

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

Nitzavim Vayeilech

I saw a fascinating idea in the week's Torah reading that can have such a tremendous impact on our daily lives. In Parshat Nitzavim there is an important discussion of the significance of Repentance and the study of Torah.

D'varim 30:11-13 - "For this Mitzva that I command you today is not removed from you, nor is it far. It is not in the heavens that you may say who will go up to the heavens, take it for us, and teach it to us and we shall do it. Nor is it across the sea that you may say who will cross the sea ..."

The simple way of reading the pasuk is that whether you hold like the opinion of Rashi that it is referring to the whole Torah or, as others hold, to the mitzva of T'shuva, they are not out of our grasp. These are not difficult things for us to achieve. However, Rav Kulefsky zt"l pointed out that Rashi reveals that, in fact, the pasuk may be indicating the exact opposite.

Rashi, quoting the Gemara in Eruvin 55a, says that while the Torah is reassuring us that it is not across the sea or in the heavens and therefore, one need not journey there to attain

it, it is implying that if it were, we are expected to go such lengths. The Torah really is relating a stringency in G-d's expectation from us. No matter how far from our reach the Torah is, no matter what extreme changes are necessary to do T'shuva, those extreme paths of action are expected from us.

He illustrated this idea with a story of Rav Zalman of Volozhin, the brother of Rav Chaim. When learning Torah late at night and he needed a sefer that was not readily available, he would not simply move on. He would travel even if it meant going to another city to obtain that sefer.

One's actions should be based upon the above verse. If the Torah or T'shuva were across the sea or in the heavens, one is expected to go there. Any change and effort are never easy but being in the days prior to Rosh HaShana, we can appreciate the need for inner reflection how to make the extra effort in improving ourselves in all our facets of our life. 🏰