challenge people in our congregation because things get planned on Shabbat. Family events, reunions, weddings, etc...more often than not, happen on Shabbat.

Ask yourselves this, if the shoe was on the other foot and you planned something on Sunday, how would others respond.

Would they say "we can't go because we have church"?

Ask yourselves, do others truly respect what you believe or do they dismiss it?

Are you willing to deny yourself and possibly relationships with others, in order to serve Adonai, become a stronger believer and follow Him?

Sacrifices, not compromises are required for believers.

Yeshua went to the synagogue of the town he lived in...

Luk 4:16 Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went to the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read,

Luk 4:17 and he was given the scroll of the prophet Yesha`yahu. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written,

Luk 4:18 "The Spirit of Adonai is upon me; therefore he has anointed me to announce Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the imprisoned and renewed sight for the blind, to release those who have been crushed,

Luk 4:19 to proclaim a year of the favor of Adonai."

Luk 4:20 After closing the scroll and returning it to the shammash, he sat down; and the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Sha'ul traveled to many cities and in each city went to the synagogue...

Act 13:13 Having set sail from Paphos, Sha'ul and his companions arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There Yochanan left them and returned to Yerushalayim,

Act 13:14 but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Act 13:15 After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message, "Brothers, if any of you has a word of exhortation for the people, speak!"

Act 14:1 In Iconium the same thing happened — they went into the synagogue and spoke in such a way that a large number of both Jews and Greeks came to trust.

Act 17:1 After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Sha'ul and Sila came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue.

Act 18:1 After this, Sha'ul left Athens and went to Corinth,

Act 18:4 Sha'ul also began carrying on discussions every Shabbat in the synagogue, where he tried to convince both Jews and Greeks.

Act 19:1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Sha'ul completed his travels through the inland country and arrived at Ephesus, where he found a few talmidim.

Act 19:8 Sha'ul went into the synagogue; and for three months he spoke out boldly, engaging in dialogue and trying to persuade people about the Kingdom of God.

On Shabbat they were in the synagogue for a Holy convocation – a gathering that is set apart from other gatherings. It is a day that God sanctified to Himself and gave it to Israel. Through God's relationship with Israel, via His covenants, the nations have access to salvation through Messiah.

Gen 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, along with everything in them.

Gen 2:2 On the seventh day God was finished with his work which he had made, so he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Gen 2:3 God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all his work which he had created, so that it itself could produce.

Grafted into the same vine and feeding from one root system does not promote two ways, one for Jews and one for Gentiles, but rather One God and one way through one Messiah.

NO EXCUSES – OWN YOUR CHOICES

“If something is important to you, you’ll find a way, if it isn’t you’ll find an excuse.”

I'm tired of hearing people make excuses for why they can't do what God has told them to do up to an including why they cannot keep the most basic of commandments to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. I sick of hearing, I'm so tired, I had a family event. I am so busy. I had to get ready for next week. Be honest....you should be saying I have something way more important than you and your commandments God. Sorry, maybe I will catch you next week, if I have time that is or am not too tired.

As we begin a new year it is time to make some decisions. Either you are going to go with God all the way, or you are going to get out. God is calling you to be hot, or be cold, but He is no longer tolerating your being lukewarm. The battles we are about to face need talmiydim who truly know God's voice and will act upon His commands no matter the cost.

Frankly, I don't want to hear excuses. They don't mean anything; whatever your situation is, God has a way out. Instead of spending time talking about our excuse, we need to get in the Word and find out what God has to say about the situation, the problem, and conquer it. Take dominion over it - subdue it.

We want the promises of God, right? He's not holding them back. You know who's holding them back? For most of us, it's not the adversary. We're holding them back ourselves, because we want to dabble in what the world has to offer, and then do what God is saying as a last resort. You know, when we're in trouble and we've just got to have an answer. We can't do that anymore. We have to let the excuses go.

Mankind has been making excuses from the very beginning. The Bible is littered with excuse-makers, starting off with Eve in Genesis 3:13 claiming it was the serpent's fault with its erroneous ability to deceive her and then Adam chimed in with well God it was the woman that YOU gave me.

The truth is we can't really make excuses for our sin, either. Like Adam and Eve, we're responsible for our own choices, and like Adam and Eve we will pay the consequences for those choices. James tells us in James 1:14 - each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by HIS own desire.

