

Riva ***Rivka Ronit bat Hayim v'Rut Leah***

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelekh

[Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30](#)

September 14, 2017

Summary

This week we read a DOUBLE PARASHA! On Shabbat many congregations will read from both *Parashat Nitzavim* and *Parashat Vayelekh*--both appear towards the end of *Sefer Devarim*, the Book of Deuteronomy. During this week before Shabbat it is traditional to read the opening section of *Parashat Nitzavim*--the first of these two *parashiyot*. I will read from *Devarim* chapter 29, verses 9-11.

In this Torah portion, every Israelite gathers to hear more of Moshe's closing words. They are told that they all have a share in the promise that God has made to the Israelites. Once again they are warned of the consequences for not observing the mitzvot. They are also told that God will accept and help anyone who sincerely wants to and tries to do better. This is a good message for us as we start to get closer to Rosh Hashanah.

This week Moshe offers the Israelites words of encouragement. Even though we might sometimes feel like understanding Torah or living according to the *mitzvot* we study in Torah can be challenging, Moshe reminds us this week that we can find words of Torah in our hearts and even in our own mouths as we speak. Torah is designed to be within reach for us.

Questions

1) For many weeks now Moshe has been reminding the Israelites that when they get to the Promised Land it will be very important to do all of the *mitzvot* mentioned in the Torah. Why do you think it is important to follow Torah and do *mitzvot*? <<Pick 3>>

If we did not follow Torah there would be craziness. We need ground rules to help us grow and be better people. In turn, we can teach future generations these rules and what is right and what is wrong. Choosing not to follow Torah could mean disobeying God by doing things that we once knew were not ok but somehow forgot.

2) In this week's *parashah* we read about the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*--turning towards God with all of our heart and soul. We learn that it is not out of reach for us--not in the heavens and does not require a far trip across oceans, it is near to us and it is do-able. In what way is learning Torah and living according the Torah in reach of us? <<Pick 3>>

Choosing to live according to Torah is in reach of us because we will always have these teachings with us so we can always study them and God will always be with us to support us in doing the right thing.

3) In what ways has God helped you do better? <<Pick 3>>

One way that God has helped us is by giving us *mitzvot*. By giving us *mitzvot* and commanding us to do them, God gave us directions for how to improve ourselves. Even when we do *mitzvot* like lighting *shabbat* candles--even though we don't particularly help other people we are doing something which God commanded us to do. When we do *mitzvot* we are trying to bring out the better in ourselves and this can make the world a better place. When I sincerely try to do *mitzvot* and this helps me not only because I am trying to do what God expects me to do, but also because I am working on listening to God--which can strengthen my listening skills and maybe even make me better at listening to other people.