

Lamplighter

19 Av
Eikev
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion opens with an unusual expression: "Eikev ("if" or "because") you listen to these laws..." Instead of the more common word "im" to denote "if," the Torah uses the word "eikev," which means "heel."

According to the Torah commentator, Rashi, eikev alludes to the "simple Mitzvot (commandments) usually trampled underfoot" - those Mitzvot whose importance is sometimes denigrated.

Rashi's explanation is based on a Midrash which states: "These are the simple commandments that people are not always careful to keep; they toss them under their heels."

The Midrash is not referring to a person who considers these Mitzvot to be trivial, G-d forbid, or who scorns them intentionally. Rather, the Midrash refers to a Jew who accepts that these Mitzvot must be observed and who endeavours to keep them, yet keeps postponing their observance until they are "tossed under the heel."

Such a person is likely to divide G-d's commandments into categories, according to what he perceives as importance.

To him, the "important" Mitzvot are the "head" and must take priority. "Let me first observe the 'important' Mitzvot perfectly," he says "then I'll start with the others." The simplest Mitzvot are left for last. According to this way of thinking, the Jew does not demand of himself a level of conduct that is "within the letter of the law" until he considers himself to have mastered the "important" Mitzvot.

What is the consequence of such an outlook? When this person is asked to love every single Jew - including those he does not know personally - he replies, "How can you ask that of me? It's hard for me to love people I do know! How can you expect me to extend it to Jews I've never met?"

When pressed to observe Mitzvot even more scrupulously than is required he replies, "No! There's got to be a certain sequence in observing Mitzvot. Demanding that I do more than the basics is like asking me to walk in the street barefoot while wearing a beautiful tie around my neck! You've got to start at the beginning and work your way up."

While these arguments may sound logical at face value, they are nothing but the counsel of the evil inclination.

In truth, the foundation of a Jew's G-dly service is his faith; it is predicated on the acceptance of the yoke of heaven, not on intellectual arguments or rationalizations.

The function of the Mitzvot is to connect us to G-d. Every Mitzva that a Jew observes strengthens his bond with G-d, regardless of whether it is an "important" commandment or a "simple" one, i.e., related to the "head" or to the "heel."

If any Mitzva allows us to draw nearer to G-d and unite with Him, why not do one immediately?

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

The Secret of Success

By Mordechai Wollenberg

The story is told of Hymen, who was desperate for success in business. He went to the synagogue and prayed devoutly, "G-d, if you'll only help me somehow, I'll give you 10% of everything I make."

Nothing happened.

The next day, Hymie prayed, "G-d, I'll give you 25% if you help me."

Still nothing.

The next day, "G-d, I'll make you my 50-50 partner if you just help me out a little."

Just then his wife came running in to the synagogue, "Guess what, Hymie, we won five million dollars in the lottery!"

Hymie turned to the Heavens, "Oh, don't worry about it, G-d, it's okay, I got the money someplace else!"

This week's Torah reading describes how a person may "say in [their] heart that 'My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth.'" The Torah counsels us to "remember... that G-d was the One Who gave you strength to generate wealth."

The story is told of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, who saw a man running breathlessly through the market place.

"Why on earth are you running so fast?" asked the Rabbi.

"What do you mean, why am I running so fast? I am hurrying in pursuit of my livelihood!"

"How do you know that your livelihood is in front of you and you are running to catch up with it? Maybe it is behind you and you are actually running further away from it!"

Jewish tradition emphasizes toil, pursuit of livelihood, supporting one's family, going out into the world and not living a monastic lifestyle. At the same time, we strive to remain cognizant of the higher power that guides our life, to realize that ultimately it is not "our own handiwork" but really it comes through blessings from Above. We are merely fashioning channels for these blessings to flow through and vessels to receive them.

It is this recognition that helps us to remain a little detached; maintain a certain spirituality even whilst being totally immersed in materialistic concerns.

In truth, all too often we are unable to be absolutely sure whether we are onto a good thing in our working lives or whether we are on the wrong track, whether a particular opportunity or project will yield fruit or not.

Nonetheless, when we realize that there is a higher power involved, that our efforts will be successful if that is what G-d wants, we can feel assured that we are more likely to be running in the right direction.

