

TODAY'S THE DAY

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

The Shema, the fundamental Jewish affirmation of connection, trust and devotion between G-d and the Nation of Israel, is so essential to the G-d consciousness of the Jew that it is a focal component of the morning and evening services. Most important, it contains practical steps explaining how to achieve this vital relationship with the Divine.

The Chofetz Chaim (1) professes that the Jew must approach every day with three perceptions imbedded into his soul: today is my only day to live, the chapter of Mishna/folio of Talmud that I am currently studying is all there is to learn and master, and I am the only Jew alive such that the existence of the entire world rests on my shoulders. Why must a Jew maintain this attitude?

"You shall love G-d your L-rd with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources. And these matters that I command you today shall be upon your heart." (Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:5-6) A person could contemplate the breadth and depth of his relationship with G-d, as alluded to in the first verse, and convince himself that there is so much to accomplish that he need not do much today for there is always tomorrow; there is so much to learn that he will never actually complete the Order of Mishna/Tractate of Talmud, so there is not much purpose to starting; there are so many Jews to fulfill the Divine mission that their deeds can keep the world going.

The Chofetz Chaim debunks these delusions with an allegorical understanding of the second verse. "And THESE matters": there are no great volumes to learn and comprehend, just the small quantity you find immediately before you, so there is no reason to procrastinate; "that I command YOU": it is only you and G-d in this world, so you must do all you can; "TODAY": you only have today, so maximize it to draw yourself as close to G-d as possible and fill your day with righteous deeds, do not delay; "shall be upon your heart": these three lessons shall fill your heart perpetually.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan of Radin; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics and renowned for his saintly qualities

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