

SEEING IS BELIEVING

by Rabbi Dovid Green

See I put before you today blessing and curse! (Devarim 11:26)

Hear O'Israel Hashem is our G-d Hashem is One! (Devarim)

You should know today and return it to your heart that Hashem is G-d in the heavens above and on the earth below. There is no other! (Devarim) .

The distance between the mind and the heart is greater than the distance between the sun and the earth! (Rabbi Yisrael Salanter)

Hearing is not comparable to seeing! (Talmud Rosh HaShanah)

What is the difference between the way learn with our ears and the way we learn with our eyes? We see that sometimes the Torah shouts "LISTEN" and sometimes "LOOK". We know that the Torah is read and heard. There is an Oral and a Written Torah. What is the Difference?

Imagine that you hear a news report of disastrous proportion. Hundreds of thousands of individuals are swept away by a giant tidal wave. The numbers are startling. The reports are gruesome. You arrive home and begin to share the ugly news with your wife as she brings dinner to the table. You take a bite and request salt, ketchup, and a napkin all while sprinkling the report like a spice on your dinner table. Sure, you're in pain. You are grieving and anguishing while imagining the pain of the last moments, the horror of the event and its devastating aftermath. You decide to skip dessert that night as a sign of solidarity and solace for the victims and their families.

The next night you are hurrying home from the office and about to make the last turn before coming down your block. You can almost smell the dinner and your starved. In one moment a little brown doggie rushes into the street you have no time to react. You see the whole thing. You hear the whelp upon impact. Looking in the rear view mirror you slow down. Doggie is on the side of the road twitching. You wonder what can be done. Suddenly a Mack Truck that had been trailing behind you finishes off your issue.

You pull your car slowly into the driveway and slink up the steps. You slowly open the front door where and you are met by your wife who exclaims with exuberance, "Guess what I have for dinner tonight dear; your favorite, HOT DOGS!" You excuse yourself and go to bed early without a word!

What happened here? Do we care more about one dog than we do about one hundred thousand people? One night we can eat and discuss and pour the ketchup liberally and the next night we are

ill from the tragedy of the doggie!?

The answer is, simply, that one event we heard about and the other we witnessed with our own eyes.

We do not act upon what we know but what we feel. Knowledge is like having food in the freezer. Feeling is like putting a steak on the fire. The advantage of knowledge is that it remains with us longer. We will recall years later the event of the tidal wave, its date and details. The doggie hurt for a day or two and then we were back to the barbecue.

Through listening we gain knowledge and information through vision and imagination we gain motivation. When a driver is caught driving drunk he is forced to watch vivid films of human tragedy to sober his reckless ways. To know that friends don't let friends drink and drive is not effective unless it is accompanied by a picture.

Therefore, the Torah after filling our freezer with knowledge by shouting endlessly "Hear O' Israel"... now demands that we stoke the fire of vision. "Knowing today"... is one project but engaging the heart is another.

Perhaps now we can appreciate the Talmudic adage that the wise man is the one who sees the outcome! Not only does he anticipate what will be, but he envisions with his mind's eye the consequences of his actions.

Write an action or behavior that you would either like to adopt or reject but you're having difficulty getting started. Write down what pain or cost is involved with this action. (Effort or money or status quo.) Then write briefly how you would feel if you did this good thing for the next 5, then 10, the 20 years. How would you feel if this negative trait persisted. Create a detailed picture of the pain and pleasure of the foreseeable future and you are counted amongst the wise.

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of this week's Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam, of FOUNDATIONS for Jewish Learning Monsey, N.Y. 10952 Phone: 914-352-0111 or 800-700-9577. Fax-914-352-0305.

Foundations will be conducting a fascinating introduction to Judaism seminar from Sept. 20-22 On Rosh HaShana in the New York area for people at all levels of observance. The well-known author and speaker Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky will be on staff. Those interested should please contact Foundations at the above toll-free number.

Good Shabbos.

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