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Choose Life

30: 11-20

Choose life DIG: Is the Torah a means of salvation, or our blueprint for living? Explain. Where can Isra'el find God's Word? What choices does Moses set before Isra'el? How will Isra'el show the choice they've made? Who witnesses Isra'el's choice? What deciding factor does verse 20 provide for anyone still wavering between the two choices?

REFLECT: What modern objections have you heard or used, which sound like the ones in verses 11-13? From this passage, would you be able to recognize genuine faith when you see it? How so? By what clues? By what action verbs? How can you live out the verbs of verse 20? Why would anyone choose death and cursing over life and blessing?

Obedience to the Torah was not the means of achieving salvation, but the response to a salvation that the righteous of the TaNaKh had already experienced.

The day before Moses died.

Because we're created in the image of **God**, we have minds to think with, **hearts** to feel with, and wills to decide with, and **ADONAI** calls us to make the proper decisions. We're not robots; we can hear **God's Word**, learn **God's** will, and decide for ourselves either to obey or disobey. **Moshe** made it clear that making the proper decision isn't a difficult task. After all, we have the revealed truth of **God** in **His Word**, and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** to teach and guide us. We don't need to go up **to heaven** to find **the Word**, or even **across the sea** to a different nation, because **YHVH** has brought **His Word** to us.⁶⁴⁸

God's covenant is accessible to all (30:11-14): The emphasis returns once again to the present, the renewal ceremony being enacted on the plains of Mo'ab. **Moses** declared: **For this mitzvah that I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you** to understand, **nor is it beyond your reach (30:11)**. This belief is reflected in the B'rit Chadashah: **We know that we love God's children by this - when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God - that we keep His**

commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome (First John 5:1-3)?

The mitzvah that **ADONAI** was commanding **B'nai Isra'el** to follow was **not in the heavens**, that **they** should say: **Who will go up for us to the heavens and get it for us, and have us hear it so we may do it?** Nor is it **across the sea**, that **you** should say: **Who will cross over for us to the other side of the sea and get it for us, and have us hear it so we may do it?** No, the word is very near to you - **you** can speak it because it is **in your mouth** and you know it because it is **in your heart to do it (Deuteronomy 30:12-14; Romans 10:6-8).**

In other words, **the Torah** is not among those things that the humble person does not bother with (**Psalm 131:1**) or that even the wise find beyond their understanding (**Proverbs 30:18**). It is not, therefore, impossibly idealistic, unrealistic, or unachievable. **Torah** is a balance between ideal standards and earthly realities. The idea that **God** deliberately made **the Torah** so demanding that nobody could live by it belongs to a distorted theology that tries to make the gospel look better by putting **the Torah** down. The frequent claims by various psalmists who have lived by **God's Torah** are neither exaggerated nor exceptional. They arise from the natural assumption that ordinary people can indeed live in a way that is generally pleasing and faithful to **ADONAI** in **His** stream of **blessing**, so to speak.

And **the Israelites** could find joy and delight in doing so: **Happy is the one who has not walked in the advice of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of scoffers. But his delight is in the Torah of ADONAI, and on His Torah he meditates night and day. He will be like a planted tree over streams of water, a stream of blessing, producing its fruit during its season. Its leaf never drops - but in all he does, he succeeds (Psalm 1:1-3).**

This is neither self-righteousness, nor a claim of sinless perfection, for the same psalmists are equally quick to confess their sins and failings, fully realizing that only the grace that could forgive and cleanse them would likewise enable them to live again in **the covenant** of obedience.⁶⁴⁹ Theoretically, then, **the Torah** was an impossible standard to live up to, but practically, it was achievable in the same way that the Sermon on the Mount is theoretically an impossible standard, but practically, very achievable. Likewise, just as **good works** in the B'rit Chadashah are not the means of **salvation**, but the evidence of **salvation (James 2:21-26)**, obedience to **the Torah** was not the means of achieving salvation, but the response to a salvation that the righteous of the TaNaKh had already experienced.



The call to choose (30: 14-20): Moses never taught the Israelites that they were saved by **good works**, by obeying the 613 mitzvot of the **Torah**. Early in his first book he stated that **Abram** was justified by **faith** (see the commentary on **Genesis**, to see link click **Et - Abram Believed the LORD and He Credited It to Him as Righteousness**). However, here in **Deuteronomy**, **Moshe** spoke to the people about fellowship, not justification. When we obey the **Torah**, we enter into **God's** stream of **blessing**; it is our blueprint for living (see the commentary on **Exodus Dh - Moses and Torah**). If, however, we live in the world (**First John 2:15-16**), we enter into **God's** s of **cursing**. That was, and is, the choice . . . spiritual life or spiritual death.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, **You** are such a wonderful **Father**! Praise **You** that when **You** tell us to obey **You**, it is out of a heart that is looking out for our best and wants us to be full of joy. The choice of our loving obedience to **You** bringing spiritual life or our living for ourselves bringing spiritual death is not just for this world but for all eternity. It is not worth it to sin by half-hearted "obedience." Joyful immediate obedience brings eternal joy. Sometimes it may seem easier and more pleasurable to go our own way, but the momentary pleasure will be over in a blink compared to the everlasting joy when we choose lovingly obedience. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. I love **You** and delight in pleasing **You** with all my heart. In the name of **Yeshua**, **Your** holy **Son** and **His** power of resurrection. Amen*

