ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Ramban suggests two possible explanations as to which mitzvah this passage refers. According to his first explanation, it refers to the mitzvah of teshuvah, mentioned in a previous pasuk: "And you will return unto Hashem, your God." Teshuvah is comprised of three components: regret, confession, and resolution to improve. Hence, we can understand the conclusion of this passage. "The matter is very near to you — in your mouth and in your heart — to perform it." Teshuvah must be "in your mouth," by confessing our sins to Hashem. It must be "in your heart": with sincere regret, and determination to improve our ways. And we must "perform it": by being faithful to our resolutions.

Alternately, the Ramban suggests that the "mitzvah" discussed here is a reference to the entire Torah. Rabbeinu Bachaye explains that this is an allusion to the three central pillars upon which the world stands: Torah, prayer, and acts of kindness. "In your mouth" refers to verbal Torah study, as the pasuk states. "And you shall speak of them (the words of Torah)." "In your heart" refers to prayer, which our Sages call "a service of the heart." "To perform it" refers to practical acts of kindness.

The Chassidic texts explain the pasuk, "the matter is very near to you — in your mouth and in your heart — to perform it," to mean that each mitzvah comprises all three elements. Speech: we recite a berachah before performing a mitzvah; thought: a mitzvah must be performed with the appropriate kavanah; and deed: the act of the mitzvah itself.

Although all these explanations shed light on the conclusion of the passage, they do not explain why it goes to such length to deny the excuses that the Torah might be "in the Heavens" or "beyond the sea," and thus inaccessible to us. What do these excuses mean, and how are they incorrect?

It seems that here are two main obstacles that people face in their pursuit of perfection in Torah and mitzvah observance. The first obstacle is our failure to understand the meaning of the mitzvos. This prevents us from performing the mitzvos with the necessary joy and enthusiasm. Mitzvos that we fail to understand are apt to be taken lightly or performed with dry, lackluster routine. When we treat them like an unwanted burden, they cannot provide their full influence on our souls, to draw us closer to Hashem.

The second obstacle is the constriction of our hearts that occurs when we allow ourselves to be drawn after our selfish, material desires. A heart consumed by the empty pleasures of this mundane world becomes like a lifeless stone, unable to appreciate the rich, spiritual beauty of the mitzvos. Such a person lacks any desire to exert himself in the fulfillment of mitzvos, since he does not enjoy them. Mitzvos seem to him as nothing more than a heavy burden that he is forced to carry.
In order to achieve perfection in mitzvah observance, we must overcome these two obstacles. We must understand the meaningfulness of the mitzvos, on the one hand; and open our hearts to a life of spiritual pursuit, on the other. For this we pray:

"Create a pure heart for me, Elokim, and a steadfast spirit renew within me."

We pray for a pure heart, to desire the mitzvos; and for a proper spirit, to understand them.

With this we can understand the Pesukim quoted above: "The mitzvah that I command you today — it is not hidden from you, and it is not distant." Sometimes, the meaning of a mitzvah is hidden from us, causing us to be lax in its fulfillment. Other times, we find ourselves distant from a mitzvah. It seems far from us, and difficult for us to fulfill.

To overcome these obstacles, we are told that the mitzvah is *not in heaven.* Do not be alarmed when the mitzvos seem high above our understanding. *It is not across the sea.* Do not be discouraged when the mitzvos seem distant and difficult. The distance can be traversed, and the difficulties can be surmounted, if the necessary effort is applied.

As the solution to both these problems, the Torah advises us, "It is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart — to perform it." In your mouth" refers to Torah study, of which the pasuk states, "This Sheer Torah shall not depart from your mouth." Only through Torah study can a person come to understand the inner meaning inherent in the mitzvos, and all their rich and fascinating details. He can awaken a new, proper spirit in his breast, purifying his heart and soul through the study of mussar. Through the Torah that a Jew studies, he can ascend to the perfection of Hashem's service and conquer all the obstacles that stand before him.

