

נִצָּבִים

NITZAVIM/YOU ARE STANDING Devarim/Deuteronomy 29:10-30:20

Devarim 29:10 " All of you stand (נִצָּבִים) today...

These are the important words that begin our parasha this week. The **Hebrew** word for “**you are standing**” – nitzavim (נִצָּבִים), has the connotation of **firmness and stability**. It is **not the typical word** translated as **stand** (amad - עָמַד). Instead, **nitzavim** (נִצָּבִים) speaks of the **fortitude and courage that comes from a Torah knowledge** that has been **internalized**. As the Israelites “**stand**” at the **end of their journey to the Promised Land**, they are much **wiser** than they were at the **beginning of their journey**. Moses is asking them to “**stand**”, **reflect on how far they’ve come** and on **what they’ve learned along the way**.

In like manner, those who remain “**standing**” at the **end of time** are in a position to **look back** over the **entire span of history**, as far back as the **Garden of Eden**. This **final generation** becomes a **witness to the truth of Scripture**. They will be able to **testify** of everything that was **foretold in the Torah** and the **prophecies**, including the **loss of the Promised Land**, the **resultant exiles**, the **return of the land**, and the **restoration movement**. There will be **no doubt** in their minds that **shalom (peace)** in the land of Israel will **only come through the embracing of יהוה’s Covenant and His Torah**.

Okay, let’s take a look at the first few verses of our Torah reading this week:

*Devarim 29:10 " All of you stand today before יהוה your Elohim: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel,¹¹ "your little ones and your wives -- also the stranger who is in your camp, **from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water** --¹² "that you may **enter into covenant with יהוה your Elohim**, and into His oath, which יהוה your Elohim makes with you today,¹³ "that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be Elohim to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹⁴ " **I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone,**¹⁵ "but with him who stands here with us today before יהוה our Elohim, as well as with him who is not here with us today*

Each individual member of the community will be involved in the **ceremony of reestablishing His covenant**. In fact, this covenant **also includes those Israelites from the past, present and the future** (29:13-14). Since יהוה is **eternal**, it makes perfect sense that He would enter into a **covenant with all generations**.

Now could there be any special significance to the “**one who cuts your wood**” and the “**one who draws your water**”? Do you think it’s any coincidence that our **very first patriarch** and the **father of our faith** is also one who “**chopped wood**” when he was **commanded** by יהוה to **bring his most beloved son, Isaac**, up on the mountain to be a **burnt offering**?

***Bereshith/Genesis 22:3** So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and **Isaac his son**; and **he split the wood for the burnt offering**, and arose and went to the place of which Elohim had told him.*

Elijah the prophet is also associated with the one who “**draws the water**” as he **challenged the prophets of Baal** on top of Mount Carmel:

***1 Kings 18:33** And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood."*

Elijah is known as the one who will **herald in the Messianic times**:

***Malachi 4:5** Behold, I will send you **Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and dreadful day of **יְהוָה**.*

Therefore, it is pointed out by Jewish commentators that **Abraham was the first Hebrew** (he is also the **father of our faith**), and **Elijah** will be the **last Hebrew** who will be **committed to world redemption** before the **coming of Messiah**. We also note that **Yeshua, the King of redemption**, was associated with the **wood of the tree** that He carried and was nailed on to become the **sacrifice**. And His very **first miracle** was about “**pouring the water**”:

***John 2:2** Now both Yeshua and His disciples were invited to the wedding.³ And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Yeshua said to Him, "They have no wine."⁴ Yeshua said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."⁶ Now there were set there **six waterpots of stone**, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.⁷ **Yeshua said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water."** And they filled them up to the brim.⁸ And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.⁹ When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (**but the servants who had drawn the water knew**), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.*

Isn't it interesting that it was the **servants who had drawn the water** (v. 9) who **knew where the wine had come from**. Did they make the **connection with a prophecy about another banquet and fine, aged wine**?

***Isaiah 25:6** And in this mountain **יְהוָה** of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A **banquet of aged wine**, Of fat things full of marrow, the best of meats and **the finest of wines**.⁷ And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations.⁸ He will swallow up death forever, and Adonai **יְהוָה** will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For **יְהוָה** has spoken.⁹ And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our Elohim; **We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is יְהוָה**; We have waited for Him; **We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation (Yeshua).**"*

Let's continue on in the parasha:

Devarim 29:16 (for you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by,¹⁷ and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them -- wood and stone and silver and gold);¹⁸ "so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from יהוה our Elohim, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood;¹⁹ "and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart' -- as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.

