



Parashat Nitzavim Va-yelekh
Isaiah 61:10-63:9
September 20, 2014 / 25 Elul 5774

Week 7

The grand finale has finally arrived and each of the ideas presented in the previous six weeks is referred to in one form or another in this morning's haftarah. Like a symphony one can hear the echoes of previous movements. Our people will be victorious, God's promises will be kept, Jerusalem will no longer be forsaken and God continues to remain faithful to his people.

This grand finale is structured so that it resonates or reintroduces the major themes of the Torah portion several times. Chapters 31-34 (parshat Va-yelekh) is concerned with two items, the succession of leadership and the creation of the Torah as a book. It reads like a symphony because it is composed of two literary strands. For example, read chapter 31:1-8 and then 32:48-52 and then 34: 1-12. Each of these three passages is concerned with the question of succession of leadership. If you read chapters 31:9-32:27 you will note a similar literary style only this one focuses on the establishment of the Torah as a book.

How appropriate because next Wednesday evening is the start of Rosh HaShana. For the past seven weeks we have been lead on a journey designed to help us look seriously at ourselves in preparation for a time of cleansing as well as one of rejoicing.

It just might be that the haftarah parallels this morning's Torah reading(s) because Nitzavim is a grandeur finale. We stand together, all of us, and prepare to enter into the covenant once again. Just as a couple at times needs to reaffirm their commitment to one another, so do God and the people of Israel. And so, after a long struggle in the haftarot where God and our ancestors wrestle with their relationship and finally work it out, we too are asked to learn to do same thing, to re-affirm our commitments just as our ancestors did in the Torah and haftarot.

The time is now, it's almost Rosh HaShana.

Since the start of Rosh HaShana is days away, there is still time to discuss, on the FJMC forum site www.mentschen.org We ask you to consider the following questions (and comment on mentschen):

- What do you do during the high holidays to reaffirm your commitment to Judaism?

- Please share with others what positive actions you have taken during the holiday period (Rosh HaShana through Yom Kippur) to look at your actions and change.
- Is there a particular passage in either the Torah or Haftarah portions read during the high holidays which resonates with you, and if so why?

This week's Haftarah commentary is reprinted from one originally written for the Unraveller for September 4, 2010 by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of "Understanding the Haftarah: An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership".