

National Reconciliation

One thing is clear in this election year, it is not business as usual. There is a deep divide in our nation. Sin has become so entrenched in our society that what is right and what is wrong are quickly becoming one and the same. Paul said it would be so: *“²¹for even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks. Instead, their thinking became futile, and their senseless hearts were made dark. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools. ²³They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image in the form of mortal man and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the evil desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies with one another. ²⁵They traded the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to shameful passions. Even their women exchanged natural relations for what is against nature. ²⁷Likewise the men abandoned natural relations with women and were burning with passion toward one another—men committing shameful acts with other men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸And just as they did not see fit to recognize God, God gave them over to a depraved (KJV, reprobate) mind, to do what is not fitting” (Romans 1:21-28).* What a fitting description of our country!

Our *Erev Yom Kippur* Service began with the hauntingly beautiful melody of the *Kol Nidre* prayer, which is a plea to *Yah Adonai* to release us of vows. To understand the *Kol Nidre* prayer, and why it is so significant in the synagogue liturgy, one must have a view of the medieval times in which it was composed.

Because conversion of the Jews was seen as an urgently needed spiritual goal for the Catholic Church in the middle ages by such methods as public debates over whether the Messiah had already come, and *conversionist sermons* by Catholic preachers in the synagogues or in churches, and with mandatory attendance by all Jews above age 12. By 1411, a Dominican friar, *Vincent Ferrar*, lead a mob through Castile on *Shabbat*, and seizing the *Torah Scroll* with one hand, and a crucifix in the other, offered the Jews the choice, *Baptism or death!* Some 70 other Spanish towns and cities had similar murders or forced conversions.

Under such pressure, some Jewish people made a nominal conversion to Catholicism. However, their consciences were plagued by their denial of the Faith and the God of the *Torah*. Their newfound affiliation offered them no spiritual solace. Many secretly practiced some of the Jewish traditions. When they were discovered, they were considered heretical Christians, and put on trial. If they confessed and repented of their *Judaizing heresy* they could be humiliatingly forgiven. If they refused, they were punished. Starting on Feb. 6, 1481, six men and six women were burned at the stake for their unrepentant backsliding into Judaism. In 1492 the government of Spain officially introduced the Inquisition, which legalized such practices.

In a desperate attempt to clear their consciences, the *Kol Nidre (All Vows)* prayer was composed. This prayer is appropriate for Messianic believers, in that we also want to break our toxic vows. For example, most people have received wounds at the hands of others, particularly in our childhood and youth, and we have purposed, *vowed to never be like so and so*. This antipathy, bitterness, and unforgiveness makes for a focus and hostility in our spirits that is very defiling. *Yeshua* came to fulfill *Isaiah 61:1*, as He quoted the verse when He read from the scroll in the synagogue in Nazareth, as described in *Luke 6*: *“The Spirit of Adonai is upon me, because he has sent me...to proclaim freedom for the imprisoned.”* It is powerful and liberating for us to have entered into the *Kol Nidre* prayer with the focus on opening our hearts to the *Ruach, the Spirit*, to release us from any bondages to unforgiveness or wrong habits of thought and heart.

How can our nation clear its conscience? How can individuals who comprise this nation also have an opportunity to clear their conscience? We also have inherited lies from our forefathers and many of you sitting here today have succumbed to the pressure of the majority calling good what the Lord has called evil and evil that which is from God. Well last night and today you and I have the chance to practice forgiveness and seek reconciliation with the Almighty on our behalf and on behalf of our nation: *we regret and we repent! Yom Tov!*