

# BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' IN ENGLISH

PARSHAS VAYELECH – 5 TISHREI 5782

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“The gate of the inner courtyard that faces eastward shall be closed during the six days of labor, but on the Shabbos day it shall be opened...” (Yechezkel 46:1). Although this Pasuk from the Navi refers to the Beis HaMikdash, in Chassidic thought it refers to the inner chamber of the heart of Man. While our hearts may be closed to Teshuva during the hustle and bustle of the workweek, the respite of Shabbos allows us to open our hearts to Teshuva.

Similarly, during the Ten Days of Repentance, between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when Hashem is especially close to us, our hearts and minds are more attuned to implementing the Teshuva process. This is why the Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is known as Shabbos Teshuva as it has a doubly conducive to accomplishing Teshuva.

When Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai and received the transmission of Torah from Hashem, the heavens and the earth were linked for those forty days. We also see this correlation in the final Parshiyos of the Torah. In Parshas Netzavim it says, “Because this Mitzvah that I command to you today is not inaccessible from you or distant from you. It is not in heaven for you to say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it’. It is not across the sea for you to say, ‘Who can cross to the other side of the sea for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it’. Rather it is very near to you, it is in your mouth and your heart to perform” (Devarim 30:11-14)

It is noteworthy that Rashi cites the Gemara (Eiruvim 55a) in the name of R' Avdimi bar Chama bar Dosa who suggests that if the Torah was in heaven we would have an obligation to find a way to traverse the sky in order to learn Torah. Although Rava and Rebbe Yochanan give alternative non-literal explanations, Rashi quotes the first opinion in his commentary on the Chumash.

Even though it was not known in Rashi's time how to travel into the sky, it was known that one could travel across the ocean with much effort and danger. The important takeaway here is that Hashem would never obligate or expect us to do something that was impossible. Therefore, if Hashem implies in the Torah that we would have to ascend the heavens to study Torah, then Rashi and R' Avdimi knew that it must be possible.

The same is true about Teshuva. If Teshuva is a Mitzvah, then by definition it is possible. Shabbos in an opportune time for Teshuva. The sanctity and holy aura of Shabbos has the power to transform a person into a new creation that has yet to transgress. Adam HaRishon tapped into this sanctity when he recited, “A song of Mizmor for the Shabbos day”.

The penultimate Parsha HaAzinu also captures the union of heaven and earth, “The heavens should listen, and I will speak, and the earth shall hear the words of my mouth” (Devarim 32:1). ‘Listening’ takes more effort, as the heavens are further away, so Moshe uses the term **אדברה** ‘speech’ which is louder and harsher. In contrast, Moshe uses the term **פי** **אמרי** for the earth, which is closer, and can more easily ‘hear’ what Moshe says.

Throughout our lives we must also join the heavens and the earth – meaning that of the spiritual world with that of the physical world. We should not mistakenly think that our bodies are an amalgam of physical and spiritual, rather by performing Mitzvos we are able to sanctify our physical body to be

completely spiritual. The Kotzker Rebbe would use this idea to explain the Pasuk, "The heavens are Hashem's heavens and the land was given to human beings" (Tehillim 115:16). In other words, it is the job of Man to sanctify the physical 'land' given to us and transform it into the spiritual 'heavens'.

During the year after committing an Aveirah, we may give pause and reflect on our shortcomings, but in general the pace of life forces us to quickly move on. Shabbos Teshuva gives us a unique opportunity between the great awakening of Rosh Hashana and the Yom HaKadosh when our records are sealed, to reflect on all of our mistakes over the past year and how to rectify them.

Baruch Hashem, most of us live in righteous communities, however there is always more we can do to better ourselves. There are so many Torah Shiurim available today, both daily shiurim like Daf Yomi, or weekly shiurim on a variety of topics. How is it possible that people cannot find time in their week for at least one weekly shiur? What kind of Chinuch are we transmitting to our children when they come home from school and see that their father is never learning from a Sefer? The father tells his children how important studying Torah is and yet they never see him learning. Children are perceptive. Everyone should make their own calculation of how often their children see them learning Torah and performing Mitzvos and how often their children see them on the phone or in front of a computer or involved in other non-Mitzvah activities.

In our Viduy we say 'we and our fathers have sinned'. Why are we mentioning our fathers? We should just focus on our sins. Perhaps we are alluding to the fact that if our parents had raised us better and educated us properly we would have transgressed less. This is not meant to pass the blame to the previous generation, but to arouse within us the need to rectify this and put more efforts into the Chinuch of our children so that we do not transmit our failings to the next generation.

Every morning we say in Birchos HaTorah, "These are the things that have no prescribed measure: Pe'ah, Bikkurim, Korban Re'eiyah, acts of kindness and Torah study. These are the things whose fruits a person enjoys in This World, but whose principal remains intact in the World to Come: Honoring parents, acts of kindness, early attendance to the Beis Midrash, hospitality to guests, visiting the sick, providing for brides, escorting the dead, prayer with Kavana, bringing peace between people and Torah study is equivalent to them all.

If Torah learning is equivalent to all the others, then why do we need to list all the other Mitzvos beforehand? One explanation is to teach us that there is time for everything. There is time for Kibud Av V'Em and there is time to help others and with all the time we need for other daily, weekly, and annual Mitzvos, there is still ample time, and in most cases an abundance of time to study Torah.

There was once a woman whose husband had died in a plane crash. She petitioned the courts and won the right to hear the recordings of the plane before it crashed. She went through all the legal costs, time and efforts of litigation for the remote possibility that in the midst of all the pandemonium before the plane crash, she might perhaps hear something from her husband before he died.

If this woman was willing to go to such lengths, then what does that say about us, who have the clear words of Abaye and Rava, of Rebbe Shimon and Rebbe Yehudah, of Rashi and Tosfos, within arm's reach wherever we are. We don't need to ascend to heaven or cross the sea, all we need to do is open a Gemara and it is all there for us. Today, they even print Gemaras that fit in your pocket so you can learn Torah from a Sefer when you 'travel on the way' just as we say in the Kriyas Shema.

May Hashem give us the strength to strengthen ourselves and improve our wonderful Jewish communities even more, so that we may all merit a Shana Tova of health, happiness and Hatzlacha, as we eagerly await the Geulah v'Yeshua B'Karov.