Shovavim

These weeks during which we read the first eight parshios of Sefer Shemos are referred to as “Shovavim”. The word is an anagram of the first letters of the parshios. These are the weeks that the Jewish people went down to Egypt and were redeemed from slavery. The Meforsh Loaz explains that one of the reasons for the enslavement was purification. They hard labor was a purification process for certain sins. These weeks are an opportunity for us also. If we engage in teshuva, strengthen our learning, and pray for Hashem’s help, we can also purify ourselves.

Kinderlach...

We receive special “yitzyas dishmaya” (Heavenly assistance) during these weeks. Do you know how many times we worked so hard in Eli and Tikhri? We have a new opportunity now for teshuva. Let us all try to strengthen our learning, pray more slowly and with more kavanah (concentration). Look for opportunities to do chessed (acts of kindness) for people. With Hashem’s help, we can reach new heights during these weeks.

Now It Is Known!

“Indeed, the matter is known” (Shemos 2:14). What was known? The simple interpretation of the verse implies that the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu had killed an Egyptian, was now public knowledge. The day before he had seen the Egyptian beating a Jewish man. He struck down the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. The next day he saw two Jews quarreling and tried to make peace between them. The wicked one said to Moshe, “Do you propose to murder me as you murdered the Egyptian?” Moshe thought, “Indeed, the matter is known” (Shemos 2:14).

Kinderlach...

We are all striving to do as many mitzvos and as few aveiros (sins) as possible. Why? Because we know that we will receive reward for the mitzvos and punishment for the aveiros. However, we learn something very important here. Our bad speech gives the accuser the power to speak badly about us. If we do not speak lashon hora, the news of our aveiros will not reach Hashem’s ears. Therefore, this one mitzvah can help us avoid punishment for all of our aveiros.

Every Place Is Holy

The bush was burning with fire, but it was not consumed. Moshe thought, “I will turn aside now and look at this great sight – why is the bush not burned?...” Hashem called out to Moshe from the bush... “Remove your shoes from your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground!” (Shemos 3:2-5).

The Chofetz Chaim zt”l warns us with the words from Parkei Avos, “Do not say that when I have free time, I will learn.” A person thinks that when Hashem makes his situation more comfortable, then he will have the time and peace of mind to learn and do mitzvos properly. Now, however, he is too busy tending to other things. To answer this the verse says, “The place upon which you stand” – this situation that you are in right now – “is holy ground” – it is possible that Hashem wants you specifically to learn and do mitzvos under these trying circumstances. The Chofetz Chaim finishes off with the statement from our sages: “The reward is proportional to the difficulty.” The Medrash on Shir Hashirim states that one who learns when it is difficult receives 1000 rewards. Learning without difficulty merits only 200 rewards.

Kinderlach...

“I’m too tired.” “I’m hungry.” “My feet hurt.” “My friend wants to come to play.” “I don’t feel like it.” These are all reasons we can give to not do a mitzvah. They may be very good reasons. The Chofetz Chaim zt”l is telling us that Hashem knows these reasons. Even so, He is still giving you the opportunity to do this mitzvah. He wants you to do the mitzvah even though it is difficult. In fact, in a way it is even better to do a mitzvah when it is difficult. The reward is so much greater. Next time that you are tired, hungry, or busy, and imma as ks you to do a mitzvah, take a deep breath and say, “Thank you imma. I’m coming right away. I want a big reward for this mitzvah!”