In stark clarity, **Moses** presents the Israelites with the choices before them: fellowship with **YHVH** and long life in the Land, or death and destruction. See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil. What I am commanding you today is to love **ADONAI** your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His mitzvot, statutes and ordinances. Then you will live and multiply, and **ADONAI** your God will bless you in the land you are going in to possess (30:15-16). God's ability to make good on the

promises of **the covenant** were not for one moment in question; the responsibility now rested with **the people**.⁶⁵⁰

Those people who decide to disobey **ADONAI** and commit spiritual adultery will **perish** and will forfeit abundant **life** in **the Promised Land**. **Covenantal** treachery will bring about the exact opposite of the marvelous **blessings** **YHVH** wanted to bestow on **His people**. **But if your heart turns away and you do not listen, you could easily enter the stream of cursing** and be **drawn away and bow down to other gods and worship them, I tell you today that you will certainly perish! You will not prolong your days on the land, where you are about to cross over the Jordan to go in to possess (30:17-18)**. To emphasize the importance of this demand, **Moshe** for the third time uses the expression **“today” (30:15 and 18)**.

Heaven and earth are called as **witnesses** to the decision **set before them**. **I call the heavens and the earth to witness about you today, that I have set before you: life and death, the blessing and the curse**. For the final time, **Moses** solemnly urged **B’nai Isra’el** to make the proper choice. **Therefore, choose life so that you and your descendants may live, by loving ADONAI your God, listening to His voice, and clinging to Him. For He is your life and the length of your days, that you may dwell on the land that ADONAI swore to your fathers - to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob - to give them (30:19-20)**. **Moses** concluded this section by affirming that **YHVH**, **Isra’el’s covenantal LORD** (see **Ah - Treaty of the Great King**), would give **them** long tenure **in the Land** if **they** lived as loyal citizens. **For He is your life! Choosing life, for them and their descendants, was equated a wholehearted commitment to a genuine relationship with YHVH**.⁶⁵¹

This marks the end of **Moshe’s** farewell address, the review of **the Torah**, and the renewal of **the covenant**. **He** still has more to say, and what **he** says is very important. Then **Moses** will die, and **ADONAI** will bury **him** where nobody can find **his** body. **Joshua** will then take over and lead **Isra’el** to triumph in **the Land** of Promise.⁶⁵²

Haftarah Nitzavim: Yesha’yahu (Isaiah) 61:10-63:9 (see Af - Parashah)

This haftarah is the last of seven Haftarothe of Consolation following Tisha B’Av (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt - The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on Tisha B’Av in 70 AD**). **Jerusalem** is responding to the words of comfort begun during Sabbath Nachamu (The Shabbat of comfort, the first of these seven Haftarothe of Consolation,

Isaiah 40:1-2). Isra'el is comforted by being **clothed in garments of righteousness**, which produces **Godly** praise upon the whole earth (**Isaiah 61:10-11**), and encouraging the righteous of the TaNaKh not to rest, nor give **God** rest in prayer, until **He** fulfills **His** promise (**Isaiah 61:6b-7**). Those **Israelites** who were standing before **Moses** in our **Torah** portion above received promises of **the covenant**. In **62:8-12**, **God's** promises are reiterated for **Isra'el's blessing**. Finally, we can be comforted by the return of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (see the commentary on **Isaiah Kg - The Second Coming of Jesus Christ**).

B'rit Chadashah suggested readings for Parashah Nitzavim:
Romans 9:30-10:13; Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 12:14-15; John 15:1-11

Scripture often likens **Isra'el** to **God's vineyard** (**Psalm 80:8-9; Isaiah 5:1-2 and 7**). **Yeshua**, the **Kosher King**, declares that **He** is **the true vine** (**John 15:1**). As the perfect **Gardner**, the **Father** **cuts off every branch that bears no fruit** and **prunes the live branches**, to maintain a flow of **life** that produces fruitfulness instead of unnecessary wood (**John 15:2 and 4**). The one who abides in **the vine** courses with **life** and **bears fruit**; in fact, there is no place for an unfruitful disciple (**John 15:5; Matthew 7:20**). Obedience is the cause of fruitfulness, and **joy** is the result of fruitfulness. **Bearing fruit** brings **glory** to **God** (**John 15:8**). It requires obedience and prayer to remain connected to **the vine** (**John 15:7 and 10**). **The love** which unites **the Father** and **Son** also unites us with **the vine**. **Yeshua** concludes: **These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be full** (**John 15:11**).⁶⁵³