

AND THE RABBI SAID:

THERE IS MUCH THAT WE REALLY CAN DO AND DON'T

Hypocrisy is one of the most despised of human characteristics. Any individual will usually exhaust every resource at his or her command in order to avoid being called a hypocrite.

Precisely because of a dread of this designation, many of us have developed a warped approach to Jewish observance and practice. Many of our people encounter obstacles which make it difficult to observe some of the mitzvos. Deciding that these obstacles are insurmountable, they abandon these traditions. There remains, however, a sizeable segment of Jewish practice and Jewish living which they are able to fulfill. The fear of being labelled a hypocrite causes them to abandon even those mitzvos which they could very easily perform.

For the sake of argument only, let us assume that the obstacles in our way are insurmountable. Let us assume some precepts are impossible for us to fulfill. Does it follow that we must also forsake those precepts which we are able to keep?

Obviously, it is absurd to even think that our inability to observe this or that aspect of Judaism abrogates our responsibility to observe another. We ought to honestly endeavor to observe and practice as much of Jewish tradition as we can. But this is exactly where we fail.

As we welcome Shavuoth, the Holiday which commemorates our receiving God's Torah, let each of us make a self-appraisal of these aspects of Judaism which we could have fulfilled, but in which we were derelict. Let us then devote ourselves to more scrupulous and devoted observance.

I am sure we will be surprised to discover that most of us can afford to spend $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours in Shul on Shabbos. We can light Shabbos candles and say Kiddush. We can avoid doing our housework, shopping, and errands on Shabbos. We can watch what food goes into our mouths, etc.

While fragmented Jewish living and selected performance of mitzvos leaves much to be desired, it is certainly preferable to total non-observance. Partial observance besides providing Jewish identity and fulfilling God's word, to an extent, can introduce us to the meaning and beauty of a full Jewish life. Perhaps in this way we will be guided towards a deeper appreciation of richness of Jewish living which will in turn lead to greater commitment. Because of our Torah, we the Jewish people have remained alive.

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