

מצות

AN INFUSION OF ENERGY
TO MAINTAIN THE ETERNITY
OF THE SOUL

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Eikev Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Proverbial Yardstick Confirms Delusion

1. If one observes the “neglected” *mitzvos* (those “trampled” upon by one’s heel), G-d will uphold the covenant, etc.
2. He will merit unlimited blessings, an exceptional reward. Why?
3. Jews are bound by 613 dictates – both positive and negative.
4. Some only pertain to a certain segment of the Jewish people.
5. Some have relevance to the *Kohen*, or to the ordinary Jew, but not to a woman.
6. All Jewish Souls are interconnected.
7. When one does a *mitzvah* all Jews are beneficiaries; if one sins, all Jews are diminished.
8. He who observes the neglected *mitzvos* infuses the entire Jewish People with the spirituality they were lacking.
9. Therefore he’s the beneficiary of unlimited blessing.
10. Also: Since he/she does not discern between the more and less severe *mitzvah*, it confirms his interest is solely to fulfill the will of G-d.
11. His intent is not self-serving, so he merits the ultimate– as he is fully attached to the ultimate.
12. One who uses the proverbial *mitzvah* yardstick will not address the “less important” *mitzvos*.

Attribution Differentiates the Grand From the Grandiose

Is Acknowledgement of the Source Integral to the Sated or the Hungry?

1. “And you have eaten, and you are sated, and you will bless G-d.”
2. This is basis one must say Grace after eating: 3 blessings on a *Torah* level and a 4th which is rabbinical.
3. *Gemara*: What is the basis for the pre-blessing?
4. If one acknowledges G-d when sated– definitely when one is hungry?
5. *Gemara*: One is not permitted to benefit from the world without a blessing.
6. If one did, it is as if he had benefited from something that was consecrated.
7. Psalms: The world in its entirety belongs to G-d.
8. Psalms: The Heaven is G-d’s and the Earth was to mankind.
9. *Gemara*: Before acknowledging G-d with a blessing the world is all G-d’s; after the blessing the terrestrial is released to mankind.
10. 13 methods of interpretation were given at Sinai.
11. *Kal V’chomer* is one.
12. The logic that was employed by the *Gemara* to establish a basis for the pre blessing is the *Kal V’chomer*.
13. *Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk*: If the *Kal V’chomer* is the basis for the pre-blessing; one’s obligation should be biblical, which it is not.
14. He explains there is a fallacy in the logical *Kal V’chomer*.
15. When sated and complacent, one is vulnerable to attribute his successes to himself.
16. He must therefore immediately trace the source of satiation to G-d with the Grace after the meal, which is not a concern when one is hungry.

Mitzvos: An Infusion of Energy To Maintain the Eternity of the Soul

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Eikev



The Impetus to Strive for Greater Spiritual Heights

Gemara: “One is able to forego the study of *Torah* for the sake of the reading of the *Megillah* (of *Esther*).” The reading of the *Megillah* of *Esther* should be considered a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of the study of *Torah* since it is part of scripture. If so, why does the *Gemara* refer to the reading of the *Megillah* as neglecting the study of *Torah*, if the reading of the *Megillah* itself is the study of *Torah*?

Shaar Ephraim: If one is able to study *Torah* at a more advanced level and chooses to engage in it at a lesser level, it is considered as one is nullifying *Torah* study (*bitul Torah*). For example, if one is able to study *Gemara* and chooses to read Psalms or review the Portion of the week instead, it is considered to be the equivalent of nullifying *Torah* study. It is because this individual is not addressing his endowed potential sufficiently.

The *Gemara*’s intent is to elucidate the point that one is permitted to read the *Megillah* even if one has the ability to engage in *Torah* study at a more advanced level. Although the reading of the *Megillah* is not an in-depth involvement in *Torah*, it nevertheless takes priority over the study of *Torah* at a more in depth level.

If one has the ability to engage in a *mitzvah* at a more advanced level, such as performing a *mitzvah* for its own sake (*l’shma*), and chooses to do so at a less advanced level (not for its own sake), there is a claim against that individual. This is because he had the ability to perform at a more advanced level.

Gemara: If one has the ability to study *Torah* and chooses not to do so, suffering and all types of difficulties will come upon him to disrupt his life.