If anyone ever needed proof of this, look at how unpredictable the world is. A top executive could be earning millions one day and fall from grace, losing everything. Somebody else, with no experience, comes up with a brilliant idea and becomes a millionaire overnight. The world is described as a wheel which is constantly turning, like a Ferris wheel. Sometimes we find ourselves on the top, other times on the bottom. When we are on the top, we have to remember how easy it is to end up on the bottom and that it is due to G-d's providence and kindness that we are prospering, not just through the "strength and might of my hand." This also enables us to appreciate more that, but for the Grace of G-d, we might be on the bottom, and to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

In this manner, may we enjoy true success and prosperity in all matters.



A Life of Giving

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson, whose yartzeit (anniversary of passing) is this Shabbos, 20th of Av, was a descendant of the founder of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. His eldest son, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, became the present Lubavitcher Rebbe.

It was a few days before Passover in 1939 when four NKVD agents burst into the home of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson in Dnepropetrovsk. The search continued for hours until Rabbi Levi Yitzchok was ordered to accompany the NKVD agents.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok was sent to Kiev where he spent six months in jail and underwent gruelling interrogations. In August 1939 he was sent back to Dnepropetrovsk. Rebbetzin Chana was informed that she was allowed to deliver a package of food and money to the jail for him. This was the first time that she had any positive proof that her husband was still alive.

A non-Jewish professor who spent time in jail with Rabbi Levi Yitzchok later told Rebbetzin Chana: "I will never forget this remarkable man for his sharp intellect, extensive scholarship, and incredible courage. Four of us were crammed into one cell and the only reason why we didn't lose our minds was because we were so affected by Rabbi Levi Yitzchok's tremendous valour. Despite our suffering and feelings of depression, his indomitable spirit sustained us. He stood by his religious principles with unwavering determination. One incident in particular deeply moved me. One day the prison authorities ordered all the inmates to shave off their beards. Some of the prisoners, including a number of rabbis and other religious Jews, unsuccessfully attempted to resist. Not

so with Rabbi Levi Yitzchok! When his turn came, he declared firmly, "I will not remove my beard under any circumstances!" The prison wardens were so surprised by the authoritative tone of his voice that they left him alone."

Among the charges against Rabbi Levi Yitzchok were: being the "ringleader" of an underground clerical anti-Soviet organization, building an illegal ritual bath, cooperating with "extreme reactionary religious groups from abroad," holding unlawful gatherings in his home, establishing funds for assisting the wives and children of Jewish prisoners and exiles, and receiving matzos and money from abroad to be distributed among needy Jews.

Eventually, Rebbetzin Chana was summoned to NKVD headquarters. She was informed that that her husband had been sentenced to five years of internal exile in an eastern Asian republic.

She was told to prepare some provisions for his journey because he had refused to eat any food he had been offered throughout his imprisonment.

Rebbetzin Chana's joy at seeing him was mixed with shock when she saw how badly his health had deteriorated. He had become so emaciated that he was almost unrecognizable.

"Thank G-d we have been able to meet!" Rabbi Levi Yitzchok exclaimed through the iron bars that separated them. Their entire meeting only lasted a few minutes. When they parted, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok asked his wife to forgive him for anything he may have said or done to offend her over the years. He was clearly worried that he might not survive the hard journey ahead.

Soon after this Rabbi Levi Yitzchok and his fellow exiles boarded a train to Chiali in central Asia. It was a long, arduous journey that dragged on for a whole month.

Chiali was a miserable, impoverished outpost where even obtaining a loaf of bread was a difficult process. Every three days everyone lined up to receive their ration of one loaf, which was often mouldy. Only those who managed to reach the front of the line were lucky enough to receive any bread at all.

Anyone standing further back than the middle of the line would be sent home empty-handed.

Many different types of people joined the breadline. They included prisoners and criminals of various backgrounds. There was shouting, cursing and ceaseless shoving to reach the front of the line; there were often violent incidents.

Although Rabbi Levi Yitzchok wore simple clothing and was very unassuming, his noble appearance attracted the attention of these coarse peasants. Even the most boorish among them understood that Rabbi Levi Yitzchok was no ordinary prisoner and they treated him with respect. On more than one occasion they even sneaked him into the front of the line to save him the difficulties of waiting for bread.

After five years of exile and with much effort Rabbi Levi Yitzchok was given permission to resettle in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan.