### Through the Prism of Torah

A second criticism is that many mitzvos and prohibitions are beyond our comprehension, and it is extremely difficult to observe a code of conduct that is inexplicable. To this the verse replies, *אֲדֹנָי אֲרֹן — it is not too far removed from our understanding.* If only these critics would bother to study the vast literature that deals with the inner meaning of Torah — Sheer HaChinuch, Recanti, Derech Pikudecha, Moreh Neovuchim and countless more — they would discover new insights and novel explanations for all the commandments. It takes time, but it is well worth the effort.

*Enei Yisroel*

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David HaMelech said of Moshe Rabbeinu: "If you ascended on High and took a captive" (Tehillim 68:19). Later, there were Nev’im ‘Prophets’, and even today there are great tzedikim and people with ruach ha’kodesh ‏'divine spirit'. Their whole existence involves traversing the gulf between this world and the Upper Worlds with their Torah and mitzvos. The Torah would never be stranded in Heaven. Spiritual giants could bring us the Torah even from there.

### A lesson in personal responsibility

The Torah is warning us against a different error entirely: If Torah and teshuvah were in Heaven or across the sea, we would never feel personal responsibility to attain them. The brave sefarim, and the pious pioneers of the spirit would bear the burden of Torah and teshuvah. It is they who would have to learn it. As for the rest of us, who are either unable or unwilling to make the effort, our fulfillment of the mitzvos, our scholarship, and even our repentance would be dependent on these great men.
It is this mistake with which the Torah specifically takes issue. "This mitzvah that I command you this day is neither beyond you nor distant from you." It is no one else’s task to learn and fulfill the Torah for you. "For it is exceedingly near to you," and therefore, you bear personal responsibility for your knowledge and fulfillment of the Torah. The possuk makes no guarantee that Torah and sincere repentance are easy to accomplish. On the contrary, attainment of Torah and teshuvah take much effort. Still, no Jew is permitted to sit passively on the sidelines, because, as the Torah tells us, "It is in your mouth and in your heart to do it."

Spiritual achievement is up to each individual

It is a fundamental tenet of our faith that our spiritual attainments do not depend on the actions of others. Undoubtedly there are specific tasks that specific groups or individuals must perform; the prime example being the avodah of the Kohanim in the Beis HaMikdash.

However, in terms of personal spiritual achievement, each Jew is responsible for his own growth. No one can ‘go and get’ the Torah for you. Each person must make his own efforts to toll in Torah to the best of his ability. Indeed, the very idea of an intermediary, whose efforts will connect a person to a higher spiritual reality, actually belong to the philosophies of other religions.

A great many of these religions, have a galach, a ‘priest’ who performs their so-called sacraments and without him, the average worshipper is unable to connect with whatever nefarious spiritual goal he is trying to attain. He is the theologian, and also the emissary of the congregants who follow him.

In the case of the Catholics and others, their priests are celibate. Whatever they might say their reason is for this, it sets these priests completely apart from— and above— everybody else, as if they live on a higher level of holiness. The requirement of celibacy ensures that their priestly status is not accessible to most people, for the nature of mankind is to procreate, and not least because such practices would mean the end of that particular religion after a single, celibate generation. This is one example of a religion whereby a special, consecrated individual has the task of achieving spiritual goals on behalf of the common, un consecrated masses.

Indeed, their priests have a vested interest in keeping their knowledge to themselves. Were everyone to be educated in the rites and be able to attain ‘holiness’ on their own, then the priestly status of these religions would have no significance.

The potential of every Jew

In contrast, the Torah ideal is that every single Jew can become kadosh ‘holy,’ as it is written, "You shall be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Shemos 19:6). We are meant to be a nation wherein each person is a ‘Kohen,’ a priest who has full access to every aspect of Torah and who can learn, and teach, and grow in Torah, each according to his ability and motivation. To live by the Torah, a Jew must become a scholar and learn as much of the Torah as he is able; the ultimate goal being mastery of kol ha’Torah kulah.

