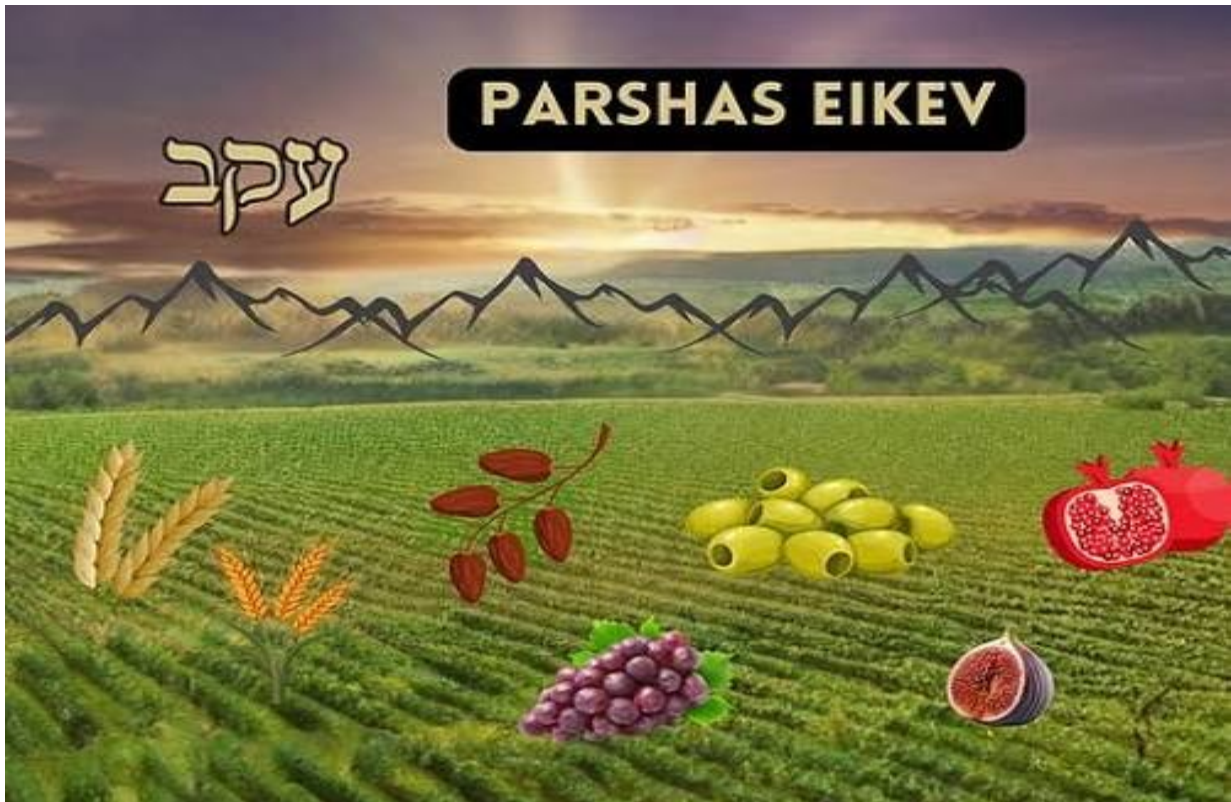




Parshas Eikev

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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הגיליון מופיע באתר 'לדעת' וכן ניתן לקבלו לאימייל מדי שבוע על ידי שליחת בקשה. eisikovits1@gmail.com,
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 "זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו"

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The Silent Witness

Parshas **Eikev**

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your homes and your gates. (Devarim 11:20)

The Mezuzah stands like a sentinel at the door; we pass it whenever we enter or leave the room. What are we to think as we look upon the mezuzah? What are we to contemplate when we see the letter shin on the case and are reminded of the holy scrolls within?

The Rambam, at the end of his presentation of the laws of mezuzah, tells us to think about the eternal nature of the Almighty. This will inspire us to awaken from our slumber and come to the realization that nothing in this world is permanent other than the Almighty and His Torah.

Why does the mezuzah remind us of these concepts?

