

### Visit to a Messianic Synagogue

This was the first time for me to visit a Messianic Synagogue in Carlsbad, New Mexico, which the name of the synagogue is Kehilat Yeshua - Congregation of Yeshua. I visited the Synagogue in September, 2016. With permission of one of the members from the congregation of Yeshua, I made some plans days before for myself to be able to go on Saturday afternoon, because my schedule was already full for that day. But I made it happen and I thought it was very interesting to see the difference between my religion and theirs.

The person whom I asked about the day when they gathered to have service was very nice to me. She has been a member of that religion for many years. I have to say that I was nervous the night before. My religion is Catholicism, and for me to be there was something new that I had experienced in my life before. I had never set one foot inside a synagogue. I tried to be there early because I wanted to see the building before the service started. One of the women who was there opened the door for me and welcomed me, being very polite. She then introduced me to the rest of the members, which were about 25 people, and the rabbi, who was sitting in the front of the table. Some of the members of the congregation were wearing the "kippah", the head cover that most men wear.

The lady told me to sit wherever I wanted. I was trying to sit in the very back of the room, but the rabbi told me to sit in front, that way I could observe better what he did. They were eating some goodies, so I approached the lady who invited me to go inside the other rooms. First of all, I saw about three tables full of food and different kinds of drinks. Most of the food was vegetables, fruits, and tortillas with butter. Nothing of red meats or fish was on the tables because on Saturdays, they are not allowed to have big meals. This is because it's the day that is dedicated to celebrate the Sabbath day. On this day, they are allowed to have small meals and drinks. They have a small kitchen, and two rooms for children. In the Hall there was a table with the Torah, which contains the five books of Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Also, these books are written in Hebrew. The woman told me that some people believed that they were written by Moses.

The largest room has different things such as a lamp with nine candles, which is used during the Hanukkah, one of Judaism's major holidays. It's a holiday that is celebrated almost at the same time as Christmas is celebrated in Christianity. It consists of lighting a candle each night for eight nights, until a ceremonial lamp is completely lit. Hanukkah commemorates the recovery and cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple, also the miracle of the lights. While walking around the room I saw the Shofar, which is a ram's horn that is used to announce the Day of Remembrance. Also, I saw the Star of David, which has six points and represents the medieval symbol of Jewish identity.

In the way back to the first room, where the rest of the people were, she told me that the Sabbath day is a major day which is celebrated every week. They are not allowed to work because that day is dedicated to God. Starting on Friday evening, the Sabbath begins by lighting two candles in their houses, and the wife or the woman of the house is the one who lights them and puts two loaves of bread and some wine on the table. All of these are because they want to remember the first act of creation. Also, they can't do any chores at home, like cleaning, washing clothes, cooking, cleaning the yard, or even buying food from restaurants, because that is satisfying their hunger by letting others cook for them. Saturday is dedicated to be in the synagogue and for reading the Bible and eating some food.

When we went back to the service room one of the members invited me to take a Bible for myself to follow the readings. The man started reading some passages of the Bible of chapter twelve in Deuteronomy. There was a word that some people didn't understand, and were asking the rabbi about the meaning. They started giving some answers about the meaning, but the rabbi told them the answer in different forms until they got the idea. This form of service was totally different from my religion. They spent most of the time reading and providing answers to any word of the chapter that they couldn't understand.

I like the idea of interacting with new ideas all the time. They believe only in God as the creator of everything and nothing else. Also, they talk a little bit about the Holocaust and why that happened. Maybe the people of those years did not follow God's rules.

They said that the things good or bad that happen is the way that we want to live by self-preservation. It's about asking ourselves what we want to do. Like experiencing pain for example; the best way to get over it is just asking God deeply to take away that pain, and God will answer to your petition. God knows our heart better than our parents and ourselves. Also, they were talking about the animals that they can eat, and the ones that they can't eat. While they were talking about the passages of the Bible people were more understanding of it. I believe they can come and go whenever they want, and others went getting up to go and get something to eat. The children were with a lady who was teaching them about God in another room. The way that they practice their religion is very different from the way the Catholics practice their religion, because the Catholics don't discuss the readings. Only the priest can talk at the celebration of the mass.

I was paying attention to all the people who were in there, and listening to the person who was reading the Bible. There were some moments when they laughed because some of the questions that they were discussing were a bit humorous. Throughout the celebration, I was trying to obtain the information that I was looking for. Also, animals were not permitted in there, no smoking and the cell phones turned off or put on vibration was required. But there was a man with his laptop trying to look for some of the words that the others couldn't find the answer for. What attracted most of my attention were the words in Hebrew, which I find very interesting, and made me think of taking a class about the language and learn a little bit of it. It was a very nice experience to be there live and see how they practice their religion.