On the train ride to Almaty, a crowd of young people gathered around Rabbi Levi Yitzchok. They sensed something unusual about this traveller. Many of them were Jewish students and they spoke to him on a variety of subjects. Afterwards they said that they had never met someone who had such wide knowledge or such a vast intellect.

In Almaty, despite his severe illness and being racked with pain, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok devoted himself to Jewish communal life.

During his last few days, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok lay in bed, hovering on the edge of unconsciousness. He murmured quietly to himself. At one point he suddenly asked for some water to wash his hands. "I have to prepare to move to another world!" he explained.

The next day, the 20th of Av, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok's condition deteriorated even further. He continued to murmur quietly to himself. Someone tried to hear what he was whispering. When he drew close enough, he could hear the words, "Ikvos Moshicha," (the footsteps of Mashiach.) Before the end of the day, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok's pure soul had returned to its Maker.

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ISSUE 941

MOSHIACH MATTERS

When the pre-marriage contract was written for Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev's niece, he told them to write: "The wedding will take place, G-d willing, with good mazal, in the holy city of Jerusalem. And if, G-d forbid, Moshiach has not arrived by then, the wedding will take place in Berditchev."

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



LONG ROUND-ABOUT WAY

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5715 [1955]

You write that although you believe in G-d and His closeness, you are endeavouring to find your own way of serving Him. This is a long and round-about way. It is analogous to the person searching for the secrets of the functions of the physical body, e.g. how food is converted into blood, tissue, energy, and sustains life; it would surely not be the right approach to stop eating and drinking, pending his arrival at the conclusions of his study.

Even a reduction in necessary calorie intake would weaken his powers of reasoning and research and handicap him in his ever attaining his objective.

Similarly, in an effort to find a way of serving G-d, one must not postpone such service until one has completed one's search, and, moreover, the absence of the religious practice itself handicaps the powers of the intellect to grasp the truth.

Furthermore, since the human intellect is by its very nature limited, while the subject it desires to grapple with is related to the Unlimited, it is only with the aid of the Infinite G-d that one hopes to be lifted across the unbridgeable chasm separating the created and the Creator, and such Divine aid can come only through Divine service.

Finally, there is obviously no contradiction here to the principle of the freedom of personal choice. The real issue here is the proper approach and method to be undertaken now, until one has arrived at the stage where one's intellect becomes sufficiently clear to confirm the established truth.

The key to the solution is "Na'ase v'nishma," ["We will do and then we will understand"] where "Na'ase," practical religion in daily life, is the prerequisite condition for "Nishma," study and understanding.

5th of Nissan, 5718 [1958]

I received your letter, in which you write about the problem of your daughter, Rivka. Judging by your description of her condition, it is somewhat surprising to me that she sees the doctor only once a month. However, I assume that you are in closer contact with him.

As for the question of making the trip to New York with your daughter to see me, I do not think it is advisable at this time, for it is impossible to foresee what effect this round trip might have on your daughter. However, what I do consider advisable, if it is possible to arrange without too much difficulty, is that your daughter should have a change of environment for a couple of weeks. This would have a beneficial effect on her, inasmuch as she would not be in contact with the people in whose presence she feels so sensitive, etc.

Needless to say, every additional effort on the part of all the members of the family in matters of the Torah and Mitzvot would bring additional blessings to the whole family and particularly to your daughter, who needs them most. It would be good to set aside every week-day morning, a couple of cents for Tzedaka, and that you and your daughter personally drop the couple of cents into the Tzedaka box, of course, there should be no compulsion. It would also be advisable to have the Mezuzot checked...

The Midrash tells us that when King David compiled the Psalms, he had in mind himself, every Jew, and every circumstance. No matter who you are and what the situation, the words of the Psalms are heard on high.

The third Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, wrote that if we only knew the power of Psalms and their effect in the spiritual realms, we would recite them constantly.

In the standard books of Psalms, the 150 chapters are grouped into seven portions, so that they can be completed every week, and into thirty portions, so that they can be completed every Jewish month. Some people recite Psalms according to the weekly cycle, while others follow the monthly cycle.

It has become a wide spread custom to recite the whole tehillim every Shabbat Mevarchim (Shabbat before the beginning of a new month)

If you are starting to say Psalms daily, I'd recommend you start with the monthly cycle. In this cycle, you'll only be reading an average of five chapters a day. Additionally, you'll be joining thousands of Jews who also do the same.

