



"Would it be that My people listen to me, if Israel would go in My ways,
I would subdue their enemies in a instant, and turn My hand against their foes."

King David, Psalm 81

ESTD
1997

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Jewish Beliefs and Practices

JewishTimes

Volume I, No. 15...May 15, 2002

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES.PDF

Download and Print Free

IN THIS ISSUE:

EVERY DAY	1
ABRAHAM AND GOD'S JUSTICE	1, 2
APPEARING BEFORE GOD	1, 3
QUESTIONS ON SINAI	2
FOREFATHERS OBSERVED TORAH?	3

Appearing Before God

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Deuteronomy, 16:16, we find the command for males to appear before God (in front of the Temple) three times a year; on Passover, Tabernacles and on the Festival of Weeks. The passage reads thus:

"Three times yearly, there shall appear all males - to the face of God your God - in the chosen place; on the holiday of Unleavened Bread, the holiday of Weeks, and the on the holiday of Tabernacles, and you shall not see the face of God empty handed."

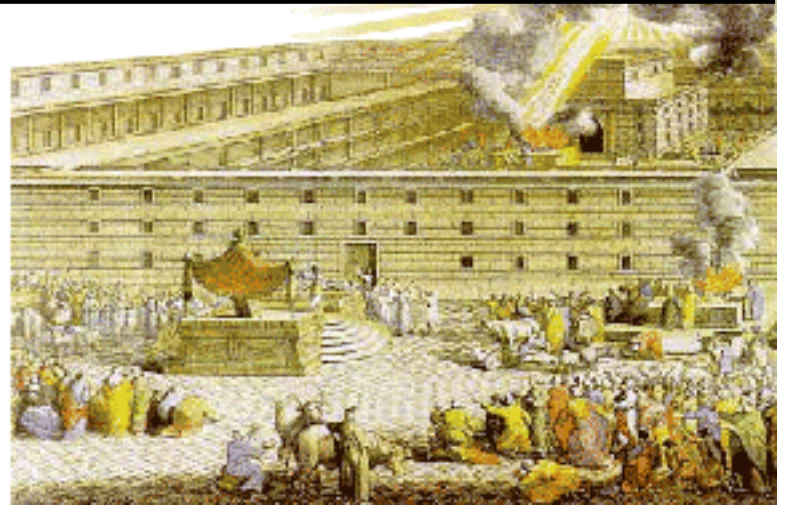
The Amoraim - those who succeeded the authors of the Mishna (Oral law) - argued regarding to who we refer with the term "appear". The Hebrew word "yay-ra-eh" means to appear. This can apply to God appearing to man, and visa versa, man appearing before God. Rabbi Yochanan b. Dahavai explained it as referring to God, meaning, man must place himself in the situation where God appears to him. Rabbeinu Tam explained it referring to man appearing before God.

Rabbeinu Tam explains his reasoning as follows: There are two versions of the structure of the word; There is "yay-ra-eh", meaning "to appear" before someone. And there is "yi-ra-eh", meaning "to look". The former is the actual written form located in the Torah script, while the latter is only the accepted pronunciation. We have this many times in the Torah, we call it the "ksiv" and the "kri", the written and the spoken forms, respectively. These dual word forms are Masoretic (Traditional) vehicles for passing down additional teachings, unavailable without the additional word form.

Rabbi Yochanan b. Dahavai held that we use the orally transmitted forms of words as starting points in Biblical exegesis. This means that the

(continued on page 2)

(continued on page 3)



ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"God does not eat, so why do we then bring animal sacrifices to Him?"
Have your children email us with their answers: questions@mesora.org

SUGGESTED READINGS:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Avraham Learning God's Justice

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

How did Avraham know what G-d's justice was prior to G-d's communication with him?

As he had no Torah, nor communication with God as of yet, by what means did Avraham arrive at a true understanding of God's will? God said "hamichaseh ani mayAvraham...", "will I keep hidden from Avraham". What knowledge was Avraham bereft of, why couldn't he acquire this knowledge on his own, and what was it in G-d's words which introduced Avraham to this new concept?

Every Day

RIVKA OLENICK

"And these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart." Va'eschanan (Deuteronomy 6:6) What does this mean: "These words that I command you today These words" are the commandments that God has given to us. The commandments are based on truths that help a person live a moral, ethical and virtuous life. The commandments help us live our lives in the most beneficial way by freeing our mind of illusions and fantasies. Instead, we do the commands and train ourselves to live and think according to the ways of justice, kindness and truth.

This is what God demands of us "through" the commands. And so we must follow the commands every "today" in the present, so that our passions do not become the main focus of life. The commands were given thousands of years ago, and it is easy to regard them as ancient obligations that no longer apply to our life today. However, we read this same statement in the Shema every day, which means the commandments are relevant and timely and are for "today." Toras Chaim says: "What this verse is telling us is that a person should always reflect upon his way of life and be sure that he is doing the will of God as it expresses itself at the present time, "today."

What does this mean "shall be upon your heart"? The great gift of intelligence that God gave each of us is to be used to uncover the profound teachings contained in each commandment. These teachings assist us in living an upright existence, a life of emes truth, which promotes peace and unity between people. The heart relates to the kindness one uses in bringing "emes" to others. Any person with knowledge is obligated to share it not only by transmitting the knowledge to ones children, but to bring others "near to Torah." The Sifre says: "We should regard the commands with great enthusiasm and freshness, not out of habit." So this means that we should "approach" all the commands with eagerness and joy and look forward to fulfilling each one with the "desire" of doing God's will. We should also understand that "be upon your heart" means to remember with intelligence and common sense. This is all in the "how" we do the commands. Nothing is worse than taking the commandments for granted as if they have no life, as if they are stagnant or boring and no longer hold our interest - as if they've become our "enemy."

The Ramban says: "Observe God's commands out of love, and out of fear. Observe it out of love, for a lover does not despise, and observe it out of fear for if you come to reject God's authority you will not do it." Samson Raphael Hirsch says: "Accordingly the demand here is that the words spoken here as being our duty are to be kept "present" in our minds and exert a permanent influence on our hearts under the weight of these words, allow our thoughts and feelings to be mastered by them. One must bind one's inner inclinations by oath to duty." And the Sforno adds: "The expression "upon your heart" means to commit something to memory. Israel is urged to take heed of God's words and to remember them ever for the purpose of translating them into action."

Every "today" should give each of us a renewed feeling of "eagerness" to do the commands better "today" than yesterday, which brings us closer to the Will of God. □