

# Parshat Nitzavim: How to Achieve Unity for All Jews

written by Chaya Rivka Zwolinski

September 4, 2023



“You are all standing this day before the Lord, your God the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel, your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp, both your woodcutters and your water drawers, that you may enter the covenant of the Lord, your God is making with you this day...” □ Deuteronomy 29:9-29:11

In Parshat Nitzavim the Torah says today all of you are standing before Hashem, your God. Your leaders, your elders, your young ones – everyone of Israel. In Likutey Halachot Reb Nosson says that this teaches us the importance of achdut, unity for all Jews. From the greatest to the smallest, all must join together in order that our prayers to go up to the heavens. Really acting with achdut can be a difficult challenge.

This idea of unity, to remember that each and every Jew is our

brother or sister, is fraught with “except fors” and “buts”. Someone might look at another Jew who appears outwardly less religious or less serious about their Torah observance, and they might look down on that person. They miss the mark, not understanding how much this person may be striving to come closer to Hashem but is facing deep inner struggles.

Then there are others who look at people, whether they be individuals or communities, who may appear more outwardly religious with more attention to the meticulous details of Torah. They might feel that these people aren’t being genuine, or that they are being hypocritical, or that they are fanatics. These critics also miss the mark.

You cannot judge someone’s genuine feeling for Hashem by just taking a glimpse at their external, public behavior, a two-dimensional snapshot of their life.

Rebbe Nachman and Reb Noson both teach again and again: We must judge each other always of the side of good. We must look for the nekuda tovah, the good point, inside each Jew. This is the foundational advice, of Rebbe Nachman in his famous lesson of Azamra (LM 282.) It’s obvious that we act kindly and honorably towards one another, but we must also think and feel kindly and honorably towards one another.

Just as we judge others on the side of merit, with mercy and also forgiveness, we should try to judge ourselves on the side of merit too, even with mercy, and with forgiveness.

For each of us personally, it’s important to remember that this doesn’t give us a pass. We still must try hard. It still must feel and express genuine remorse for our actions that might be less than they should be, and make reparations when needed. We understand that we are flawed. Everybody is flawed. Our job is to look through the flaws, to look beyond them. We need to look at the beautiful souls inside ourselves, each individual and the entire Jewish nation.

May you have a day where you think, feel and act with genuine kindness towards yourself and others.