Every Jew has the responsibility to become one of the lomdei Tora secha, those who learn Torah. Everyone must strive to understand the tenets and the laws given to our nation on Har Sinai, indeed, every aspect of Torah, to learn and to teach, and to reach the pinnacle of completeness in Torah.

If a person tastes success in his studies, then this places upon him a greater responsibility to teach and to serve Klal Yisroel. Torah is our connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and therefore, each person has the responsibility to ensure that his fellow Jew is learning as much Torah as he is able. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu told Yechezkia when he complained that Eldad and Meidad were prophesying in the encampment: "Rabbi, why do you prophesy? Would it be granted that all Hashem’s people be prophets?" (Bamidbar 11:29). Moshe Rabbeinu understood that the primary purpose of his life was to bring everyone in the nation as close to his stature in Torah as possible.

Even today, the Rabbi of almost every Orthodox shul does all he can to increase the erudition of its members. He will cajole, encourage, and beg his congregants to make time to learn and attend shiurim. This reflects the demand upon every single person in Klal Yisroel to attend to his own spiritual growth.

Every single Jew must strive towards his maximum spiritual potential, and this cannot be achieved through someone else. He must become an adam hashalem, through diligent study of Torah, and sincere repentance. Every Jew is meant to be a special individual, urish kadosh.

The days of repentance

Kabbalas ovi malchus shamayim, accepting upon oneself the yoke of Heaven is the essence of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the whole period of asseres yemei teshuvah. It involves the realization that the Torah is “in the heart and in the mouth” of every Jew. Every Jew can overcome all enticements, and guide himself away from the attractions that develop an affinity for the repulsive abominations of gentile culture.

The avodah of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is designed to build up within a person a healthy attraction to devarim she’be’kedushah, holy matters. In this way, his admiration will naturally be evoked by erlicher Yidden, good, honest, and wholesome Jews with sterling character. In truth, only people such as these are deserving of honor. Conversely, those who demonstrate baseness will evoke distaste.

Especially during these precious days, each Jew should see himself as being an individual who, if need be, would be capable of rising to the Heavens, or of crossing the turbulent waters, whose existence is bound up entirely with Torah. If approached with diligence, his avodah will foster sheilemus, completeness, and open up for him the gates of unlimited spiritual potential.
The preservation of the element of surprise, in order to shock people out of their lethargy, was the reason that Moshe delayed telling Israel about the double portion of manna on Shabbos. Rashbam (Shemos 16:22) explains that Moshe had already been told on Sunday that on Friday there would be two portions. However, he waited until Friday to tell the Children of Israel in order that they should be astonished when on Friday they would suddenly find a double portion to gather. Had he told them about it on Sunday, then the effect would have worn off by Friday. That is why he held back from publicizing his prophecy for so long, so that it would make the proper impact on Israel.

Similarly, the Midrash (Devarim Rabba 1:11) states that Avraham was not told about the manna so that prior knowledge of this miracle should not dull its impact.

Rote
The Prophet Yeshayahu protests this, when he says, “Their fear of Me was like a human command performed by rote.” Yeshayahu’s protest is not just over the fact that people perform mitzvos by rote. He says, “Their fear of Me.” He is talking about their yiras Shamayim! Even a person’s fear of Heaven can be by rote. It can be out of habit, without thought.

Our perception of Hashem, of the siddur and the Chumash, is that of a five-year-old child. This is indeed “those who are far.” It is serving Hashem from a distance of thirty years, from the time we first came to know Him. Only someone who “recently drew close to Hashem,” who just now renewed himself, is among “those who are close.”

Here are some more examples: Every Shabbos we recite the Nishmas prayer. If we would pay careful attention to the words we are saying, we would be filled with inner excitement.

