



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

So Close... If You Taste It

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Kollel Scholar and Director of Special Projects

"It is not beyond your understanding nor is it far away. It is not in heaven... nor is it beyond the sea... For the Word is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to fulfill it." (30:11-14)

In many instances, the greatest obstacle to reaching our potential in our *Avodas Hashem* (service of G-d) is the way we perceive our own reality. A person tells themselves: "If I had been endowed with sharper intelligence, then I would apply myself to study Torah more. If those around me weren't holding me back or if they supported me more, then I would be a different person..."

In this week's Parsha, the Torah assures us that the Torah and its mitzvos are attainable for every individual, irrespective of their circumstances. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains: Torah "is not beyond your understanding" – but is within the grasp of an ordinary human mind. "It is not far way" and can be understood and kept within the ordinary conditions of life. "It is not in heaven" i.e. all the knowledge necessary to understand and accomplish its teachings was transmitted at the Divine Revelation at Sinai. Nothing remained in heaven that would require us to find a supernaturally intelligent person to penetrate the secrets of heaven to bring it to us. "Nor is it across the sea" – do not claim that the Torah is really meant to be understood and kept in circumstances and societies other than my own.

The reason that the Torah is accessible to every individual, explains Rav Hirsch, is because it "is very close to you" – it is about you yourself and concerns your life and your circumstances. To connect to the words of the Torah, one need only to consider the messages contained within and see that they are meant for regular people, with normal strengths and weaknesses. This can only be achieved when it is "in your mouth and in your heart to fulfill it" – when the words of the oral tradition, the teachings of our sages, are in our mouths, for the purpose of taking them to heart and fulfilling the Torah's commandments. When we learn Torah with the perspective that this relates directly to me and can help me grow, the experience takes on immeasurable meaning and has the ability to foster real change.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos and a Shana Tova!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

You are standing today, all of you... all the men of Israel (29:9).

(Hashem) reign over the whole world, all of it... (Rosh Hashana Davening)

Why do we use a double terminology of "all"? If it says "all of you" why does the verse repeat, "all the men of Israel?" If we are asking that Hashem reign over the whole world, why do we add "all of it?"

Parsha Riddle

On which date was the world created?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Where is there a reference to the mitzvah of Tefillin in this week's parsha?

Answer: Ki shem Hashem nikra olecha - they will see that the name of Hashem is upon you (28:10).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parashas Nitzavim (30:1-10) discusses "returning" to Hashem:

It will be that when all these things come upon you ... then you will take it to your heart ... and you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice ... You shall return and listen to the voice of Hashem ... Hashem will make you abundant in all your handiwork ... when Hashem will return to rejoice over you for good ... when you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d ... when you shall return to Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and all your soul.

Ramban in his commentary to these verses interprets them as conveying a commandment to repent, whereas Rambam apparently does not, understanding them to rather constitute a Divine assurance that Israel will ultimately repent (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:5). Although he does assert the existence of a commandment to confess one's sins along with the repentance process, he does not derive this obligation from our *parashah*, and he does not seem to consider repentance *per se* to be a *mitzvah* (*Sefer ha-Mitzvos aseh* #73 and beginning of *Hilchos Teshuvah*; cf. *Minchas Chinuch* #364).

Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2) writes:

What constitutes *teshuvah*? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart, never to commit them again as [Isaiah 55:7] states "May the wicked abandon his ways ..." Similarly, he must regret the past as [Jeremiah 31:18] states: "After I returned, I regretted."

It is noteworthy that Rambam does not include penance and self-mortification in his basic definition of repentance (although he does elsewhere (*ibid.* 2:4) include voluntary exile among "the paths of repentance"). This is in accordance with the Talmudic teaching that:

It is **not sackcloth and fasting** that **cause** atonement for our sins. **Rather, repentance and good deeds** will **cause** our atonement. This is **as we find with regard to the people of Nineveh, that it is not stated about them: And G-d saw their sackcloth and their fasting. Rather,** the verse states: "**And G-d saw their deeds, that they had turned from their evil way**" (Jonah 3:10) (*Ta'anis* 16a).

Similarly, the *Noda be-Yehudah* (1 OC 35) rules that:

In truth, fasting is but ancillary to repentance, and repentance fundamentally consists of abandonment of sin, verbal confession with a broken heart, and wholehearted remorse ... but other things, such as fasting and penances, are not fundamental.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. Yehoshua grew from me.
2. I was the merit for Esther.
3. I was the first of four.
4. I was to be listened to.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I will be for Moshiach.
2. I am for inauguration.
3. I am for repentance.
4. I cause Hashem to move.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Bikkurim (First Fruits) (You tie me, You bring me, You wave me, You save me.)

#2 Har Grizim and Har Eival (I divided people, The bad for Evil, I had blessings, I had curses.)

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Greater Washington Community Kollel wishes all of its friends, supporters, participants, and the entire community, a good Yom Tov and a sweet new year!

May you and your family be blessed with health, happiness, and peace!