Perhaps it is because the mezuzah is a silent witness to the ebb and flow of history and human events. Think about the mezuzah of

an old shul or some other venerable edifice. It has been hanging there for decades if not centuries. It has seen infants brought into the shul to be circumcised, and it has seen these same people grown old brought into the shul to be eulogized and buried. It has seen generations come and go. It has seen empires rise and fall. It has seen the birth of ideologies and their demise.

In the last century alone, our hypothetical mezuzah would have seen humanism, capitalism, materialism, existentialism, each embraced as life philosophies and then discredited. It would have seen the rise of the Soviet Union and Communism and their ignominious collapse. It would have seen the creation of the Third Reich, the Thousand-Year Reich, its perpetration of the Holocaust against the Jewish people and its ultimate defeat and destruction. It would have seen the birth of Israel and its growth to maturity. When the railroads were introduced in the 19th century, people thought the new technology was so perfect that it would never change. The railroad companies sold corporate bonds for centuries in advance. And where are they all today? On the scrap heap, along with their rusting trains.

Human beings are always seeking immortality. This invention, this idea, this building, this book, this one will capture that elusive immortality, this one will stand the test of time, this is one for the ages, this one will make me immortal. But it doesn't work.

The Torah tells us (Bamidbar 32:42), "And Novach went and captured Kenas and its suburbs, and he named it (lah) Novach in his name." According to the rules of Hebrew grammar, the word lah should end with a mappik heh, a mark of emphasis, but it doesn't. It ends with a weak heh. The Midrash tells us that the weak heh lets us know that the city did not last. It was eventually destroyed.

Why does the Torah consider it important to let us know this information? It is meant to teach us the futility of immortalization. Novach wanted to immortalize himself by creating something permanent – an entire city, no less! – and crowning it with his own name. But he failed. The city was destroyed, and his name would be forgotten if it were not mentioned in the Torah. Everything constantly changes. Nothing is permanent. Only the Almighty and His Torah are permanent. The mezuzah can bear witness.

Manna From Heaven

Parshas [Eikev](#)

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The One Who feeds you manna in the desert...in order to test you.
(Devarim 8:16)

Everyone knows that life is a test. We struggle to make a living, to raise our children, to build up our communities. Nothing comes easy, and our test is to deal with the hardships and frustrations in the best way possible.

But what if our livelihood were served up to us on a silver platter? How wonderful that would be! No more worries about how to pay for the children's tuition or the new roof. What if everything we needed came to us like manna from heaven? Would we consider this a test? Hardly. We would consider it a blessing. The Torah, however, seems to say otherwise.

No sooner had the Jewish people come forth from Egypt than they complained (Shemos 16:3), "If only we had died by the hand of God in the land of Egypt when we were sitting beside the fleshpots, when we ate our fill of bread; now you have brought us out into the desert to let the entire congregation starve to death."

“Behold, I will rain down bread from the heavens on you,” Hashem replied (ibid. 16:4). “The people shall go out to collect their daily portion every day, to test whether or not they will follow My Torah.”

The commentators wonder what kind of test this is. What could be better than having everything you need delivered to your doorstep every day? This is a test? This is a blessing!

Rashi explains that Hashem was referring to the laws that govern the manna. One could not store away any manna for the next day. One had to collect a double portion on Friday. And so forth. This was the test. Would the Jewish people observe the laws of the manna scrupulously?

This test is also mentioned in Parashas Eikev, “The One Who feeds you manna in the desert... to test you.” Sforno explains that the test is whether the Jews would still follow the Torah even when they do not have to worry about their livelihood.

Yes, there is a great test in “bread raining down from heaven.”

Affluence without effort is a dangerous thing. It comes with a great amount of leisure time and freedom of action. What do we do with that leisure time and that freedom of action? Do we use our leisure time and freedom of action to taste the forbidden? This is the great test of the manna.

We are all aware of the test of poverty. We are all aware of the trials and tribulations of being poor. However, says Sforno, affluence also comes with great temptations. It puts a tremendous responsibility on a person. This is the test of the manna, and it is the test for many Jews in these affluent times.

