

September 15, 2012

Nitzavim (You Are Standing)

Although this week we have a double portion, I want to speak only of *Nitzavim*. In last week's *parasha*, half of the tribes of Israel were standing on Mt. Gerizim shouting, "Live long and prosper," while the other six tribes were on Mt. Ebal yelling, "Eat worms and die." Well, while they didn't use those exact words, they did give blessings and curses. But they had a choice.

This week, the entire nation of Israel, including the guy who chops your wood, and the person who carries water for you, is standing before HaShem to make a covenant. The covenant was not only with everyone who was present, but also for those who are not, and even for people who weren't even born yet. Finally, near the end of chapter 30, Moshe offers the choice of life or death, but I think he was leaning more toward the side of life because he said, "And you shall choose life." But regardless of what **he** said, **they** still had a choice. On a different note,

Marriage is a wonderful institution invented by HaSham. Marriage, or images associated with marriage, is sometimes used in Scripture to illustrate the way things should be. There is an interesting choice of words in verse 20. Moshe tells the people to "love HaShem, your God, to listen to His voice, and to cling to Him." The word "to cling" in Hebrew is *ool-dah-veck* and has the same root word used in Genesis 2:24, *leh-dah-vach*, where it says that "a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife..." (Strong's Concordance – 1692). This exhortation is at the end of a string of terms starting at verse 15 that call to mind the opening chapters of the Torah. They are contrasting sets of words like life and death, good and bad, skies and earth, blessing and curse. By using these terms in his address near the end of the Torah, Moshe forms a connection to the beginning of the Torah, and this reminds us that there is great unity throughout the Torah.

In the haftarah selection, Isaiah illustrates his prophesy using terms related to marriage, like "married," "bride" and "bridegroom." In speaking of the land, he says that it shall no longer be called "Desolate," but it will be called *Beulah* which means "married." He continues: "When you are married to the land, HaShem will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride." But there is a choice: to be married to the land or not.

In the good news, as told by John, it is established that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In his epistle to the Romans, Paul borrows a quote from this week's *parasha*. He says, "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart." But this Word is only there if you have decided to put it there. Once again, there is a choice. If we are truly married to Yeshua, that is, if we are indeed the Bride of the Messiah, If the Word is in us, then we have not just chosen life, as Moses suggested, but we have chosen everlasting life.