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AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בְּשִׁיטְחָה



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
NITZAVIM

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

**F**or this commandment that I command you today - it is not hidden from you, and it is not distant. It is not in heaven [for you] to say, 'Who can ascend to the heaven for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it?' Nor is it 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, the matter is very near to you - in your mouth and your heart - to perform it."<sup>1</sup>

With these poetic words, the Torah lays out the argument for *Teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* is close to us, and does not take strenuous activity to perform it. The *Kli Yakar*<sup>2</sup> (Reb Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz, 1550-1619) explains that the statement, "It is not hidden from you," refers to two possible reasons why people do not do *Teshuvah*.

One fear that we may have is that Hashem will not accept our *Teshuvah*. 'Who says *Teshuvah* works? After all, how can one remove something that was done from reality?' To this, the *Passuk* responds, 'It is not hidden from you.' You know, in your heart of hearts, that Hashem waits and desires your *Teshuvah*.

The soul of the Jewish people and *Teshuvah* are intertwined, as both were created before the world,<sup>3</sup> and know each other as well as any old friends would. Yes, *Klal Yisrael* is well aware that Hashem accepts *Teshuvah*.

The second hesitation can come from a recognition of what we did when we erred. 'How can we ever do the *Teshuvah* needed in response to the *Aveirah* that we committed? How is it possible to make up for what we've done? How is it possible to catch up on all the lost opportunities?' To this, again, the *Passuk* responds, 'It is not hidden from you.' You truly know deep down that Hashem does not demand extraordinary feats of spiritual strength - if you decide to genuinely turn your heart to Him, He will respond by returning to you.

Sometimes we feel so worn down by the constant spiritual battles, and wonder, 'What's the point?' With this coming Rosh Hashanah, we can remind ourselves what we already know - that Hashem is eagerly anticipating our return to Him.

1 *Devarim* 30:11-14

2 *Devarim* 30:11 s.v. כי המצוה

3 *Pesachim* 54a, cf. *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4

### The soul of the Jewish people and *Teshuvah* are intertwined.

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

As Rosh Hashanah nears, we may struggle with feeling burned out. How can I make promises to change when I know that I did that last year, and it didn't work out? How can Hashem accept my *Teshuvah* when I know that I'll very likely fail? These questions may swirl around in our mind, and we have a hard time answering ourselves.

One helpful exercise may be to think about what we would say to a friend who would approach us with these thoughts. Take a few moments to imagine sitting down with a friend who tells you how they are feeling about the coming Yom Tov.

What would we respond? When we 'externalize' our questions, we might be surprised to find that we knew the answers all along - that Hashem is always waiting for us to do *Teshuvah*, and that He is very happy for us to even attempt to come close to Him.

By thinking about Rosh Hashanah in this way, we can inspire ourselves to happily come closer to Hashem.



**If a person attempts to change their nature without properly learning Mussar, they may end up planting bad Middos instead of uprooting them.**

- R' Yaakov Yisrael Lubachinsky, *Mivakshei HaSheleimos* p. 58

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# WORDS IN ONE'S HEART

Ezra\* was torn. On the one hand, his business was doing well, and not only was he able to provide for his family, but he was giving a lot of *Tzedakah* as well. On the other hand, well... more and more he had to rationalize some of the commonly accepted business practices. Simply put, he wasn't comfortable with what he was doing, but what other option did he have?

With this in mind, he finally decided to ask his Rabbi. There he sat, in Rabbi Greenberg's office, laying out the entire business model, including all of the dubious areas that the business engaged in. "Let me be clear, Rabbi Greenberg. I spoke to a lawyer who explained that what I'm doing would indeed be defensible in court. I don't think I'm doing anything illegal - it's just, well, close to it."

Rabbi Greenberg nodded. "Let me ask you, Ezra. What do you think you should do? What do you think Hashem wants you to do?"

Ezra laughed. "When you put it like that - I think I should cut out those dubious practices from my business."

Rabbi Greenberg smiled. "That's right. It doesn't sound so kosher, so why do it? Why risk getting in trouble - it may be defensible in court, but who wants to end up in court in the first place? And from your reaction I see that you knew that before you even sat down. I'm guessing you just wanted to discuss it with someone."

Now it was Ezra's turn to nod. "Sometimes you know something, but it's hard to act on it. Just because I know something deep down doesn't mean it'll get me to do something about it. I felt that if I spoke it out with someone I respected, I'd feel more comfortable in my decision. Thank you, Rabbi."

**Just because I know something deep down doesn't mean it'll get me to do something about it.**

*\*Names have been changed, based on a true story.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The lofty level a pious person can achieve only exists because of man's ability to sin.<sup>1</sup>
- When a person squanders their potential, not only does Hashem mourn the sin, but He also mourns over the loss of what the person could have become.<sup>2</sup>
- Deep down, we all desire to serve Hashem properly.<sup>3</sup> However, to tap into feelings of remorse, one must first stop doing the sin for a period of time.<sup>4</sup>

1 Rav S. R. Hirsch, *Bamidbar* 28:15

2 *Chovos HaTalmidim*, Chap. 1

3 *Berachos* 17a

4 *Sha'arei Teshuvah* Chap 1. s.v. העיקר השני