



**PhiloTorah D'var Torah**

## **Tochacha Again, But...**

As we have pointed out more than once in the past, the readings of Parshat HaShavua are tweaked (by combining or separating some pairs of sedras) to see to it that Parshat Ki Tavo with its very harsh TOCHACHA, warnings, admonitions, predictions - is not the sedra that immediately precedes Rosh HaShana. It would not be a good mood-setter for the Yamim Nora'im.

And so, Parshat Nitzavim serves as the buffer between Ki Tavo and Rosh HaShana. Nitzavim is always the sedra we read on the last Shabbat of the year, as we are about to enter the Days of Awe with Rosh HaShana - Yom HaDin. Sometimes (like this year), Nitzavim is read alone and sometimes it is combined with Vayeilech. But Nitzavim always brings us into Rosh HaShana.

And yet, look at what Nitzavim tells us:

*Perhaps there is among you a man, woman, family, or tribe, whose heart strays this day from HaShem, our God, to go and worship the deities of those nations. Perhaps there is among you a root that produces hemlock and wormwood... HaShem will not be*

*willing to forgive him; rather, then, HaShem's fury and His zeal will fume against that man, and the entire curse written in this book will rest upon him, and the Lord will obliterate his name from beneath the heavens... Sulfur and salt have burned up its entire land! It cannot be sown, nor can it grow [anything], not [even] any grass will sprout upon it. It is like the overturning of S'dom, Amora, Adma and Tz'voyim, which HaShem overturned in His fury and in His rage... For they went and served other deities, prostrating themselves to them, deities which they had not known, and which He had not apportioned to them...*

Sounds like the Tochacha, again. What kind of buffer is Nitzavim? What kind of mood-setter?

Let us read further in the sedra...

*And you will return to the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and you will listen to His voice according to all that I am commanding you this day you and your children, then, the Lord, your God, will bring back your exiles, and He will have mercy upon you. He will once again gather you from all the nations, where the Lord, your God, had dispersed you... And you will return and listen to the voice of the Lord, and fulfill all His commandments, which I command you this day... This day, I call upon the*

*heaven and the earth as witnesses  
[that I have warned] you: I have set  
before you life and death, the blessing  
and the curse. You shall choose life, so  
that you and your offspring will live;  
To love the Lord your God, to listen to  
His voice, and to cleave to Him. For  
that is your life and the length of your  
days, to dwell on the land which the  
Lord swore to your forefathers...*

**T'shuva! Free Will! HaShem's Love!**

**That is the message of Nitzavim and  
that is why Nitzavim is the perfect  
sedra to bring us into the Yamim  
Nora'im. **PTDT****

**K'TIVA VACHATIMA TOVA**