“This shall be the reward (*v’hayaeikev*) when you hearken to these ordinances (*Mishpatim*)...” If one

heeds the ordinances of the *Torah*, G-d will provide him blessing.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Whenever the *Torah* uses the word 'v'haya (this shall be)' it is to indicate joy. *Moshe* is telling the Jewish people that they are only permitted to rejoice regarding their performance of *mitzvos* when they are fulfilled in the context of being complete and perfect. The word 'Eikev', which is used in the verse, alludes to the fact that the *mitzvah* must be complete.

Chazal: The end of time is referred to as "Ikvisa d' meshiacha –the time for *Moshiach* to come." until one has performed the *mitzvos* in the most meticulous and advanced manner, one should not be content to experience joy with his level of accomplishment. One must continuously reflect upon ways to improve and advance in order to achieve one's potential.

Pirkei Avos: "If one studies a significant amount of *Torah*, one should not pride himself." Why is this so? "Because that is the reason you were created."

Although one is permitted to rejoice in coming upon the opportunity to study *Torah* or perform a *mitzvah*, one should not experience pride, despite the fact that he has amassed a significant amount of *Torah* knowledge.

There is a distinction between joy and pride. Joy is the feeling of privilege to have the opportunity to perform a *mitzvah*. Pride is rooted in acknowledging one's own accomplishment.

Mishna: "G-d wanted to bring merit to the Jewish people, He therefore gave them an abundance of *Torah* and *mitzvos*."

Rambam: "If G-d wanted to bring greater merit upon the Jewish people, why did He give them a greater amount of *mitzvos* rather than a lesser amount, if in fact there is a greater chance of failure with the greater amount of *mitzvos*? If they would have been commanded to fulfill a lesser amount of *mitzvos* it would have been easier to succeed."

"In order for one to merit a special distinction in the world to come, one must perform a *mitzvah* in the most perfect manner, although it is only one *mitzvah*. By giving the Jewish people multiple *mitzvos*, G-d is presenting them with a greater opportunity to have a chance to perform at least one of them perfectly, although it may only be once in a lifetime."

Understanding that one needs to perform a *mitzvah* in the most perfect manner, one cannot be satisfied to the point of rejoicing with the performance of any *mitzvah*. One can only rejoice at the opportunity that he was given by G-d to serve Him.

A Jew must feel fortunate that he was endowed by G-d with a special portion and lot through which one is able to advance himself spiritually. One must continuously strive to perform *Torah* and *mitzvos* at a more advanced and perfect level and never be content with one's accomplishments.

Reward in this World Does not Exist

Pirkei Avos: "The reward for the performance of a *mitzvah* does not exist in this world." Since the result of *mitzvah* performance is unlimited because a *mitzvah* is spiritual in its essence, it has no relevance to a limited existence, which is the physical world. Something of an unlimited nature cannot be contained in a limited context. Therefore, one receives the reward for a *mitzvah* in the world to come, which is eternal and infinite.

Gemara: Although we can no longer implement the four death penalties that were at one time imposed by the *Sanhedrin* (High Court), a semblance of these death penalties come about through natural events.

If one would have been liable for the death penalty through stoning, that individual will fall to his death from a rooftop. This is because when the death penalty of stoning was implemented, the guilty party was cast off of a location that was the equivalent of his own height in order to break his neck when he falls.

If one deserved to die through burning, which was implemented with molten lead, the individual would die through the bite of a venomous snake. The venom burning through his body is the equivalent of the molten lead entering his innards.

If one deserved to die through asphyxiation, he would die through drowning, which is its equivalent.

Tosfos: "If the four death penalties are in fact being implemented by Divine Decree despite the fact that we no longer have the *Sanhedrin*, why do we find truly evil people dying in peace at a ripe old age?"

"He repays His enemies in his lifetime to make him perish." G-d rewards the evil one for whatever

insignificant good that he had brought about during his lifetime, so that after he dies he will go into the oblivion without have a share in the World to Come.

However, G-d reserves the reward for the individual who is not evil for the World to Come to allow him to atone in this world so that he may benefit eternally for his good deeds.

“This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances...”

Midrash: “G-d had removed the reward for the one who performs a *mitzvah* from this world so that the Jew could perform the *mitzvah* in the most perfect and wholehearted manner.”

