



Valley of Decision -

v'Anokhi u'veiti na'avod et-Adonai

וְאֲנֹכִי וּבֵיתִי נִעְבֹּד אֶת־יְהוָה

But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD

–Joshua 24:15b

BEFORE HIS DEATH, *Yehoshua bin Nun* (Joshua the son of Nun), the great successor of Moses, regathered the people of Israel at Shechem for his final speech.

Shechem was near Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, the place where the LORD unconditionally promised Abraham the land of Israel (Gen. 12:6-7) and where Joseph was abducted (and later buried). It was also the place where the “blessings and curses” were recited after Yehoshua first led the Israelites into the Promised Land years before (Deut. 27:12-29:1, Josh. 8:30-5).



At this earlier ceremony at Shechem, Yehoshua had inscribed large stones with the words of the Torah written on them and built an altar at the foot of the mountain (just as Moses had done at Sinai). After offering sacrifices, six tribes stood on Mt. Gerizim, representing the blessings, and the other six tribes stood on Mt. Ebal, representing the curses. The Kohanim and the Levites, along with the Ark of the Covenant, stood in the valley in between. The Levites then proclaimed curses on those who performed various sins (such as idolatry) and blessings on those who obeyed the LORD. All of the twelve tribes were to respond to each blessing and curse with "Amen."

Since the Israelites present had not directly experienced the giving of the Torah at Sinai (as their ancestors who died in the wilderness had), Yehoshua did this to re-enact the Sinai experience for those who would dwell in the Promised Land.



Now it was years later, and Yehoshua called Israel back to Shechem to remind them that the LORD delivered the fathers from Egypt and gave them the land of Canaan so that they would be *am segulah* – God’s own treasured people who would cleave to Him in sincerity and faithfulness. In a last appeal, Yehoshua asked the people to finally *make a decision* – either to vainly serve idols or to choose to serve the LORD alone.



Paradoxically, we are forced to freely choose whether to live as a *tzaddik* (righteous person of faith) or as a *rasha* (idoltrous person of unbelief) -- and we cannot *not* choose! All of us have ultimate concerns and values, but if we spurn faithful submission to the LORD, we will invariably be consigned to a life based on the *yetzer hara* (the natural state of the soul) and self-serving idolatry.

Each of us must make up our own mind and "choose this day whom we will serve." Will we serve the LORD and take hold of His promises, or we will spurn His commandments in deference to our own selfish desires?

May it be true of us who say, "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*"



Transliteration:

יְהוָה	אֶת	נָעַד	בְּרַד	וְ	בֵּיתִי	וְ	אֲנֹכִי
(1)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)
Adonai	et	na' a-vod	u-vei-ti		ve-a-no-khi		
The LORD	()	will serve	and my household		But I		

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Closing Thoughts: The Valley of Jehoshaphat (*Adonai will judge*) is called the *Valley of Decision* (Joel 3:12), the place where the nations will be judged after the Great Tribulation on the Day of the LORD. Those who have despised the Jewish people and disregarded the truth of Torah will face their fate before the only true God and Savior to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess (Isa. 45:23, Phil. 2:10-11).

Yehoshua was clearly a picture of the Mashiach Yeshua (Jesus), and even their respective names derive from the same Hebrew root (*yasha'*, from which comes *yeshuah*, salvation). Yehoshua was faithful to the LORD and loved the Torah (like Yeshua, Deuteronomy was his favorite book). Unlike Moses, who was forbidden from entering the land, Yehoshua was chosen to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Land of Promise. Yehoshua circumcised the people (at Gilgal), married a Gentile bride (Rahab of Jericho), defeated the enemies of the LORD, and by faith even caused cosmic events to occur (i.e., the sun standing still). There are many more parallels between Yehoshua and Yeshua that could be identified, of course.

A midrash says that when Yehoshua was born, no one took note, but when he died, all of Israel took note. Nonetheless, the Israelites did not mourn for him properly. One was busy with his vineyard, the other with his field, yet another with his coal. The Holy One, Blessed be He, therefore sought to make the whole world quake (*Midrash Shmuel 23:7*). This is also an apt description of Yeshua as *Mashiach ben Yosef*, the Suffering Servant, whose birth went unnoticed, but His death and resurrection indeed shook the world!