It is remarkable that after 40 years in the desert, verse 18 alludes to the possibility that there may be **individuals** among the Israelites who are **dealing with bitterness**, or **consider themselves apart from the group**. We have evidence that this is in fact true when we read of the story of **Achan** (Joshua 7:1) who just a few weeks later would **violate the instructions of battle**. Not only did Achan lose his life as a result, but the **lives of many others were lost in the battle at Ai**.

This **individual** of verse 19 has **heard the words of the curse**, the consequences for not obeying the Torah, and he is **not intimidated**. He begins to **rationalize his own position**. Our English translation indicates that he “**blesses himself**”. This is a very **rare form** of the familiar Hebrew verb, **barak** (to bless - בָּרַךְ). Isn't it odd that in the midst of the promises for the **blessings for obedience**, this individual chooses to “**bless himself**”?!! Rabbi Yaakov Bieler points out that in this Hebrew word the Torah has “**perfectly captured the mindset of a resolute and unrepentant sinner upon being confronted with the dire consequences that are threatened to result from his sins**. Not only does s/he **deny that any harm** will come to him/her as a result of **continuing transgression**; s/he determines that the **Covenant will ultimately prove to be beneficial to his/her situation**.”

Others suggest that this individual bases **his confidence in managing to live both a blessed and sinful life simultaneously**, upon a statistical calculation. This person believes that **because he is a part of the larger community who adheres to the Torah that he also will be able to reap the benefits** as well. Was not יהוה willing to **spare Sodom and Gomorrah** as long as even **ten righteous individuals** could be found there? Then it just seems reasonable to **assume that evil will not come upon a group whose majority is striving to serve the Almighty with all their heart**.

So does יהוה only deal with **collective Israel**, allowing **individuals** to slip between the cracks? The famous sage Ramban teaches that when the **people as a whole** were asked to **acknowledge their acceptance of the Covenant**, this scheming person **remained silent**, thereby thinking that **he had successfully excluded himself from making the commitment and potentially suffering any consequences**. But it is precisely this type of situation to which **Devarim 29:29** refers:

Devarim 29:29 "The secret things belong to יהוה our Elohim, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Torah.

So in the case of the **individual** who **outwardly appeared to be a follower of the Torah**, but **inwardly** he was filled with **bitterness, stubbornness, and a lack of the fear of Yah**, the above verse may indicate that those **secret things of the heart will be judged by the heavenly Judge**. A verse in Malachi supports this thought:

Malachi 2:2 If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name," Says יהוה of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart.

The idea of **what is in your heart** is very **important to Yeshua**:

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see Yah.

Matthew 5:28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The **Word** of the Almighty is the **best way for us to judge our own hearts**:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of Elohim is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

The book of **Romans** tells us **when the secrets of the heart** will be finally **judged**:

Romans 2:5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of Elohim,

Let's change directions slightly. The Torah portion that we are reading this week, **Nitzavim** (נִצָּבִים), is **always read on the Shabbat before Yom Teruah** (Feast of Trumpets, Rosh HaShanah) when our **thoughts** should be **directed towards repentance or teshuvah** (תְּשׁוּבָה). The root of **teshuvah** is **shuv** (שׁוּב) meaning to **"return"** or **"restore"**. **Shuv** (שׁוּב) is the **topic of Devarim 30:1-10** and is found in one form or another **seven times** (underlined). Also notice the numerous references to the **"heart"**:

*Devarim 30:1 "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you bring them back to your **heart** among all the nations where יהוה your Elohim drives you,² "and you return to יהוה your Elohim and obey (shema) His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with **all your heart** and with all your soul,³ "that יהוה your Elohim will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and **gather** (קָבַץ) you again from all the nations where יהוה your Elohim has scattered you.⁴ "If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there יהוה your Elohim will **gather** (קָבַץ) you, and from there He will bring you.⁵ "Then יהוה your Elohim will bring you to the land which your*

fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.⁶ "And יהוה your Elohim will **circumcise your heart** and the **heart of your descendants**, to love יהוה your Elohim with **all your heart** and with all your soul, that you may live.⁷ "Also יהוה your Elohim will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.⁸ "And you will **again** obey the voice of יהוה and do all His commandments which I command you today.⁹ " יהוה your Elohim will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For יהוה will **again** rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers,¹⁰ "if you obey the voice of יהוה your Elohim, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Torah, and if you **turn** to יהוה your Elohim with **all your heart** and with all your soul.

Now I'd like you to look at the very next verse by itself:

Devarim 30:11 "For this **commandment** which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.

