



Ohr Yerushalayim News

6th August 2023 - Volume 16 - Issue 5 - עקב - י"ח אב תשפ"ג

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Yitzchok and Channa Brocho Steinhaus on the birth of a grandson to Zevi and Shana Steinhaus. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 14 Danesway.

Mazel Tov to Michael and Bayla Brandeis on the recent birth of a great grandson to YY and Dina Neuman

Even More Mitzvos

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love HASHEM, your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give the rain of your land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. (Devarim 11:13-14)

to love HASHEM: You should not say: "I will learn in order to become rich," [or] "in order to be referred to as 'Rabbi,'" [or] "in order that I receive a reward." Rather, whatever you do, do out of love [for G-d], and ultimately, the honor will come. – Rashi

This is a little troublesome. In the second paragraph of Shema which is posted on every doorway in Jewish homes and which we recite at least twice daily, I detect what seems like a huge contradiction. We are told "to love HASHEM", and Rashi explains this means not to serve HASHEM for any ulterior motive or reward but rather out of pure love and then the goodness will come. That's great! If that's all the Torah had demanded then, admittedly it would be very challenging but everything would be clear.

In the very next verse and verses the Torah spells out the earthly rewards that will come about as a result of serving HASHEM with love. Have you noticed the problem yet? Why is a reward offered as a contingency for serving HASHEM out of love, and not for a reward? It sounds a little distracting to say the least. Is it a test? Maybe! The Ramchal writes in Mesilas Yesharim that "all matters of this world are tests for a person". Certainly, the Torah is not inviting us to engage with a pure motive in order that we should invite a test. That can't be the intention here. So, what is?

Another problem is that the sages tell us, "There is no reward for Mitzvos in this world!" We have to understand what this means. It does not mean to say that there is no benefit for performing Mitzvos in this life. There are uncountable benefits. What it means is that this earthly world does not have an equivalent currency to exchange for the value of even a single incidental Mitzvah.

The Mishne in Pirke' Avos states explicitly, "One whiff of the next world is beyond all of this world!" Rabbi Dessler explains that if one could capsuleize all the pleasures experienced by all the people from the beginning of time until the end of time, it would still not equal one trace of the delights of the next world. There is no scale. We haven't got enough pizza, or mouths, or beds, or sunsets, or musical notes to approximate one small hint of what that ultimate pleasure is. So, what's the answer?

The Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuva that the Torah is telling us that the physical attainments promised in this second paragraph of Shema are not presented as a reward. Again, a Mishne Pirke' Avos tells us, "The reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah". When somebody does a Mitzvah, we have a custom to bless them, "Tizku L'Mitzvos! – You should merit Mitzvos!" The biggest result of doing a Mitzvah in this world is the opportunity to do another Mitzvah. The seeming reward spoken about

here is not a payoff. It is a paving of the way to be able to do more Mitzvos unimpeded. The real reward is something unfathomable in the context of this physical setting.

Maybe now we can appreciate the nature of what is being offered. I heard this idea recently from a seasoned-mature Talmud Chochom, a Rabbi Goldberg. Let us appreciate how precise is the language of the Torah. We are promised that for serving HASHEM with love, "you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil." This is not a cohesive and consistent grouping. Grain is a raw product. Wine and oil are finished products. Why are they listed together? He explained that grain can be stored for a long time as a raw product. Once it is processed into bread then it perishes quickly. Grapes which become wine and olives that are used to make oil in their raw form tend to spoil. They can only be safeguarded for long periods of time as finished products. This blessing offered by the Torah is not a settlement in this world with grain, wine, and oil. We are being granted the peace of mind, the security, and the surety that we can remain dedicated to meriting even more Mitzvos!

The Reward Will Be In the End

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week we read the parsha of Eikev. "V'ha'yah aikeyv tishm'one ais hamishpatim... {And it will be 'eikev' you will accept the judgments...}. [7:12]" The word 'eikev' has many different meanings which the different commentators incorporate into their explanation of the passuk (verse).

The Targum explains 'eikev' to mean 'in exchange.' In exchange for your accepting the laws, the passuk continues and says that Hashem will maintain the covenant and kindness of which He swore to the Patriarchs.

