



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ד"ב אב תשפ"ד - עקב - 24th August 2024 - Volume 17 - Issue 5

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Dani and Esti Epstein on the wedding of Elisheva to Leivy Uzvolk this Thursday

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to Penny Gatoff for the Yahrzeit of her father on Friday 26th Av

Holiday Thoughts

Rabbi J Rubinstein

Many people find themselves on holiday, during the week in which the Parsha of Ekev is read. Sometimes while on holiday, one passes a scenic beauty spot. As one passes by, the scene appears to change, because one keeps viewing it from a different angle. In reality the scene itself does not change at all, but because the person is constantly viewing it from a different standpoint, he keeps seeing it in a different perspective. Rav Volbe compares this to Davenning. As one journeys through life, he sees the words of Davenning in a different perspective. For example, a teenager might think of his studies or exams, when saying the prayer in Shemoneh Esrei for giving us knowledge and understanding, whereas a parent may think about bringing up his family, or his future career, and the list goes on and on. One's view of the prayer varies according to one's standpoint. (Based Sefer Ali Shur Vol. I: Page 27)

All of this, only works if we pray as we should, using the words to express the feelings of our hearts. However, if we rattle the prayers off, without thought or feeling, all our prayers will be identical, just a superficial recitation of the words. But we have to bear in mind that Maimonides writes; we learn from the phrase וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכָל לִבְבְּכֶם "And to serve him with all your heart" (in the second part of Shema, contained in this week's Parshah), the way to fulfil the Mitzvah of prayer, is to engage our hearts in our prayers. (Rambam beginning Hil. Tefillah)

I think it was in a speech by Rabbi Sholom Schwadron, that I heard the story of the Rav who went up to a congregant, after the congregant had just finished Shemoneh Esrei, and said to him, "Boo boo boo", The congregant looked at the Rav in astonishment. The Rav explained, "I watched how you were saying your prayers to Hashem, as if they had no meaning or significance, so I thought I would do the same to you, and see how you liked it". An onlooker intervened and said to the Rav, "but Hashem is like a loving father to us and even when a child says Boo boo boo, the father smiles". Rav Schwadron commented, he would have responded, that is true as long as the child is young, but if the child grows up and as an adult still says Boo boo boo to his father, then the father will be horrified. If as adults, we recite our prayers mindlessly as a child might, that is surely not good enough. (My apologies if I don't remember Rav Schwadron's presentation precisely.)

Sometimes during holidays, prayers are rushed more than ever. In reality, the lack of everyday pressures should be an opportunity, to spend time considering how the words of the prayers relate to our own lives. This will enable us to engage our hearts with our prayers, and fulfil the Mitzvah, וּלְעַבְדוֹ בְּכָל לִבְבְּכֶם "And to serve him with all your hearts".

The Reward Will Be In the End Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week we read the parsha of Eikev. "V'ha'yah aikev tishm'une 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 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

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.10pm
שבת זמן & Candle Lighting	7.22pm - 7.35pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.37am
Mincha	6.00pm / 8.05pm
Rov's Shiur	Following Mincha
Motzei Shabbos	9.10pm
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

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 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.

Perpetual Care

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

Some things get special attention. The land of Israel Yisrael is one of them. The Torah tells us this week, that Eretz Israel is a land "that Hashem constantly watches, from the beginning of the year till the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). It is an amazing verse, one that declares the eyes of a very Personal G-d to be supervising even a seemingly inanimate object, His most beloved piece of real estate with constant concern. And though the commentaries discuss the special significance of this particular surveillance as opposed to every thing in the world that is under Hashem's ever-present surveillance. But if everything is always under guard, what makes Israel so special?

In the early 1980s my grandfather Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, suffered an angina attack, and his doctor strongly recommended that he undergo an angiogram, a difficult and sometimes dangerous procedure for a man that age. At the time my younger brother, Reb Zvi, was a student at the Ponovez Yeshiva in B'nai Beraq. In addition to his own prayers on behalf of our grandfather, he immediately decided to approach his Rosh Yeshiva HaGaon Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Shach with a request to pray for Reb Yaakov's welfare.

In Jewish tradition, when you pray for the welfare of an individual, you identify the intended party by mentioning him or her together with his or her mother's name. Thus Moshe our teacher's name would be Moshe ben Yocheved (Moshe the son of Yocheved).

My brother knew he had to present Rav Shach with his grandfather's name, Yaakov, and the name of Reb Yaakov's mother. That was no easy feat, my brother Zvi had no clue of her name. Moreover, at the time of the angina attack, Reb Yaakov was over 90 years old, and in excellent health. Zvi could not recall a time where he had mentioned our grandfather's name in the Mi Shebairach for the sick. He simply was embarrassed to approach Rav Shach without Reb Yaakov's mother's name, so he went on a search expedition through B'nei Beraq attempting to contact people who would know the name of Reb Yaakov's mother.