The Chovos Halevavos writes in Shaar Habitachon that one of the reasons people, unlike birds and animals, must make a great effort to earn their livelihood is to control the yetzer hara. If we had too much time on our hands, we would be unable to resist the

temptations he puts before us. As it is, we are either too busy or too tired most of the time. And even then, it is a struggle to resist temptation.

The Maggid of Mezritch once said that when people face troubles, sickness, or mortal danger, Heaven forbid, they all become religious. They all come to shul. They pray fervently. They say Tehillim with tears streaming down their cheeks. They give charity generously. But when things are going well, when they are going wonderfully, do they give much thought to the Almighty? This is the test of the manna.

Lessons from a kingfisher

Written by Julian Alper

We learn in the Gemarah (Eruvin 100b) that if, G-d forbid, we didn't have the Torah we would be able to learn good character traits from observing and copying some animals.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Even if the Torah had not been given, we would nonetheless have learned modesty from the cat, which covers its excrement, and that stealing is objectionable from the ant, which does not take grain from another ant, and forbidden relations from the dove, which is faithful to its partner, and proper relations from the rooster, which first appeases the hen and then mates with it.

This week I want to learn a lesson from a white-throated kingfisher that I observed snatching a fish from a lily pond outside the Sarona Market in Tel Aviv. A kingfisher has to eat fish to survive, and it has to eat many each day. A nice big fish will sustain it for much longer than will a small fish. But the kingfisher takes every opportunity to *chap* a fish, however small it might be and wherever it finds one. It focuses on the *now* rather than on later in the day. It doesn't calculate whether there might be a better opportunity later on – it seizes the moment.

So too when it comes to *mitzvot* we must *chap* every opportunity, small *mitzvot* as well as big *mitzvot*. And we learn this from the first *pasuk* of this week's *parasha* (Devarim 7:12) (as well as from the kingfisher).

And it will be, because (*eikev* – literally heel) you will heed these ordinances and keep them and perform them, that Hashem, your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.

Rashi writes about this *pasuk*:

If you will heed the minor commandments which one [usually] tramples with his heels [that is those which a person treats as being of lesser importance].

The lesson for us is to treat all *mitzvot* as important, whether they seem to us to be big important *mitzvot* or small inconsequential *mitzvot*. Just like the kingfisher takes small fish as well as big fish.

As it says in Avot 2:1

Be as careful with a 'light' mitzvah as with a 'heavy' one, for you do not know the reward given for the commandments.

In the eyes of Hashem a small *mitzvah*, a little act of *chesed* to a friend or neighbour, might carry just as much weight as a major *mitzvah*.

And we are promised – if we keep the small *mitzvot*, just like the large *mitzvot*, then

your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.

Seize the moment! Take every opportunity for doing *mitzvot*.

shortening “The Longest Distance In The World”

Written by Tal Segal

In this week's dvar Torah on parshat Ekev, we quoted Rav Yisrael Salanter who said: The longest distance in the world is between a person's mind and their heart.” We said that this explains why some people know what's right,

but they don't put it into practice. Hashem knows how we work, so He told us "You should know today and return it to your hearts that Hashem is God in Heaven above and on earth below – there is no other" (Devarim 4:39). You see it's not enough to know what's right.... we have to return it to our hearts for it to make any difference or impact on our actions. We have to internalize it.

The question is... how do we do that? I only said what needs to be done. I never mentioned the techniques that we can use to actually bridge that gap between the head and the heart – to shorten the "longest distance in the world."

So that's what we are going to talk about today. The Rabbis who founded the Mussar movement in Europe that dealt with character refinement and making yourself a better person teach us numerous methods about how to internalize what we already know to be true. Let me share just one of them with you....

In this week's parsha, Moshe continues his little pep talk to the Jewish people before they pass into the Land of Israel without him. He tells them about several mitzvot: Not to learn any bad habits from our neighbors and start worshipping idols (in fact, he mentions this one several times), the sacrifices we should bring to the temple on the festivals, the animals that are kosher and not kosher... the list goes on. Why is Moshe telling our ancestors about all of these things? They have already been taught earlier in the Torah! Not only that, but he warns them many, many times about certain things like idol worship. Just teach it once, and then they know about it! Why does the Torah, which is usually so careful not to have one single extra letter than necessary, all of a sudden repeat things numerous times!?

The Ramban answers his first comment in the book of Devarim. He explains what the purpose of this 5th book of the Torah is: Just as the Jewish people are about to enter the land of Israel, Moshe knows that even though they have been taught this all before, they still need to go over it again and again until they can internalize what they have already learned. To ensure they don't start to stray from the mitzvot once they enter the land promised to our forefathers, they have to go over again and again what they know to be true. That is the first tool of internalizing: Repetition. In Ivrit it's called Chazara.

The more we go over things again and again and memorize them and think about them – the more they become a part of who we are.

My mum told me a story that happened at King David recently. One of the students, a young boy about 9 years old, needed to bring a signed slip from his mum to allow him to catch the public bus in the afternoon after school. And every day his mother gave him a signed slip... but it never made it to school! He had always lost it by the time he got to school and the time came to hand in the slip! On the fourth day, however, the slip made it to the teacher – his mum had pinned it to his jumper. That slip was not getting lost again.

This needs to be our attitude. Sometimes we learn an incredible Torah insight, something that we can see is true and right, and it inspires us for a day, a week, but then the effect is lost. However, that idea never changed! It still exists and is still as true as the day we heard it... we just forgot it, and so we lose momentum, and what we know to be true never comes to be implemented. The secret to changing our actions is to carry through and internalize those lessons through chazara. It's not about quantity, but quality. Don't worry about learning everything. Worry about internalizing what you do learn. We see in Sefer Devarim one technique to accomplish this:

Repetition.

Maybe I can suggest a new aim for the week: When you hear a true idea – go over it again and again until you know it off by heart and internalize it.

Remember, if at first you don't succeed.....

Try, try again!

3 short vorts about the 2nd paragraph of Shema

Written by d fine

1) If one can learn, then teach

The Chofetz Chaim notes that in the pasuk (11:19) of Shema velimadetem osam es beneichem ledaber bam ('you shall teach them to your children to

speak in them;’ referring to the teaching of Torah to one’s children), the word osam is written without a vav, which lends itself to be read as ‘atem.’

Commenting on the availability of this alternative reading, the Chofetz Chaim points out that this reading would have the pasuk say ‘you should teach yourselves.’ A father should not settle for merely teaching one’s kids Torah, but has to learn Torah themselves. In fact, the person who is best equipped to transfer Torah to the next generation is someone who is enveloped with a love and appreciation of Torah themselves. The best way to fill a new, empty cup with Torah is to be overflowing with Torah yourself.

2) And sticking with our pasuk (11:19), it has been said that the word bam refers to the Oral and Written Law (Torah she’bichtav and Torah shebe’al peh). For the beis of bam hints at the first word of the Torah she’bichtav (bereishis), whilst the mem refers to the first word of Torah she’be’al peh (me’eimasai of Brachos 1:1).

3) Whatever will be

The enumeration of the rewards for keeping mitzvos is introduced with the word vehaya (11:13). The Ohr Hachaim notes that this word vehaya denotes simcha, with the pasuk thus referring to the fact that if we keep the mitzvos properly then we will be genuinely happy people. The Messilas Yesharim in his opening few lines highlights the same point – there is no simcha like the observance of HaShem’s Will.

Humor

- **The Castaway:** A man stranded on a desert island builds two synagogues—one to pray in, and one he’d *never* set foot in.
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- **The Brewer:** How does Moses make his beer? He *Hebrews* it!
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- **The Luggage:** A kosher traveler doesn’t pack light; one suitcase is clothes, and the other three are strictly backup tuna and matzo.

- **The Deaf Fish:** Did you hear about the gefilte fish that went deaf? He had to buy a *herring-aid*. [[1](#), [2](#)]

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