The question that jumps out at us...what **commandment** is He referring to? Ancient Hebrew commentators say that it is the **commandment of teshuvah (repentance)**. We saw in the text of Devarim 30:1-10 (underlined phrases) the **different forms this verbal root** (shuv - שׁוּב) takes on – **bring them back** (to your heart), **return** (to obey), **bring you back** (from captivity), and **turn** (to יהוה). When the **Torah repeats** a word like this, it is **pointing to its significance** within the text. So in this context, **what is the importance of “returning”?**

Sin alienates us from the **Almighty**. We become **distanced** from **His Presence**. We must **“return”**. So here in our passage from Devarim 30, we read of both the **physical** and the **spiritual dimension of “returning”**. When we are ready to **physically return** to the **land**, it comes about because we have **spiritually returned** through the **process of repentance!** It points to a **double homecoming!** In fact, this order of events is neatly laid out for us in these Devarim verses:

1. **Return** (repent) to יהוה
2. **Obey** (shema) Torah
3. **Brought out of captivity** by being gathered together
4. **Taken to the Promised Land**

Where are we in this order of events? We are very familiar with the words of **John the Immerser** and **Yeshua** as they both taught the **first necessary step of returning**:

Matthew 3:1 In those days **John the Immerser** came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,² and saying, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Matthew 4:17 From that time **Yeshua** began to preach and to say, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The result of **slavery to sin is death**; but when we “**repent**” of our sins, it makes us a **slave of the Almighty** and leads to the **second point...obedience** (shema). Paul explains this in Romans:

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But Elohim be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of Elohim, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of Elohim is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Adonai.

From obedience, we go to the **third point** of being **brought out of captivity**. Did you even realize that you were a **captive**? Once we begin to **obey the Torah**, we realize that we are a **captive to this world's system**. Yeshua had a mission of **gathering out of the world all of the tribes of the lost sheep of the house of Israel**:

Matthew 15:24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Yeshua spoke **prophetically** as He told of His **sheep all coming to the point of hearing (shema) His voice and “returning” to become one flock**. We even see this idea in the **Hebrew** as the word for **gathering** (קָבַץ - Devarim 30:3-4) is the word from which we get the modern Hebrew word “**kibbutz**”, meaning a **tightly knit community** much like the ones the first believers were a part of in **Jerusalem after the resurrection**. Even more amazing, we can find this concept in the **prophetic blessings of Jacob** over his children:

Bereshith/Genesis 49:1 And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather (קָבַץ) together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) : ² "Gather (קָבַץ) together and hear, you sons of Jacob, And listen to Israel your father.

- Verse 1 – **gather** - קָבַץ – this is the Hebrew root of “**Joseph**”
- Verse 1 – **last days** - בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים – term used for “**latter days**” in several prophecies (Isaiah 2:2)
- Verse 2 – **gather** - קָבַץ – Hebrew root of “**kibbutz**”

These verses, which in context precede the blessings over the sons of Jacob, are also **prophetic** in foretelling the **gathering together of “Joseph” in the “latter days” in “kibbutz-like” communities**. When we take another look at Bereshith 49:1, it appears that the **information** regarding the “**days to come**”, will not be revealed until we are “**gathered together**”. We know this has already begun to happen! Now we can understand the importance of **Yeshua's mission to unify Israel into “one flock”**:

John 10:16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The **fourth point** is about **being taken to the Promised Land**. This comes from Devarim 30:4:

Devarim 30:4 "If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there אָרְצוֹתֵיךָ your Elohim will gather you, and from there He will bring you.

The King James Version translates the end of the verse – “**from there He will fetch you.**” This same Hebrew word (laqach - לָקַח) is also **used of taking a bride**; once we are **gathered**, that is what we will be to Him. As **individuals**, we can not fulfill the role of the **bride of Messiah**. We need to become that **unified “one flock”!**

Here’s another question for you....do you think that what is spoken of in Devarim 30:4 is **prophetic of the second coming of Yeshua** and of what has been termed the “**rapture**” (occurring after the tribulation)? Let’s see if it checks out with other verses in Scripture.

Matthew 24:29 " Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.³⁰ "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The **elect** are **gathered “from one end of heaven to the other”**. This compares to **Devarim 30:4** – where they are **gathered “from the farthest parts under heaven”**. This does seem to be very similar to what we find in **Thessalonians**:

1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of Adonai, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of Adonai will by no means precede those who are asleep.¹⁶ For Adonai Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of Elohim. And the dead in Messiah will rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet Adonai in the air. And thus we shall always be with Adonai.¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

It seems that the **return of Yeshua, the rapture, and the resurrection of the dead in Messiah** are all **linked** with the **return of Israel to her land** and all of this has been **predicted** in this **prophetic book of Devarim!** The **ekklesia**, or what has wrongly been translated as “**the church**” refers to the **assembly of Israel** to which the **believers have been grafted into**. The **return of the Jews to their land**, which began in **1948**, will be **concluded with the supernatural gathering of all of the lost tribes**. This ushers in the **Messianic age, the 7th millennium**. We get a glimpse of that time period every week when we keep **Shabbat**. **Yeshua is Adonai of the Sabbath!**

Romans 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Yeshua the Messiah, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began²⁶ but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting Elohim, for obedience to the faith --²⁷ to Yah, alone wise, be glory through Yeshua the Messiah forever. Amen.

