Down The Road Less Traveled

1These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan... 2It is 11 days journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. 3Now Moses spoke to Bnei-Yisra el, according to all Adonai had commanded him for them—in the 40th year, in the 11th month, on the 1st day of the month. (Deut 1:1-3)

The Lord is present in our lives at all times – even at those times when we are hard-pressed, squeezed into a corner, and unsure about which fork on the road to take or what is the next step. Life’s crossroads can be very painful and confusing. One of Webster’s definitions of a crossroad is: “a crucial point especially where a decision has to be made.” Moshe and Israel were at a crossroad in Devarim, in front of the Jordan. Perhaps you find yourself at a crossroad today. If not, you probably will in the very near future. I want us to have a better perspective on the direction we should take at the crossroads of our own lives by realizing that:

- We are not alone
- Scripture gives us guidelines that bring encouragement and discernment
- Therefore, we can gain new strength to endure and choose properly.

When we “are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9), the Lord is nearer than we often realize. He neither walks away from nor keeps Himself at a distance when tough times come. He cares compassionately especially when we arrive at life’s crossroads and must decide which way to turn. This is part of what He meant when He said: “...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:20). Messiah is in the here and now!

Robert Frost encountered such a crossroad in his work “The Road Not Taken:”

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And both that morning equally lay
And sorry I could not travel both In leaves no step had trodden black.
And be one traveler, long I stood Oh, I kept the first for another day!
And looked down one as far as I could Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
To where it bent in the undergrowth; I doubted if I should ever come back.

Then took the other, as just as fair, I shall be telling this with a sigh
And having perhaps the better claim, Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
Though as for that the passing there I took the one less traveled by,
Had worn them really about the same, And that has made all the difference.

What a beautiful metaphor about crossroads – critical junctures that necessitate life-changing decisions. Some we prepare for as they approach like a marriage, a career, or a move to a new home. Others, perhaps even most, intersect our lives unexpectedly, like the sudden news of a death in the family, or the loss of a job, or the loss of good health. How do we make wise decisions at such crucial times? How do we maintain our equilibrium when we’ve been broadsided by bad news? No one knows how better than the man who endured constant beatings, imprisonments, and danger – the apostle Paul.

Paul came to a crucial fork in his life. One where he was suddenly blinded with the crossroads decision to continue persecuting Believers or become one himself: “Now Saul, still breathing out threats and murder against the Lord’s disciples, went to the kohen gadol. He requested letters of introduction from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women belonging to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”
5 “Who are You, Lord?” Saul said. “I am Yeshua – whom you are persecuting. 6 But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:1-6)

What did he choose? He chose the road less traveled by, the straight-and-narrow path of faith in Yeshua, and that made all the difference. Years later in a letter to the Philippians, the Apostle explained how he had since learned to handle life's crossroads in any circumstance: “11 I am not saying this because I am in need—for whatever circumstance I am in, I have learned to be content. 12 I know what it is to live with humble means, and I know what it is to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment—both to be filled and to go hungry, to have abundance and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Messiah who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:11-13)

Whatever the crossroad, Paul found Yeshua was always there, always willing to strengthen and guide him on his journey down the road less traveled. And the same is still true for us today.

**When Temptation Crosses Our Path**

Temptation stalks us all. It demands that we make a decision which way to go. And though we may not be able to stop it from attacking, we can resist and elude its grip. Here are three practical suggestions so that the next time temptation strikes, you will be able to stand and resist as Messiah did.

**First: Don't Be Alarmed... Expect It!**

The more you expect temptation, the less alarmed you'll be by all of its prowling and growling. None of us are free from its presence. It roams in the minds of even the holiest of people. And though none of us can actually see it or touch it, we can prepare for this invisible marauder by adopting a watchful attitude. Temptations aren't nearly as dangerous when nothing they can do surprises you anymore.

**Second: Don't Be Blind... Detect It!**

Whether Satan is directly behind it or not, temptation has innumerable methods of attack, few of which are easy to detect. So stay alert; watch for signs; become a skilled tracker who can spot temptations before they have a chance to strike.

**Third: Don't Be Clever... Reject It!**

There's a name for those who flirt with temptation: victim! It will devour anyone who dares toy with it, the same as any real lion would in the wild. Do not play with temptations. You can never take the killer instinct out of it and make it your pet. But you can learn how to protect yourself as the Messiah did by meeting this enemy head on with God's sword – His written Word: “9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your word. 10 With my whole heart have I sought You, let me not stray from Your mitzvot. 11 I have treasured Your word in my heart, so I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:9-11).