Eitz Yosef: The value of removing reward from this world has a dual benefit. Firstly, one has no obvious incentive to do G-d’s Will because the individual never benefits from his good deed. Therefore, it is more difficult for one to succeed by making the right choice.

Secondly, when one performs a *mitzvah* without experiencing any benefit, it is a declaration of one’s belief that G-d will ultimately reward him in the World to Come.”

Based on the *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* we see that the reward for the performance of a *mitzvah* cannot be experienced in the physical world because it is infinite. However, seemingly we see from the *Midrash* differently. We see that reward can be given in this world; however, it will hinder the Jew from performing at a more advanced level. How do we reconcile the *Midrash* with the *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos*?

We cite a *Mishna* in our morning prayers after the blessings of the *Torah*: “These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this World but whose principle remains intact for him in the World to Come. They are: the honor due to father and mother, acts of kindness...”

The “fruits” that are mentioned in the *Mishna* are not the reward for performing these particular *mitzvos*, but rather they cause the individual to be worthy to receive blessing to assist him in the service of G-d.

In the verses of the blessings in the Portion of *Bechukosai*, G-d says to the Jewish people, “If you perform My *mitzvos* and heed My word, there will be unlimited (physical) blessing...”

Again, these blessings are not for the sake of reward for one’s toiling in the performance of *mitzvos*, but rather, these blessings are to assist one in one’s spiritual endeavors by providing the means to facilitate the performance of *mitzvos* without distraction.

Pirkei Avos: “Whoever initially fulfills the *Torah* despite his impoverished state, enduring great difficulties, ultimately will fulfill the *Torah* in a state of wealth. However, if one nullifies the *Torah* in a wealthy state, he will ultimately nullify the *Torah* in a state of impoverishment.”

If one is in a position to study *Torah* because he was endowed with material wealth and he chooses not to do so, then G-d will withdraw His blessing. This is because G-d had only bestowed him with material blessing to enable the individual to study *Torah* without preoccupation with the material.

However, the one who engages in *Torah* study, despite his impoverished state, G-d will provide him material blessing in order to facilitate his *Torah* study without difficulties. This endowment of wealth has no relevance to reward but rather only as an accommodation.

However, the *Midrash* still needs to be reconciled with the *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos*. The reward for a *mitzvah*, which is infinite, cannot be experienced in the physical world because the infinite cannot be had within a finite context. However, G-d could have given an infinitesimal part of the reward in this world in order to give the Jew an understanding of the value of his *mitzvah* performance.

G-d withheld even this infinitesimal portion of his reward so that the Jew should perform the *mitzvos* in a more complete state. In addition, it will be a demonstration of the Jew’s faith that he will be rewarded for his *mitzvah* performance in the World to Come.

The Value of a Test, Even if One Failed

“Perhaps you will state in your heart, ‘These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out?’ Do not fear them! You shall remember what *Hashem*, your G-d, did to *Pharaoh* and to all of Egypt. The great encounters (*ha’masos ha’gedolos*) that your eyes saw, and the signs, the wonders...”

Rashi: “the great encounters (*ha’masos ha’gidolos*)” means the “great tests” that the Jewish people had encountered. From the time that the Jewish people left Egypt until this moment in the verse, G-d presented them with ten tests, which they failed and for which they were rebuked. In what regard does remembering the tests alleviate the fear of defeating the numerous nations of *Canaan*?

Pirkei Avos: “The world came about through the Ten Utterances of G-d.” We find that the number “ten” manifests itself many times throughout the developmental period of the Jewish people.

Rabbeinu Bachya: Because existence came about through the Ten Utterances of G-d, all that addresses the purpose of Creation manifests itself within the context of “ten.”

“Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G-d created ...”

Chazal: This alludes to the objective of Creation. “For the sake of *Torah*, which is “*reishis* (first/choicest),” G-d created heaven earth.” All existence came into being only for the specific purpose for the fulfillment of *Torah*.

Another interpretation is that G-d created the world for the sake of the Jewish people who are referred to as “*reishis*” (the chosen). The world was created for the fulfillment of the *Torah* by the Jewish people who are the only ones who are qualified people to do so.