Here is more information on that **mystery**:

Ephesians 1:9 having made known to us the **mystery of His will**, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,¹⁰ that **in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Messiah**, both which are in heaven and which are on earth -- in Him.¹¹ **In Him also we have obtained an inheritance**, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

The truth be known, there is **much that we still do not understand** concerning the **regathering** process. There were **Jews in the 1st century** who **missed the coming of the Messiah** because of their **preconceived ideas of how that event would transpire**. We run that **same risk** if we do not allow ourselves to be **flexible to the receiving of new information as revealed** through the **Scriptures**. We know that we will be told everything we need to know when we need to know it:

Amos 3:7 Surely Adonai יהוה **does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.**

Let's take another look at the "**circumcision of the heart**" as found in Devarim 30:6:

Devarim 30:6 "And יהוה **your Elohim will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.**

In the above verse, **Elohim is the one who will "circumcise your heart"**. Compare this with what was said earlier in Devarim:

Devarim 10:16 "Therefore **circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.**

In Devarim 10, the **people are told to circumcise their own hearts**; later as they **return** (shuv - שׁוּב) to יהוה their Elohim, they are told that **He will be the one to circumcise their hearts**. יהוה asks us to **cut away anything of the world that keeps us from wholehearted devotion to Him**. This has already been accomplished to a certain extent. Once, **when we came into a relationship with Yeshua**; then **more cutting occurred** when we **discovered that loving Him meant keeping His Torah**. The **circumcision continues**, however, for our **hearts need to be prepared for properly loving Him once we arrive in the Promised Land**. At the point of **final redemption of a unified Israel, He will complete the circumcision**. We can only pray that we will be **privileged to see these latter stages of our redemption**. Then we will witness the **completion of the New Covenant** as spoken of in **Ezekiel and Jeremiah**:

Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."²⁸ "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your Elohim.

Jeremiah 31:33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says **יהוה**: **I will put My Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people.** ³⁴ "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know **יהוה**;' for **they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says יהוה. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**"

I'd like to close with some comments on the following verses:

Devarim 30:11 "For this **commandment** which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. ¹² "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹³ "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹⁴ "But **the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.**

These words are echoed in **Romans** where the **commandment of Devarim 30 is connected with Yeshua**. Remember earlier when we talked of how the ancient Hebrew commentators taught that the **commandment** of Devarim 30 was "**repentance**" (page 5)? Read how nicely the topic of **repentance** fits in as Paul **weaves Yeshua** into the verses taken from Devarim:

Romans 10:6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Messiah down from above) ⁷ or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "**The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart**" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that **if you confess with your mouth Adonai Yeshua and believe in your heart that Yah has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and **with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

Yeshua is near all who **confess with true repentance**. For our **beloved Jewish brethren**, He is **closer** than they think. **He is within reach**. It is as simple as **looking into their own houses**. To illustrate this, I'll close with an old Jewish folktale:

The tale is told about Reb Chaikel, a poor tailor from Lodz, who had the same recurring dreams. Each night his father would appear to him and tell him about a secret fortune. All Reb Chaikel had to do was travel to Vienna and go to the royal palace. Exactly fifty yards from the palace, his father said, was an old oak tree. Under that tree, his father told him, lays a great treasure. All Reb Chaikel had to do was dig under the tree, and all his financial problems would be solved.

At first, Reb Chaikel ignored the dreams, but they recurred night after night. And so, he decided to go to Vienna and seek his fortune.

He camped out near the palace and waited for an opportune time to begin digging for the fortune. At midnight on a moonless night, he stealthily crept up to the tree and began to dig. His shovel had not even had a chance to strike dirt when he felt a rough hand squeeze the back of his neck.

"Jew!" shouted the palace guard. "What on earth are you doing at midnight, fifty yards from the palace gates, shoveling dirt?"

Reb Chaikel had no choice but to tell the story of his dreams about the great fortune that lay beneath the oak tree that he was about to dig up. He even offered to split the booty if the guard would let him go. “You idiot!” laughed the guard. “Everyone has dreams. In fact, I myself dreamed that if I were to go to the city of Lodz in Poland and dig in the basement of some Jewish tailor named Chaikel, I, too, would find a fortune! Hah! Now get lost!”

Legend has it that Reb Chaikel returned to Lodz and, after a little digging in the basement of his own home, became a very wealthy man.

Yeshua is always more accessible than we may think!

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle