

"For this commandment... is not concealed from you... neither is it far off... it is not in heaven... nor is it beyond the sea... But the word is very near unto you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it." (30:11-14)

It is puzzling to find these distances expressed as such extremes. Why are we told that it is not in heaven nor beyond the sea, but actually it is to be found within us? It should be sufficient to state simply that this *mitzvah* is not beyond our reach. This statement is, however, far from extreme, and conveys a basic truth. Man is composed of two contrasting entities, the physical and spiritual. He has the ability to soar to the most sublime spiritual heights, or to sink to the nadir of decadence and depravity. Indeed the range of man's perception of his ability to perform the *mitzvah* of repentance which is referred to here, is vast. He may feel incapable of attaining perfect *teshuva*, and so not even attempt it. Yet man should be aware that having been created in Hashem's image imbues him with special, albeit hidden, potential. He can and must reach far beyond his grasp; for in doing so he will realize the ability to successfully discharge this *mitzvah*, and come to a true understanding of what Hashem demands of him.