The Ten Commandments encompass the entire *Torah* and have relevance to the initial Ten Utterances, which brought about creation. Without experiencing the ten plagues of Egypt, which were revealed miracles, the Jewish people would not have been qualified to receive the Ten Commandments at *Sinai*. The ten plagues were a prerequisite for the Ten Commandment and the fulfillment of the purpose of creation.

The Jewish people failed the ten tests that they had been presented. These tests were intended to test their belief and faith in G-d. Only after they had failed in each of these instances did the Jewish people realize that they should have trusted G-d.

By reflecting upon the tests of the past, they will understand that G-d will not put them into a position that they cannot succeed, regardless of the bleakness of the moment. The Jewish people had failed in the test of the Sea when they were confronted by the Sea

on one side and the Egyptian army on the other. They believed, “How is it possible to cross a Sea?”

However, after G-d split the Sea for them, they realized and understood that G-d is willing to alter nature for the sake of the Jewish people. The concept of “impossible” has no relevance to the Jewish people when it relates to following the Will of G-d.

By remembering the tests that they had failed, the Jewish people will establish in their mind that relating to their existence, G-d will never abandon them regardless of how insurmountable the circumstances may seem. If one internalizes the past as it should be understood, then one’s faith and trust in G-d will remain firm and secure. This will allow the Jewish people to go forward without any hindrance or distraction.

Understanding Where One Stands

“V’haya eikev tishmeun eis ha’mishpatim... This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances, and you observe and perform them; Hashem, your G-d, will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers...And you will merit all the bounty and reward.”

Rashi: The reason the *Torah* uses the term “*eikev*,” which in this context means “when,” rather than the word “*im*” is because the word “*eikev*” which literally means “heel of one’s foot” is alluding to the *mitzvos* that are not valued sufficiently and are thus trampled under one’s heel.

If one keeps these *mitzvos* that are perceived as being not important and vital, one will merit unlimited blessing and reward. Why is the one who is sensitive to the *mitzvos* that are disregarded, worthy of exceptional blessing? Why is he so endeared to G-d?

The term “*mitzvah*” which means commandment is derived from the word “*tzeevuy*,” which means “command.” One must fulfill a *mitzvah* because it is G-d’s Command. This is the essence of every *mitzvah*, regardless of its consequences – positive or negative (reward/punishment).

If the impetus and motivation to perform *mitzvos* is because it is the Word of G-d, then there is no basis to classify the Commandments as “more important” and “less important.” If G-d commanded them, then they are all of equal importance.

Pirkei Avos: “Do not be like servants who serve the Master for the sake of receiving a reward, but rather be like servants who serve the Master without the intent of receiving reward.”

The only basis to differentiate between *mitzvos* is if one’s impetus to perform them is for the sake of one’s interest (reward). When one chooses to neglect a particular *mitzvah*, it is an indication that his motivation for heeding the Word of G-d is only out of self interest.

Regarding the more stringent *mitzvah*, whose liability is great, one tends not to transgress it because of the gravity of its liability. The moment one applies his own proverbial “yardstick” to the *mitzvos* of the *Torah*, it is a confirmation that he is not performing for the sake of the Master, but rather for self-interest.

The one who fulfills and addresses even the *mitzvos* that are cast aside and neglected, is the one who truly serves the Master without seeking personal gain. He therefore merits unlimited blessing in every aspect of his life. This is because the objective and purpose of physical existence is only for G-d’s Glory. “For My glory I created it.” G-d provides the unlimited blessing to facilitate His objective.

Midrash: “Why should I be fearful in the days of evil? The sins of my heel surround me.” (Psalms)

G-d has given the Jewish people the *Torah* which contains 613 *mitzvos*. Among them, there are those, which seem to be more severe and those which are less severe. Because there are *mitzvos* that are less severe, people tend to not observe them properly and throw them under their heels as if they are to be taken lightly.

This is what King David feared on the Day of Judgment. King David said to G-d, “Master of the Universe, I am not concerned about the more severe *mitzvos* (because I performed them properly); however, I am concerned about the less severe *mitzvos*. Perhaps I have violated one of them because I related to them as if they were of lesser importance.

You G-d have said, ‘One must be as careful in the observance of the lighter *mitzvah* as one must be careful with a more stringent *mitzvah*. Therefore I am concerned that the sins that I have thrown under my heel will come to condemn me on the Day of Judgment.’

