

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
YISRO 5778

בְּשִׁיטְחָא

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

Our Inner Desire

The big day had finally arrived! *Har Sinai* was shaking, smoke had enveloped the entire mountain, and the sound of a shofar was getting louder and louder.¹ For 2448 years, the universe waited in anticipation for this moment.

Several days prior to this event Hashem instructed Moshe to set up boundaries around *Har Sinai*, and inform the *Bnei Yisrael* that they should not touch the mountain during the giving of the Torah, as the penalty was death. Despite this previous warning, Hashem again tells Moshe to go and warn the people not to touch *Har Sinai*.²

Why would the people need a second warning? Isn't the obvious boundary in front of them, plus the fact that they were already warned days ago, enough?

Rashi³ explains that Hashem understood that the *Bnei Yisrael* have a deep natural craving for *Kedusha*. This instinctive hunger may cause someone to forget themselves in a moment of zeal, and break through the boundary surrounding the mountain, effectively sentencing themselves to death. Therefore, it was critical to warn *Klal Yisrael* again, to reinforce the importance of not touching the mountain.

The *Mesillas Yesharim*⁴ states that the sole purpose of creation is for humans to have the amazing bliss, contentment and pleasure of delighting in Hashem's presence in the next world. This world is the conduit, the place where our soul amasses the fortune of *Mitzvos* and *Avodas Hashem* used in the next world to create our experience.

Our souls, having been created from Hashem, and knowing what an awesome experience it is to cleave to Hashem, are constantly and desperately seeking a way to cling to Him. Rashi shows us that this desire is so overwhelming, that when faced with the possibility of coming close to Hashem, we would naturally put our very lives in danger for the experience. The pleasure of being close to Hashem is not reserved for the next world; our souls are gratified and thrilled in this world as well. If we would remove the barriers that we've put in place between us and Hashem, our *Neshama* would cling to Hashem like a magnet, and our earthly lives would be exponentially enhanced.⁵

Recognize that we want to do what's right! We must attempt, though, to remove the impediments, and we will naturally come closer to Hashem.

1 *Shemos* 19:16-19

2 *Shemos* 19:21

3 *ibid.* s. v. יְהִרְסוּ כָּן

4 Chap. 1

5 *ibid.* *Simchas Mordechai* 102

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Knowing that we truly want to do what's right is nice, but how do we unleash that power? What can we do to enforce that feeling, and remove the obstacles in our lives?

The *Orchos Tzadikim* sometimes suggests using one character trait to combat another. For example, one can use their laziness to combat their desires - "I'm too tired to get off the couch and indulge in such and such."¹

We can apply this concept to our situation as well. We all have feelings of compassion, and if we can properly tap into that feeling, we can use it to further our self-growth.

If we truly recognize that we really want to do what's right, allowing ourselves to swerve from that path is actually doing ourselves a disservice.

Imagine a homeless child who wants nothing more than something to eat. It would be cruel to ignore that child, and strange and inhumane to offer him a fun distraction instead of an apple.

Similarly, it is cruel to ignore our true desire to serve Hashem, and strange and inhumane to distract ourselves with diversions that don't satisfy our appetite.

1 *Orchos Tzadikim* Chap. 16

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IN A MOMENT'S NOTICE

Jewish history is replete with stories of people turning back to Hashem, some in the last moments of their lives. The following story¹ occurred during the Greek occupation of Eretz Yisrael, in about the year 168 B.C.E.

Yakum of Tzeroros was a nephew of the great sage Rabbi Yose ben Yoezer of Tzreida. Yakum was a Hellenized Jew, with a powerful position in the Greek army. His uncle, on the other hand, had been sentenced to death, as part of the Greek strategy to undermine the religious Jews.

Yakum was riding on a horse when he met his condemned uncle. He derisively called out, "Look at the horse your Master has placed you upon, and look at the horse my master has placed me upon!"

"If Hashem gives peace and security to people who have only done a few *Mitzvos*, how much more must He give to those who follow Him!" replied Reb Yose.²

"But you follow in His ways, and look what's happening to you!" retorted Yakum.

"Indeed, if Hashem punishes the few *Aveiros* that I have so severely, imagine what will happen to those who truly anger Him!"

Yakum was sincerely shaken by this back-and-forth. So much so, he turned and left, accepting upon himself any judgement of Heaven. When Yakum died, Reb Yose ben Yoezer saw Yakum being brought to *Gan Eden*.

Reb Yose was able to penetrate to the heart of the matter - Yakum was driven by his desire for glory, and his fear of retribution. When Reb Yose tore away the shroud of confusion, all that was left was Yakum's true need, his craving to come close to Hashem.

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1 *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:22

2 Based on *Matnas Kehuna ibid.* s.v. אים כך

DID YOU KNOW?

- The intense desire to come close to Hashem may cause a person to rationalize their behavior, and actually end up doing *Aveiros* in their fervor to serve Hashem.¹
- The pull that holiness has on us is actually stronger, and more present, than the pull towards physical things.²
- Despite his busy schedule and matters of state to attend, Dovid Hamelech was naturally pulled to the *Beis HaMedrash*.³
- When we accustom ourselves to do *Mitzvos*, we still get reward as if we were not habituated to doing them.⁴

1 *Maschil LeDovid Shemos* 19:21 s.v. העד בעם, *Rav Schwab on Prayer* p. 43 s.v. וכוף את יצרנו

2 *Daas Torah Toldos* 25:22 s.v. ויתרוצצו

3 *Vayikra Rabbah* 35:1

4 *Eitz Yosef ibid.* s.v. בכל יום