

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
BEHAR

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## PERCEIVE HIS PRESENCE

At the end of *Parshas Behar*, after a paragraph about a man who is forced to sell himself into servitude to an idolater, Hashem tells Moshe three statements - do not make idols, keep Shabbos, and respect Hashem's sanctuary.<sup>1</sup> The Ramban<sup>2</sup> explains that these three instructions are a specific message to one who is living under the dominion of a pagan. One may think that since their master does not keep the Torah, they too can, or perhaps even should, act in the same manner. In response, Hashem states that one should not make idols, one must continue to keep Shabbos, and one should respect Hashem's sanctuary.

What is the significance of these three *mitzvos*? Shouldn't one keep the entire Torah, not just these three specific commandments?

The Ramban elaborates that of course all of the *mitzvos* are essential. However, the Torah chose these three *mitzvos*, as these three commandments are fundamental, and will serve as an example for the others.

While it is understandable how resisting idolatry and keeping Shabbos is critical to maintaining a Jewish connection, why is 'respecting Hashem's sanctuary' singled out? How does one consider this *mitzvah* as vital as the other two?

Reb Henoch Leibowitz<sup>3</sup> (1918-2008) explains that we respect places of worship because Hashem's presence is manifest there. By having proper decorum and respect in such a place, we instill within ourselves fear of Heaven - the idea that there is a Ruler, and He is watching and guiding us.

Conversely, if one displays a lack of sensitivity in a *shul* or *beis medrash*,<sup>4</sup> not only are they missing an opportunity to grow in their awareness of Hashem, they may even be dulling the awareness that they do have. Now, we can understand why it is so important that a person have proper respect in Hashem's sanctuary.

Every time we walk into a *shul* or a *beis medrash*, we have a chance to connect to Hashem. We have a choice - do we use our surroundings as a way to bring Hashem into our lives; do we recognize how He is always with us? Or do we ignore the opportunity, and go on with our lives? Let us choose wisely.

1 *Vayikra* 26:1-2

2 *Vayikra* 26:1 s.v. לא תעשו

3 *Chiddushei Halev* on *Vayikra* 26:2

4 See *Sefer Chofetz Chaim*, Introduction, *Mitzvos Asei* 7

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is not an easy thing to feel awe and reverence when we walk into a *shul* or *beis medrash*. We aren't overwhelmed by Hashem's presence, we don't see any miracles, it usually just feels like another room.

The Ramchal<sup>1</sup> writes that though Hashem's presence is everywhere, and more manifest in some places than others, we still won't feel this unless we seek it out. In other words, instead of expecting or hoping that we will be bowled over by spirituality, we need to do what we can to feel awe in these places.

One idea is to think about the significance of what happens in these places. People are literally speaking directly to the Master of the Universe! Or are studying His words! That's not something to be taken lightly.

Another idea may be to tell ourselves that for the first five minutes after entering, we will keep empty talk, etc. to a minimum. If our first five minutes are in that vein, it's likely it will grow to include our entire stay.

1 *Daas Tevunos*, *Siman* 160

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To elevate! To raise! **That is the effect of Mussar study! To fill us with healthy feelings of humble aristocracy paving the way for serving Hashem with the regal nobility with which we are capable.** - R' Chaim Shmulevitz, zt"l, *Mirrer Rosh Hayeshiva Sichos mussar* p. 118

# NOT YOUR LIVING ROOM!

Rabbi Yaakov Baker\* is the *rov* of the Agudah of Homecrest, in Brooklyn, NY. Besides serving as a *rov* for over thirty years, Rabbi Baker is also a *rebbe* in a local *yeshiva*, and is known for his erudition in *gemarah* and *halacha*. He's charismatic and a great speaker, but what people particularly appreciate is his humility and willingness to learn from everyone.

In Rabbi Baker's words, "Though I've been learning for many years, I can tell you that I learned *kovod* for a *shul* from a non-observant fellow in Eretz Yisrael.

"I had taken a couple of weeks in the summer to go to Eretz Yisrael, and was visiting some friends who lived in some of the southern cities. As *mincha* was approaching, I took my leave, and found a local *shul*. I realized I was about ten minutes early, so I found a *sefer*, and started to learn.

"A couple of minutes later, a bareheaded man walked in. I later learned that he was there to say *kaddish* for his father's *yartzeit*. I took little notice of him, as I was focused on what I was reading. Suddenly, I felt a presence looming over me. Looking up, I saw the man standing there, with a frown on his face.

"Is that how you sit in a *beit kneset*?" he said, with anger in his voice. "This is the house of Hashem! This is not your living room!"

"I was thoroughly confused. How was I sitting? It took me a moment, but I realized I was sitting with my legs slightly crossed, one over the other, while I was leaning back and learning. I did not know what to answer, and in the silence, the man walked away.

"Now, I don't think I would have taken the approach that this man did, but I did appreciate the lesson. I came over to him after *davening*, and we spoke a bit. I learned that though he was not observant, he remembers very clearly the lesson that his father imparted to him, the importance and sanctity of a *shul*. I thanked him, and we parted ways.

"And every so often, I remind myself what it means to be in the presence of Hashem."

*\*Based on a true story, name has been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- When the *Beis Hamikdash* stood, prophesy and wisdom would flow through there to the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>
- It is a great merit to be able to contribute to building a *shul*, no matter how big or small the contribution.<sup>2</sup>
- If one tries to speak to you during *davening*, even if you can talk, it is best to pretend to be in the middle of *davening*.<sup>3</sup>
- If one wants his children to learn Torah, he himself should love the *beis hamedrash*.<sup>4</sup>

1 *Derashas HaRan*, 8

2 *Kad Hakemach*, Chap. בית הכנסת

3 *Sefer Hayirah* by *Rabbeinu Yonah*

4 *Derech Eretz Zutah*, Chap. 9