Although one may perform all of the *mitzvos* meticulously, one must understand his own motivation for doing them. Even King David, who was one of the most spiritual people who ever lived, was concerned that there may have been a trace of some level of self interest in his *mitzvah* observance. If one fails regarding a lesser *mitzvah*, it is a reflection of his entire being, regarding the impetus for his *mitzvah* performance.

This is the reason King David was concerned regarding the “sins of his heel” would come to prosecute him on the Day of Judgment. If he had failed even once, regarding the lesser *mitzvah* it would be a condemnation of his total being.

It is true that the *Gemara* tells us that even when one performs a *mitzvah* with self-interest (*shelol’shmah*), it has value because ultimately it could bring the person to a more advanced level of observance (*I’shmah*), which is what G-d desires. However, the statement of the *Gemara* is telling us that one, whose motivation for *mitzvos* is one of self-interest, should not be discouraged because if one continues to perform in this manner, it will come to a more advanced level.

The Profile of the Jew

“This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances... He will love you, bless you, and multiply you...”

Baal HaTurim: When one observes the *mitzvos*, one will merit G-d’s love. It is in the merit of *Avraham*, our Patriarch. “The offspring of *Avraham*, My beloved...” (*Yeshaya*)

One will merit blessing in the merit of *Yitzchak*, our Patriarch, as it states, ‘G-d blessed *Yitzchak*...’

One will merit to be fruitful and to multiply in the merit of *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, as it states, ‘Be fruitful and multiply...’

When one observes the *mitzvos* in a manner that emulates the behavior of the Holy Patriarchs, then one will merit G-d’s love, blessing, and expansion through procreation. When a Jew reflects the behavior of the Patriarchs, he will be seen by G-d as a direct outgrowth of these special and holy people. Consequently, he will merit their blessings.

“Yosef died, and all his brothers and that entire generation. The Children of Israel were fruitful, teemed (*vayisheritzu*), increased, and became strong - very, very much so; and the land became filled with them. A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Yosef.” (*Shmos*)

It is difficult to understand how Pharaoh or the Egyptian people could enslave and persecute the family of Yosef, the Viceroy. Had it not been for Yosef's ingenuity and initiative, Egypt would have perished during the years of famine. As a result of the wealth that came to Egypt, through Yosef's initiative, Egypt gained prominence and became a world power. If this is so, how were Pharaoh and his people able to justify their enslavement of the Jewish people? How could they behave as if they had known Yosef?

Sforno: The Torah uses the term '*vayisheritzu* (teemed)' regarding the proliferation of the Jewish people to indicate that their behavior had caused them to be perceived as rodents (*sheratzim*).

The Jewish people at this time, as a result of their behavior, which was devoid of any spirituality, could not be identified as the family of Yaakov and Yosef. Yosef was renowned in Egypt, even among the pagans as the “righteous one.” Comparatively speaking, the persona and behavior of the Jewish people was as detestable as rodents. Therefore, Pharaoh and the Egyptian people could enslave them.

The Jew merits G-d's love and blessing only when He sees them as the children of the Patriarchs. This is only when they reflect the behavior of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*.

“You shall love (*V'haavtah*) Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources...” (*Va'eschanan*)

Baal HaTurim: The letters of the word '*V'haavtah* (you shall love) if they are rearranged, spell the word 'avos (Patriarchs).' The verse, 'With all one's heart' is referring to *Avraham*, our Patriarch. This is because *Avraham's* love for G-d was unique.

'With all your soul' is referring to *Yitzchak*, our Patriarch because he was willing to give his life for G-d at the *Akeidah*.

'With all your resources' is referring to *Yaakov*, our Patriarch. Before *Yaakov* fled to go to the house of *Lavan*, it states: 'Whatever You will give me I will tithe for You...'

When one acts in a manner that is similar to our Holy Patriarchs through love, sacrifice, and giving of one's material assets for His sake, the Jew will be seen by G-d as one of the progeny of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov*. The worthiness for all blessing is rooted in the Patriarchs. The Jewish people are only beneficiaries of that blessing when they identify, through their behavior as their descendants.



Yad Avraham Institute



Yad Avraham Institute

📍 810 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019 ✉️ ravkalatsky@gmail.com ☎️ (212) 259-0300 YadAvNow.com
