

HANGING THE CURTAINS

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"Take your shoes off your feet, because the place upon which you are standing is Holy ground." [3:5]

The Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael M. Kagan of Radin, offers two insights based upon this verse. Our Sages tell us that one should not say "when I am free, I will learn." The Chofetz Chaim explains that it is our nature to imagine to ourselves that when HaShem gives us a better situation, be that in our financial well-being or personal lives, that then we will study Torah - but not while our circumstances are so challenging.

This, he adds, is why the verse says "the place upon which you are standing is Holy ground." Wherever you are, at whatever time, is "Holy" - meaning that HaShem wants you to deal with exactly that situation. The Medrash promises the person who learns while going through trying times that his reward will be many times greater than that of a person who learns in stress-free circumstances.

The Chofetz Chaim also observes that the obligation is placed upon us to "take our shoes off our feet." Meaning, each of us is required to remove the curtain which separates us from HaShem. By doing that which we shouldn't, we separate ourselves, hanging thick curtains which block out any connection to the Divine. If we don't see HaShem's radiance, it's because **we** have hung the curtains! If we tear them down, we'll see the light streaming through...

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