The Chafetz Chaim once asked someone if he noticed that in the Hatov vehameitiv blessing of Birkas Hamazon, we are asking for no less than fifteen different things.

Are we aware of what we are saying? It goes like this: “May He bestow upon us forever, for grace (1), for kindness (2) and for mercy (3), for relief (4), rescue (5) and success (6), blessing (7) — the word berachah stems from the word bereichah, “pool,” denoting abundance) and salvation (8), consolation (9), subsistence (10) and livelihood (11) — even if a person has a subsistence, he does not necessarily have the means for his own livelihood, and mercy (12) and life (13) and peace (14), and everything good (15). And may He never cause us to lack any goodness.”

Did we notice all these requests? If not, it is because we got into the habit of reciting Birkas Hamazon when we were still in preschool.
Renewing oneself is the power of teshuva. It means being a completely new person. This is the avodah of Elul.

A deep commitment to change immediately changes you.

"THE MATTER IS VERY CLOSE TO YOU IN YOUR MOUTH AND HEART TO DO IT." (Dovrim 30:14)

Rabbi Chayim Shneulevitz commented on this that the Torah tells us that regardless of how far away one is, if he is sincerely resolved to become a better person, he will be able to make an immediate transformation of himself. When you make a verbal commitment to the Almighty and to yourself to become a changed person, your very words put you into a different place than where you were before.

Of course, if you just say that you will change without actually improving your behavior, you have not sincerely changed. But the words you tell yourself have a major influence on your behavior. In whatever area you wish to improve, if you keep repeating over and over to yourself how you will act from now on, you will notice practical changes. Your verbal and mental suggestions are very close to you; all you need is a firm decision to make this effort.

Once you have made this decision, you will be successful as long as you keep up that original resolve of yours.

There are some people, however, who keep making pledges and resolutions to make positive changes but do not actually carry out their plans. They have created a credibility gap for themselves. Since they have already said they would change and have not done so, they are likely not to really believe themselves. To overcome this, one needs action and consistency. Just as you should keep your word when you give it to someone else, so too you should keep your word to yourself.

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A deep commitment to change immediately changes you.
החלתי.Apiב טופר מה ש_aspectי קלטון

המרחב המשמש אידיאות בהן המבקרים של מחקרים אחרים, לעניין התוכן.

כשנודע בז緩ת לחקור, התחדש לחקור, ועם הגדלת מחקרים נוספים, האידיאות הורחבו להיקס

הנשיא של מחקרו, מעביר או ידוע לחקור, בין השאר בימינו של מחקרי את פיצוד

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קאר אליך - תלי נבך

מהי זה, אם כן, בהすべיתות אשר נ烝 מצדה, אלוהים בשמה? מה sortOrder של העונות, של האזון, של הנשים? מאיך נ באו אולפני עץ, данном להם את הפקות, והם מביאים אותם כל יום, כל שבוע. הם מתרסקים בתוכם, הם מתרחשים בו, הם מתרחבים בו, הם מתרחשות בו, הם מתרחבות בו. הם גוזלים בו, הם מתרחשות בו, הם מתרחבות בו, הם גוזלים בו, הם מתרחשות בו, הם מתרחבות בו.

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מִי יִלָּכָה מִי

ורתקי, מיהו הבן, כי הוא י יודע מה ציון. הוא ילך ותלך, וננופל בחולות, ושואל: מי יلوح בבל? מי יلوح בבל? מי יلوح בבל?