Visiting at the homes of second-cousins and other relatives, my brother inquired. No one knew. Finally, a nephew of Rav Yaakov who lived in B'nei Beraq told my brother that Rav Yaakov's mother was named Etká.

Armed with the information and an update on my grandfather's condition, he approached the home of Rav Shach.

The elderly sage invited my brother into his sparsely furnished dining room and asked him to take a seat. The elderly Rosh Yeshiva sat by a wooden table that stood directly under a large bulb illuminating the tomes that lay opened in front of him. The Rosh Yeshiva looked up from the Talmudic passage he was contemplating and smiled toward my brother. He knew my brother and his lineage and asked him how he was feeling. Then he inquired about his grandfather, Reb Yaakov.

My brother turned white. "That is exactly why I came," he stammered. Immediately Rav Shach's face filled with consternation. My brother continued, "you see, my grandfather was not feeling well and must undergo a procedure. I came to inform the..."

Rav Shach jumped up from his chair and exclaimed: "we must say a special prayer for Reb Yaakov ben Etká (Yaakov the son of Etká)!"

My brother stood opened-mouthed and could not contain himself. "Rebbe," he began meekly. "The last 12 hours I have been trying to find out my grandmother's name in order to present it to the Rosh Yeshiva. Now I see that the Rosh Yeshiva knows the name of my great-grandmother. How is that? Rav Shach explained. "Years ago your grandfather visited Eretz Yisrael. After meeting him I asked him for his mother's name. I could not imagine a Jewish world without a healthy Reb Yaakov, and there is not a single day that goes by that I do not say a special prayer for his welfare!" Hashem teaches us a lesson in this parsha. Sometimes we think that the Land of Israel is on auto-pilot. The Torah tells us that it is not. His eyes are on it 365 days a year 24 hours a day. And though we all care for and love Eretz Yisrael, perhaps we too, must mimic that attitude. Because we should not be able to imagine a world without a stable and healthy Israel. And we must have it, like Hashem, in our hearts and minds constantly. Not only when during crisis when the storm clouds are brewing, but even from "the beginning of the year through the end." Even when the sun is shining down on it.

Trivial Matters

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig (Torah.org)

"This shall be the reward when you listen..." (7:12)

The simple interpretation of the verse is that if we observe the ordinances of Hashem, we will be rewarded and He will love us. However, Rashi interprets the verse midrashically. The word "eikey" means "heel". The verse is referring specifically to those mitzvos which we trample underfoot, for we perceive them to be less important. The Mizrahi questions the need for Rashi's interpretation, especially since the Midrash apparently contradicts the simple interpretation. The simple interpretation implies that the verse refers to all ordinances. Rashi limits the verse to only those which we perceive as less important.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos warns us to be as meticulous in our observance of the less important mitzvos as we are in the more important mitzvos, for we do not know on what basis we are being rewarded. If it is possible to distinguish between less important and more important mitzvos, why, in fact, are we not rewarded more for those which are more important? The stronger the relationship you have with a person, the more at ease you are with asking him to do something which is relatively trivial. However, in a relationship which is not so strong, you tend to limit requests to matters of significance. For example, a person would not think twice about waking up a mere acquaintance at two o' clock in the morning for medical assistance, but the same person would find it inconceivable to wake up the acquaintance asking for a pint of ice cream. On the other extreme, a woman will have no problem with asking her husband to buy her a pint of ice cream at two o' clock in the morning.

We are naturally more meticulous with those precepts which we perceive to be more fundamental, for example belief in Hashem and honoring one's parents. Moreover, for those precepts which Hashem commands us to observe, in which we do not perceive any major fundamental principles, it is possible to approach them with less enthusiasm. However, it is with these very mitzvos that we show our commitment and express our love for Hashem. The stronger the relationship, the more apt one is to acquiesce to a seemingly trivial request. Therefore, our observance of "themitzvos kalos", the less serious mitzvos, is the yardstick for our relationship with Hashem.

With this, we can understand what the Mishna in Pirkei Avos is teaching us. We do not know on what basis we are rewarded for observance of the precepts, whether it is the gravity of the precept or the reflection of commitment and love in adherence of the precept. The Midrash understands that these are the precepts which the verse is alluding to, for the verse is referring to those mitzvos for which we are rewarded with Hashem's love. This must be because those mitzvos express our love for Hashem. This, the Midrash explains, must be the mitzvos which are perceived to be less important, for our observance of them truly expresses our love for Hashem.