Excuses never make you better. And they don't change your circumstances: they solidify them. When excuses become a habit, you're running on a road to failure.

Instead of pointing the finger, we need to take responsibility and assume ownership of the problem. We must own both the problem and the solution. It's time to stop making excuses.

GOD IS SAYING ENOUGH!

It's time to receive the victory God has in store for you. He can cause you to be at the right place at the right time. If you speak life into your situation and speak faith into your circumstances, the favor of God and the blessings of Heaven will chase you down when you stop excusing them away.

It took me most of my life before I noticed that, in Psalm 23, goodness and mercy are the things that FOLLOW me. Why, I had been chasing that stuff all my life! But they are results: the after effects; not primary causes; not goals to attain. I found that, in the process of trying to capture them, I had been chasing my tail, literally, most of my life. Why, they are supposed to be chasing me! They are the side effects of righteousness, if you will. When I reach out for Him, in all the ways He has given me to do that (and all the reaching, from repentance to longing, from trying and failing to gratitude for all that He provided that I did NOT 'earn' – all, even the failing – is counted as righteousness, goodness and mercy are how He responds to me. There's no use trying to want the good stuff without Him, for He IS the good stuff. He cannot bless me without showing up, for there is no good thing apart from Him. It is a package deal, and this is why the wicked rage, for they want to commit highway robbery, and intercept the mail coach BEFORE it reaches the bank. They desire the good stuff without its Owner.

When I long for love, and attempt to reach out, He counts my pitiful attempts as the real thing, and does the rest. I am connected – which is what righteousness IS – ultimately, not because I am an expert at connecting, but because He met me, when I did try, ALL THE WAY with no excuses! He gave me the motive force, He supplied the power to change, He even freed me up so that I could choose and my choosing would actually result in something real.

Trust the Word of God and the plans that He has for your life! God's plan says He will give you a new hope and a bright future.

Success will ultimately come to you when your dreams become bigger than your excuses.

Put to rest forever the old, makeshift justifications. Peel back the layers of excuse after excuse that are holding you back from God's best! Become a new creation in Messiah and let Adonai justify you, vindicate you, and excuse you from your excuses!

Stop excusing away your dreams. Instead, grab hold of them. Start speaking life into your life. Let the promises of God settle in your heart and declare these truths and let them override your regrets and rationalizations now!

When you give up your excuses you will find your results! Just look at Jeremiah 1:4-10:

Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."

What do we need to take hold of this truth? Do we have to see a burning bush and God speaking to us from this bush telling us to go rescue His people, would that inspire most of us to go? No, because Moses even after that supernatural encounter with a burning bush, turns around and offers God four excuses why he can not do it.

I could keep listing examples but even more unfortunate is that we are too often like Moses and the others. When God speaks to us we offer him excuses why we cannot do it, why we are not good enough or why someone else would be better.

From this point on, when you catch yourself making an excuse, you have to stop yourself and say, "No more excuses." And then don't just say it, take the excuse and replace it with what God says about that situation.

When you think about it isn't an excuse really just a lie the enemy uses to blindfold us and keep us in mediocrity?

An excuse is most often a false reason we use to try to get ourselves off the hook or out of being responsible. To run away from the truth or to not deal with the truth. Unfortunately, making excuses keeps us from moving forward. Making excuses stops us in our tracks. Making excuses keeps us from growing and making progress in our life. To deal with the problem of making excuses, we need to take control of our excuses. To take charge of all the whispers in our mind telling us the circumstances of our life are someone else's doing and not related to what we have done or not related to who we are. You must realize for every excuse there is another hidden truth ready to unlock your fullest potential. Without whining, complaining, or making excuses, you can turn every excuse into a time of thinking about opportunity, power, and growth. Without whining, complaining, or making excuses, you can turn even the worst circumstance to your favor.

So for 2017 NO MORE EXCUSES, OWN YOUR CHOICES. We have to let the excuses go. The excuses are robbing us of our God-given right to dominate. And I've decided to not let excuses dominate me.

This year there will be no more excuses. We have seen over and over in God's Word that there is no excuse for us not to do what He has commanded. Just accept it, receive it, and say, I see it in your Word, God. Amen, which means so be it. That's all I need to know. That's the way it's going to be.