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ובא ואהו, שהרי, אותו היום, להלך עם הילך, להלך ותלך, להלך ותלך. ההולכים והלכים, ההולכים והלכים, ההולכים והלכים. זה מה זה, אם כן, בהすべיתות אשר נ烝 מצדה, אלוהים בשמה? מה sortOrder של העונות, של האזון, של הנשים? מאיך נ באו אולפני עץ, данный להם את הפקות, והם מביאים אותם כל יום, כל שבוע. הם מתרסקים בתוכם, הם מתרחשים בו, הם מתרחבים בו, הם מתרחשות בו, הם מתרחבות בו. הם גוזלים בו, הם מתרחשות בו, הם מתרחבות בו, הם גוזלים בו, הם מתרחשות בו, הם מתרחבות בו.
But despair is not conducive to teshuvah. In fact, the despair we have been describing is itself one of the biggest impediments to teshuvah. To change ourselves, we first need the confidence that change is possible. A sense of futility is the Evil Inclination’s strongest weapon.

To fight the despair engendered by past failures, it is helpful to remember that teshuvah, too, comes in stages and that there are many levels of teshuvah. Rabbi Akiva says in the last Mishnah in Yoma (85b), “Happy are you, Israel. Before Whom are you purified and Who purifies you? — Your Father Who is in Heaven.” Rabbi Akiva brings two prooftexts in support of his statement: “I will sprinkle upon you purifying waters and you will be purified” (Yechezkel 36:25); “The Mikveh of Israel is Hashem” (Yirmiyahu 17:13).

This Mishnah is problematic. Why did Rabbi Akiva have to bring two separate verses in support of his statement? To answer this question Rabbi Hirsch Spector, the son of Rabbi Yitzchak Elchonon Spector, pointed out that there are two types of halachic purification in water. In one, the person is required to completely immerse himself in a mikveh; in the other, it is sufficient for the Kohan to sprinkle even a drop of specially prepared water upon the person for him to become ritually pure again. Similarly, said Reb Hirsch, there are two es of teshuvah. One is a complete teshuvah, which can be symbolized by total immersion in a mikveh. But there is another level of teshuvah, which can be symbolized by the sprinkling of one drop of special water. The latter type of teshuvah is less complete, less dramatic; it builds up over the years, drop by drop, until a complete teshuvah is achieved.

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Kayin taught this lesson to his father Adam. Kayin was doing teshuvah for having murdered his brother Hevel when he met his father. Adam asked him, “What was your judgment?” and Kayin told him, “I did teshuvah, and I was reconciled to the Ribbono Shel Olam.” Adam cried out in amazement, “Such is the power of teshuvah and I never knew it!”

What can it mean that Adam had never heard of the power of teshuvah, which was created before the world itself? Do Chazal not tell us that Adam spent 130 years in the most intense forms of teshuvah after his sin (Eruvin 18b)? Rabbi Dov Weinberger in his sefer Shenen HaTov offers a beautiful explanation of this Midrash. Adam, he writes, knew about only one type of teshuvah — the type of complete teshuvah that the Rambam describes in the second chapter of Hilchos Teshuvah where a person finds himself in exactly the same situation as that in which he sinned previously, with his desire for the sin unabated, and he does not sin. What Adam learned from Kayin was that there could be a teshuvah that did not meet all the Rambam’s conditions — the teshuvah of sprinkled waters, not the teshuvah of complete immersion in the mikveh. The verb used by Kayin to describe his reconciliation with Hashem — ומכות — is from the same root as דרסא, compromise. Kayin’s was a compromised teshuvah, but teshuvah nevertheless. And that is the teshuvah that we must seize upon today, the teshuvah of small improvements, year after year.

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We are that merchant, writes the Chafetz Chaim. Every year we come to Hashem and tell him that we want to do teshuvah wholesale: no more bitull Torah, no more lashon hara, no more anger. And He says to us, “I know you. You said the same thing last year.” Nevertheless, we beg for one more chance, and the Merciful One is inclined to grant it. Then the Satan intervenes and points out our past record in alarming detail. At that point, our only chance is to tell Hashem, “O.K., no more wholesale teshuvah. This year all I’m asking for is the chance to improve myself a bit. Nothing flashy, but something within my grasp, something that will allow me to feel myself growing in a tangible way.” That is, for us, the only possible route. And it works.