This custom was encouraged by the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson. At the beginning of the Jewish year 5687 (late 1926), the Rebbe requested that in all synagogues, Psalms be recited according to the monthly cycle after the morning prayers and, if there is a minyan present, mourner's Kaddish should be recited afterward.

His son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, would often tell people to recite Psalms daily according to the monthly schedule, stressing that this custom is applicable to everyone. He would suggest this as a conduit through which blessings enter into virtually all areas of life, ranging from health and wealth to spiritual wellbeing and matrimonial harmony.

A WORD from the Director

This Shabbat afternoon we will study Chapter 5 of Ethics of the Fathers. In this Chapter, the Mishna enumerates many things associated with the number ten: ten utterances, ten generations, ten trials, ten miracles, etc. Surprisingly, missing from all these "tens" are the Ten Commandments, which one might logically think belong in this grouping.

The Ten Commandments are symbolic of the Torah. Despite the fact that everything in the world is derived from Torah, the Torah is nonetheless "higher" than creation. The Ten Commandments thus cannot be included in the same category of items enumerated by the Mishna.

The Mishna doesn't limit itself to natural phenomena; indeed, it mentions the "ten miracles" that were associated with the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the location on earth where the Divine Presence was manifested. However, the Ten Commandments are even more elevated than that.

The Holy Temple is the place where the physical world attains its perfection, "a dwelling place for G-d in the lower realms." The Torah, however, preceded the world, and is thus on a higher level than even the Temple. The Torah and G-d are a single entity. In the same way that it would be ludicrous to say that G-d exists for any other reason, so too is the Torah its own objective.

Everything in Torah contains a directive to be applied in our Divine service. These lessons can be derived from what is said, as well as from what is not said. The omission of the Ten Commandments from this Mishna teaches the following:

The highest level of Torah study is when a Jew learns Torah for its own sake. When a Jew is motivated by any other incentive, be it physical or spiritual, his objective will be limited and by extension, his learning, too.

However, when a Jew learns Torah for its own sake, he is no longer limited, and his learning will also be boundless and unlimited. This is the ultimate level of Torah study for which every Jew should strive.

J. I. Gutnick

It Happened Once...



The Maharal of Prague became famous throughout the Jewish world for his wealth of Torah knowledge and saintliness. His father-in-law, R. Shmuel Reich, had close contacts and was a favourite of the ruler of Prague, Ferdinand I. Ferdinand favoured Shmuel because of his intelligence and great ability. This aroused much jealousy and hate among the courtiers, who could not bear to see a Jew attain so high a position.

King Ferdinand was a devout Catholic, however, at first, this did not influence him against this friendship of his. Unfortunately, there came a time, when the king's mind was poisoned against the Jews.

In the year 5316 (1556) the Catholics in Rome experienced their "victory" over the Jews by publicly burning their precious books. With this triumph of the inquisition, the spirit of anti-Jewish feeling spread into the court of King Ferdinand in Prague.

The king announced to the leaders of the Jewish community that he could no longer afford them his protection. It was therefore in their own interests to leave Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

Shmuel knew that the courtiers were vulnerable to accepting bribes, and he was willing to give away his entire fortune to save the Jews from being driven out of their homes. However, when he discussed this idea with his brilliant son-in-law, the Maharal, the latter advised against such a plan, fearing it would provoke similar measures elsewhere.

At that time, Prince Ferdinand of Bohemia, the son of the king, paid a visit to Prince Johann of Moravia. They were both deeply interested in astronomy and came upon a problem which seemed unsolvable. The two made a bet that the first to find the solution to the problem within six months would become the "spiritual master" of the other, who would become his "spiritual slave."

After the bet, Prince Ferdinand visited some properties of his which were managed by a Jew, Moshe Yitzchak Sobel. In the course of their conversation, the Prince mentioned the bet.

"I understand that you have discussed the problem with your scholars, but have you approached Jewish scholars?"

The Prince scoffed at the suggestion. "What do Jews know about such subjects? All they can do is wail about the destruction of their Holy Temple and dream about some miraculous redemption," he retorted contemptuously.

