

Parashat Nitzavim

Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

SEPTEMBER 27, 2019



SUMMARY

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 G!d's *breet* or contract. Once again they are warned of the consequences for not observing the mitzvot, but they are also told that G!d will accept anyone who sincerely wants to and tries to do better.

Towards the end of this *parasha* Moshe offers the Israelites words of encouragement, saying that *teshuvah*--understanding and following the instructions we find in *Torah* is not beyond the abilities of our brains or our bodies. Moshe reminds the Israelites that the words of *Torah* are in their mouths and in their hearts. Even if we might see that understanding *Torah* or living according to the mitzvot in *Torah* can be challenging, it is within our reach.

Moshe then tells the Israelites that, although G!d is bringing them to them the Promised Land, they will only be able to continue to live there if they listen to G!d's instruction and be careful that their hearts do not turn to false gods. Moshe calls heaven and earth to see that G!d is putting the choices of life and death, blessing and curse before the Israelites. Moshe then gives the Israelites the tip, "Choose life so that you and your children may live."

From Our Commentators:

SEFORNO:

לא רחוקה היא שתצטרך לחכמי
הדור הרחוקים שיפרשו לך באופן
שתוכל לעשותה אפי' בעודך
בגלות ובאר זה באמרו לא בשמים
היא לאמר. לא יקרה לך בענין
התשובה שתצטרך בה להגדת
נביא:

It (the *mitzvah* of making *teshuvah*) is not distant so that you have to ask the leading Torah scholars of your generation who live a long way from you to explain how to observe this commandment. You can easily observe this commandment even in the Diaspora where you may not have any Torah scholars nearby.

For Discussion:

- 1) Towards the end of the *parasha*, G!d gives us the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*--looking at our behavior, thinking about how we can do *mitzvot* better, and changing our behavior accordingly. G!d tells us that doing *teshuvah* is not confusing or impossible for us. Why would G!d tell us this? Shouldn't it be obvious that we can do *teshuvah*?
- 2) Why might a person want to do more *mitzvot* or get better at doing *mitzvot*?
- 3) Later in this *parasha* the Israelites hear that G!d has given them the power to choose life or death, to choose blessing or curse. Moshe tells them that G!d wants them to choose life and to choose blessing so that they and their children may live. What might it mean to choose life and to choose blessing? How could choosing life and blessing cause their children to live?