

“For the place upon which you stand is holy ground.” (3:5)

Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s curiosity was piqued when he beheld a thornbush on fire, which continued to burn without being consumed. Upon closer inspection, the phenomenon before his eyes became even stranger. Hashem spoke to Moshe, instructing him to remove his shoes, because he was standing on holy ground. Such was the custom in the *Bais HaMikdash*, in which even the *Kohanim* were not permitted to wear shoes. The relationship between man and the Exalted must be unimpeded. One’s **feet** must be planted firmly on the ground. *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, explains Hashem’s statement to Moshe concerning the exalted sanctity of the ground, “Rather than attempt to find out about a phenomenon that lies beyond your realm of cognition, understand and devote yourself to the lofty destiny of the ground upon which you already stand.”

Many of us are searching for something else – something different, something more challenging, something holier. All of the searching is nothing more than an excuse for not acting directly to address the mission that lies before us. We all have hopes and dreams, but we hold back and postpone implementing them. As a result, we end up doing nothing, while ignoring the matter at hand and dreaming about what we could have done.

The *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, explains this similarly, but from the perspective of another human failing. When an individual is asked why he did not serve Hashem better, with greater zeal, and with a greater expenditure of time, he will often give a slew of standard excuses: “I did not have time;” “I was not born with such great acumen;” “My livelihood is suffering, so I must spend every waking minute scrounging for sustenance;” “If I would be smart, I would study,” “If I were rich, I would have time to study and give charity.” It is always, “If I were somewhere else, someone different, under different conditions.” These are all excuses. Hashem does not want us to be someone – or somewhere – else. He wants us here and now: “For the ground upon which you stand (**now**) is holy.” Specifically, this ground, this situation, under these circumstances; that is what Hashem asks of us – **here** and **now**!

The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, makes a similar application concerning the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* 2:5, “Do not say, ‘When I am free, I will study,’ for perhaps you will not become free.” He explains that, *shema lo tipaneh*, “For perhaps you will not become free,” is not a reference to a future occurrence, but rather a description of the individual’s frenetic lifestyle. Some people never have time – neither now, nor at a later date. Thus, by virtue of one’s lifestyle, he may never have time to learn Torah. This is an intolerable situation, which demands that one learn Torah – now. He should not put it off, because this is exactly what Hashem wants of him. This is his *admas kodesh*, holy ground. In fact, his primary challenge in life may be to overcome all of his temporary distractions in order to study Torah.