

Parashat Nitzavim — Standing Together and Choosing Life

1. Opening

- **Text:** Deuteronomy 29:9–30:20
- **Theme Statement:** *All Israel stands before God in covenant, with the choice of life or death. Torah is near, repentance brings restoration, and Messiah embodies God’s promise of life.*

2. All Israel Stands Together (29:9–14)

- **Traditional View:**
 - “*You are standing this day, all of you*” — every Israelite, from leaders to woodcutters, is included (Rashi: stresses unity and equality before God).

- Covenant extends not only to those present but also to future generations (Ramban).
- **Messianic Application:**
 - In Messiah, both Jew and non-Jew (sojourners/gerim) are joined in the covenant (Romans 11:17).
 - Standing together means no one is excluded from the responsibility and privilege of covenant faithfulness.
- How do we as a congregation reflect this unity across backgrounds, ages, and callings?

3. Accountability and Consequences (29:15–28)

- **Traditional View:**
 - Turning to idolatry brings curses and exile.
 - “*The hidden things belong to the LORD*” — God judges the heart, but the revealed Torah is ours to obey (Rashi).

- **Messianic Application:**

- Idolatry today may not be statues but misplaced priorities or worldly influences (Col. 3:5).
- Yeshua warns that judgment comes when hearts are far from God, even if lips honor Him (Mark 7:6–8).

- **Reflection:** What “hidden idols” must we root out of our lives to stay faithful?

4. Teshuvah and Restoration (30:1–10)

- **Traditional View:**

- Even after exile, repentance brings restoration. God promises to gather His people from the nations (Sforno: God’s mercy is greater than His wrath).

- **Messianic Application:**

- Yeshua is the embodiment of God's mercy, calling Israel and the nations to repentance (Luke 15:7).
- Prophecy of ingathering finds fulfillment in Messiah's work (Matt. 24:31).
- Repentance is not despair but hope — God delights in restoring us.

5. Torah is Accessible (30:11–14)

- **Traditional View:**
 - The mitzvot are not distant or impossible. Torah is near — “*in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.*” (Ramban: Torah is practical and within human reach).
 - I often challenge those who teach/believe that we are no longer bound by the Torah because it is too difficult to keep to show me one of the commandments/instructions that is impossible for us to keep.
- **Messianic Application:**

- Paul cites this in Romans 10:6–10, showing that Messiah is the embodiment of the word which is near to us — believed in the heart and confessed with the mouth.
- Torah is not beyond reach, nor is Messiah; both are accessible and meant to be lived.
- **Illustration:** Just as manna was daily bread, Torah and Messiah are daily life-giving sustenance.

6. Choose Life! (30:15–20)

- **Traditional View:**
 - The Torah presents a clear choice: life and blessing, or death and curse. God urges Israel: “*Choose life!*”
 - Sforno: choosing life means attaching ourselves to God in love and obedience.
- **Messianic Application:**

- Yeshua said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6).

Choosing Messiah is choosing life.

- Inherent within this verse is the idea that when we follow the teachings of Yeshua we will enter a covenant relationship with the Almighty.

- This is also stated another way in verse 15. If you love me you will keep my commandments/injunctions/teachings.

- Through Him, covenant obedience becomes Spirit-empowered (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:26–27).

- Daily decisions either align with life in Torah and Messiah or with paths that lead to death.

7. Conclusion

- **Summary:**

- We stand together as one people.

- We are accountable for our actions but also offered repentance and restoration.
- God's Word is near — Torah and Messiah are accessible.
- The ultimate call: *choose life!*

8. Application:

- As a community, let us daily renew our covenant with God through Torah and Messiah.
 - Make personal choices each day that reflect life, blessing, and faithfulness.
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- **Closing Verse:** *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.*

Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live" (Deut. 30:19).

Shalom & HaSof