Moshe Yitzchak Sobel had known the Prince since he was a child, and so he took the opportunity to speak to him frankly: "You have a completely erroneous conception of Jews, and of course the fault lies with the one who has been responsible for your training. If you wish to hear the opinion of a great scholar, why, you have one right nearby, in the person of the Rav of Prague. There is not a science of which he has not the most expert knowledge!" exclaimed Moshe Yitzchak.

"If you really believe that the Rabbi of Prague can solve my problem, then bring him to me," said the prince. "But arrange the matter secretly. It must not become known that Ferdinand has need to resort to such a low people as the Jews to help solve a scientific problem."

Although the prince uttered these words in a friendly tone, Moshe Yitzchak was deeply hurt. He spoke at great length to the Prince, refuting his appraisal of the Jewish people. Moshe Yitzchak's words made a profound impression upon Prince Ferdinand. He had known for some time of the palace intrigues against the Jews at the hands of the priests, but his father, the king, was helpless to combat their incitement.

A few days later, the Prince called Moshe Yitzchak and asked him to arrange that the Maharal visit the palace. The Maharal agreed to visit the Prince and at their meeting the Prince told of the problem which no one had been able to solve. To the great delight and surprise of the Prince, the Maharal wrote out the solution without hesitation! The Prince wanted to reward the Maharal. But the Maharal declined, saying that it is an accepted custom among Jews, since the time of Moses, to impart knowledge to others without remuneration, the only exception being when people did this as a means of earning their living.

The Prince took a great liking to this remarkable Jew who seemed to know so much about every conceivable subject. The Maharal stayed a week at the home of Moshe Yitzchak, visiting the Prince every day.

The Prince learned all he could about Jews, their mode of living, their belief and faith, their history, etc. He was astonished at the great breadth of knowledge displayed by the Maharal. "How is it that you know so much about natural science?" he asked. The Maharal explained that all these sciences are in our Torah, and in order to be a good Jew, one has to study them. He added that it was traditional to hand down the Torah and everything connected with it.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

If you will say in your heart: These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? [Then] you will not be afraid of them (Deut. 7:17-18)

It is only when a Jew admits that the nations of the world are more physically powerful than he, and that only with G-d's help can he prevail, that he will cease being afraid... (*Shaloh*)

And he afflicted you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with the manna (Deut. 8:3)

Even though the manna could assume the taste of any delicacy in the world, the Jews still complained to Moses, "Our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all, we have only the manna to look to." Because they could not actually see the different foods they were eating (the manna always looked the same), it contained an element of "affliction" and "suffering"; moreover, this inability to see prevented them from being fully sated. From this we learn that lighting Shabbat candles, i.e., making sure there is enough illumination at the table, enhances our pleasure of the Shabbat meal. (*The Chida*)

And He fed you with the manna...that He might make you know that not by bread alone does man live (Deut. 8:3)

In the same way that when the Jews in the desert ate the manna ("bread from heaven") they recognized that they were being sustained in a miraculous manner, so too must we be aware that it is not the physical "bread from the earth" that nourishes us, but the G-dly spark it contains. (*Keter Shem Tov*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS EIKEV 20 AV • 31 JULY

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|----------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT: | CANDLE LIGHTING: | 5:12 PM |
| | MINCHA: | 5:15 PM |
| | KABBOLAS SHABBOS: | 5:55 PM |
| SHABBOS DAY: | SHACHARIS: | 10:00 AM |
| | LAST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: | 9:53 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 5:10 PM |
| | SHABBOS ENDS: | 6:12 PM |
| WEEKDAYS: | SHACHARIS SUN-FRI: | 9:15 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 5:20 PM |
| | MAARIV: | 6:10 PM |

CANDLE LIGHTING: 30 JULY 2010



| Begins | Ends |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 5:12 MELBOURNE | 6:12 |
| 5:14 ADELAIDE | 6:12 |
| 5:00 BRISBANE | 5:55 |
| 6:22 DARWIN | 7:13 |
| 4:57 GOLD COAST | 5:52 |
| 5:21 PERTH | 6:18 |
| 4:55 SYDNEY | 5:53 |
| 5:01 CANBERRA | 6:00 |
| 4:55 LAUNCESTON | 5:58 |
| 5:15 AUCKLAND | 6:15 |
| 5:05 WELLINGTON | 6:08 |

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

צוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.