

Parashah Nitzavim

The one that focuses on the Israelites' covenant, the law that is meant to govern and shape the people of Israel in the Promised Land, with a strong emphasis on personal responsibility and the consequences of one's actions.

In Parashah Nitzavim, Moses gathers all the people of Israel, regardless of social status or age, to affirm publicly their covenant with God. Moses begins by reminding the Israelites of their past experiences, including their liberation from slavery in Egypt, their wanderings in the desert, and the various challenges they have faced. He emphasizes that the agreement they are entering into is not only with their current generation, but also with future generations who are not present at that moment. It is an eternal covenant.

Parashah Nitzavim is also about choice. Choose life! Moses presents the Israelites with a clear choice between following the path of righteousness and obedience to the commandments or straying from it and facing the consequences. He warns of the potential exile and hardships they may have to deal with if they abandon their covenant responsibilities.

Furthermore, Moses assures the Israelites that even if they do stray and suffer the consequences, there is always an opportunity for repentance and returning to the covenant. He emphasizes the accessibility of the commandments and encourages the people to choose life and prosperity over death or adversity.

Parashah Nitzavim highlights the collective responsibility of the Israelites to uphold their covenant, maintain their moral and ethical standards, and ensure the continuity of their faith and heritage. It stresses the importance of individual choices and the impact people's choices makes on the community.

Teen Takeaways from Parashah Nitzavim

1. **What does it mean that the covenant is entered into "with those who are not with us here this day"?** That took place over 3000 years ago. Does this include us Jews in 21st century America? Did your parents and their parents and many generations back make decisions that still affect us today? What about the decisions we make? How will they affect future generations?
2. **The scene depicted in the parashah is like Mt. Sinai when the Torah was given.** Can you find yourself in the picture? It is a bit like the "Where's Waldo?" books!
3. **Your choices matter:** What you choose to do has consequences, not just for you, but also for your community and future generations. Try to make wise decisions.
4. **Include everyone:** Like Moses gathered all the people, remember to include and respect people from all backgrounds and ages in your circle. Unity is powerful.
5. **Keep traditions alive:** Just as the covenant was passed down, it's important to preserve your family's traditions and values. They connect you to your roots.
6. **You have a choice:** You have the power to choose your path in life. Your decisions shape your future, so think carefully. We may not be able to control everything that happens to us, but we can control how we respond. That is where free choice operates.
7. **Learn from mistakes:** Everyone makes mistakes. Parashah Nitzavim shows that it's never too late to make amends and turn things around. We are reminded that God is compassionate and forgiving, and it is never too late to make up for our mistakes.
8. **Support one another:** Your actions can affect your friends and community. Be there to support and guide one another.
9. **Choose a positive life:** Choose a life filled with positivity and growth, not negativity and problems. We can always choose how we respond to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.
10. **Seek wisdom:** Good advice and wisdom are usually not far away. Don't hesitate to ask for help or guidance.
11. **Stay strong:** Just like the Israelites endured tough times, you, too, can persevere through challenges. Stay committed to your values.
12. **Be a leader:** You can be a leader among your peers by setting a good example and helping others when needed.

Summary

These lessons from **Parashah Nitzavim** can help you **make better choices, be a supportive friend, and grow into a responsible and ethical individual.**