Rashi explains the word 'eikev' to mean 'heel.' If you will accept those 'light' mitzvos which a person (often) tramples on with his heel...

Eikev can also mean the end, as the heel is the 'end' of the body. The Baal HaTurim often explains the connection between the last words of one parsha and the first words of the following parsha. Here he points out that the previous parsha, after commanding us to keep the commandments, concluded with the words: "Today to do them [7:11]."

Our parsha begins: "V'hayah eikev—And it will be in the end." Today, this world, is the place to fulfill the commandments but the reward will only be in the end, in the world to come.

Last night my wife and I visited an old neighbor of ours who had lost her husband while we were away in the States. I had mentioned them in parsha-insights a while ago but I feel it deserves to be repeated.

They were both survivors of the Holocaust. He had been married with

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.15pm
Candle Lighting	7.24pm - 7.30pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
שחרית	9.22am
Ovos uBonim	5.00-6.00pm
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 8.54pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.59pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

children when the atrocities began. By the end of the war he was alone in a way that I don't think any of us could even imagine. She was single when she was sent to Auschwitz.

My wife and I learned to be sensitive to her sensitivities. My wife once 'snapped' the gum she was chewing while our neighbor was visiting. She jumped and suddenly had a look of terror on her face. She, blushing, explained that the sound reminded her of the whips she had been subjected to. Another young couple in the building once brought home a dog. She took refuge in our apartment which was the closest door available. She explained that 'Dr.' Mengele Y"SH had wanted to know what happens when a human is bit by a dog and nothing is done to treat the wound. She was chosen as the 'patient' and since then had a tremendous fear of dogs.

They met after the war and married. Wanting to start a more hopeful life than Europe could offer, they were part of the 'illegal immigration' to Palestine. When the State was declared, life didn't become all that much easier for them. She would often laugh, hearing about the aliyah (immigration to Israel) rights that the government granted immigrants and comparing it to what they had been faced with on their 'aliyah' about thirty five years earlier. We received rent subsidies on our apartment—they lived in tents. We had three years during which we could buy a car and all major appliances tax-free—they were draining swamps. The list went on and on.

Two children were born to them, a son and a daughter. The son fought in the Six Day War but died as a very young man. I never got clear if he died in the war or from an illness afterwards.

When my wife and I moved to Israel they were already older people. He worked hard in the kitchen of one of the local institutions. She would deliver the mail. Until they became too old and feeble, they were there daily, earning their honest living.

They were people who had borne so much pain and suffering and yet carried on with their lives with happiness and a sincere devotion to Hashem. I often thought that any one of the things which they had endured probably would have knocked me right out of the batter's box. But they endured.

As we were sitting and talking last night, reminiscing about her husband, a"h, my gaze fell onto the numbers still etched on her arm. I thought to myself that we really don't have too many people like this left. People who suffered so much only because they were Jews—and yet didn't budge.

We are accustomed to such comforts and luxuries. One of my Rabbeim once said that when we want to describe to our children how hard it was when we were kids, we'll have to tell them that when we wanted to change the channel of the television, we had to actually get out of our chair, walk to the television and turn the dial...

I also thought about the Rashi that I quoted above. Rashi spoke about the commandments which get trampled on—I was thinking about the people who get trampled on.

She said to us a number of times that this world doesn't seem to have any room for her. Money, money, money. That's all that seems to matter. That is the idolatry of today. That's all people want—that's all people respect. Everyone wants it but don't want to work for it. (And that was her assessment without her ever having heard about IPO's and internet stocks...)

Her husband of blessed memory worked hard and simply in order to earn his living. He never expected anything from anyone else and never wanted anything from anyone else. Amongst the Sages of the Talmud we find Rabi Yochanan the sandal-maker. That is how he is referred to throughout the Talmud. Productive, honest, proud. My neighbor was a potato peeler—those were the only 'chips' he worked with. Productive, honest, proud. Very often, those are the people who get trampled on.

Our parsha warns: "Be careful not to forget Hashem your G-d... You'll build beautiful houses, have much livestock, amass large amounts of silver and gold... and forget Hashem.[8:11-14]"

Every person is created in the 'form' of Hashem. Last night I was thinking that perhaps forgetting the poor, 'insignificant' people is included in this warning not to forget Hashem. The truth is that we are the ones who stand to lose the most by not getting to know and learn from such incredibly stalwart people. As I was looking at the numbers on her arm I was thinking that the window of opportunity is slowly closing. May Hashem grant us the wisdom to open our eyes

and our hearts.

Falling Off the Horse

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

One of the greatest challenges we face in life is being trapped in the rut of our personal shortcomings. As time progresses, we become more alert to those flaws that despite our efforts, have resisted change. It may be a propensity to anger or a lack of organizational skills. It may be a tendency to be self-centered or jealous of others. These mindsets tend to lock us in a viselike grip; as much as we try we simply cannot escape.

One of the underlying principles of both the mussar and the Chassidic schools of thought is that we must never despair of improving our character, even regarding traits that are so stubborn they seem to be genetically embedded.

The saintly Yesod Hoavoda once told his disciples that he asked a professional horse jockey if his horse ever threw him to the ground. "Of course," said the jockey. "Everyone, even the most professional rider, gets thrown from time to time."

"What do you do when you get thrown?" asked the Yesod Hoavodah. "I hold on to the reins and jump back on to the saddle as fast as I can. If not, the horse will run away and I will be left with nothing," the horse jockey replied.

"Our body too, pulls in different directions. While we try to harness its instincts, they are often times more powerful than we are, but that does not mean that we must despair of ever changing. Admitting defeat should be unthinkable—since striving for self-improvement and self-elevation is what our task in this world is all about.

King Solomon says in Koheles, "Sheva yipol tzadik vekam," seven times the righteous fall, but they will stand. Simply put, a righteous person will fall seven times but will continuously struggle back to his feet and get back in the running.

There is a classical homiletical interpretation of this verse that provides an avenue to assist us in getting back on our feet after a fall. A great Chassidic sage said we may fall seven times but if we know that deep down, our most fundamental desire is to be virtuous, to cleanse ourselves of unsavory instincts and elevate ourselves to be moral, giving and unselfish, we will persevere.

Just as a child when severely criticized will tend to internalize the judgment and feel he or she is incurably bad, we adults may also become harshly self-critical and "throw in the towel" on trying to improve. Instead of giving more power to our nature's darker side, however, our job is to reinforce the belief that a human being can reach for—and attain—the stars. We must stand erect and jump back in to the lifelong challenge of self-improvement, relying on assistance from Above to help us in the struggle.

This theme is echoed in a verse in this week's Parsha. The Torah tells us, Vehaya, im lo sishmiun bekoli," and it will come to pass, if you do not obey my voice and you stray after idols, I warn you today that you will be utterly destroyed and decimated, if you do not heed my voice. The word "vehaya" always precedes joyous tidings, the Sages say. Why then in so tragic a situation as the Jewish people straying from hearkening to G-d's word should the Torah use the word "vehaya?"

Furthermore, the commentaries ask, why does this piece conclude with the verse that all these terrible punishments will befall you since "you do not listen to Hashem's voice" (present tense)? Would it not be more apropos to write "since you have not listened to Hashem's voice" (past tense)?

The saintly Bnei Yisaschar explains that the Torah is alluding to the very concept we have discussed above. Sometimes we stray very far from where we are supposed to be. A little voice inside of us tells us that we are doomed and we might as well come to terms with our personal failure and embrace our diminished and compromised status. We will never be able to regain our footing and climb back up to spiritual heights.

It is that self-critical voice that is constantly buzzing inside of us, declaring we are doomed. Yet "vehaya," –the joyous tidings associated with this word teaches that the way to arouse Hashem's joy, so to speak, even as our inner voice condemns us, is to resist that voice with all our energy, and to choose self-affirmation instead. Bolstered by faith in Hashem's helping power, we can boost our self-confidence and courage in tackling life's ever-present challenges, and thereby succeed in realizing our inner spiritual aspirations.