

מצות

AN INFUSION OF ENERGY
TO MAINTAIN THE ETERNITY
OF THE SOUL

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YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Eikev

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Do Not Add Even to Enhance Your Spirituality

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If You Keep These Laws – Even the Non-Important Ones

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Upholding the Mitzvos Which Are Neglected

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The Value of a Mitzvah

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Obligations for the After-Bracha

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The Proverbial Yardstick Confirms Delusion

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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.

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

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1. “And you have eaten, and you are sated, and you will bless G-d.”
2. This is the base one must say in Grace after eating: 3 blessings on a Torah level & 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 that 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.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Eikev



What is the Inherent Value of Mitzvos?

When the *Torah* enumerates Statutes (*Chukim*) and Ordinances (*Mishpatim*) it always mentions the Statutes before the Ordinances. One would think that when the *Torah* presents our obligations it should first present the laws that can be understood on a rational basis and then the Statutes, which are dictates that are incomprehensible to the human mind. We explained earlier that the *Torah* first presents the Statutes and then the Ordinances to teach us that in fact there is no difference between them in terms of their basis. Meaning, the reason why we are bound to the Ordinances such as not stealing and killing is not because of their rational value but rather because it is the Will of G-d. We follow the Statutes for the same reason.

Moshe said the Jewish people, “*V’haya eikev tishmeun ais 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 citing *Chazal*: The reason why the *Torah* uses the word “*eikev*” (which also means “heel”) is because it alludes to the *mitzvos* which are viewed as not important and therefore, trampled upon.

Torah: If one keeps even these *mitzvos* he will merit the greatest degree of material reward. The question is why is keeping the seemingly less important *mitzvos* the cause of one’s exceptional reward? Also, whenever the *Mishpatim* are mentioned it is always in conjunction with *Chukim*. In this instance the *Torah* only states, “If you will keep the *Mishpatim*” and there is no reference to the *Chukim*. The question is why? If one keeps the seemingly less important *mitzvos* that were trampled upon by one’s heel is he deserving of an exceptional level of reward. If one observes the

mitzvah because it is the Will of *Hashem* then why does one differentiate between the more stringent *mitzvah* and the seemingly less important one?

In either case one must adhere with the same level of commitment because they are BOTH the Will of *Hashem*. Evidently if one does make a distinction between the two, this is an indication that the motive for the performance of the *mitzvah* is self-interest rather than doing the Will of *Hashem*. One acts out of self-interest when he is willing to sacrifice for the “more stringent” *mitzvah* because the perceived liability is greater or the accomplishment has more value; yet he tends to be less concerned with the seemingly unimportant *mitzvah* where the liability is of a lesser consequence.

Therefore if one adheres even to the *mitzvos* which are normally “trampled upon” by one’s heel, he is deserving of the greatest level of reward because he is performing the *mitzvah* purely for the sake of *Hashem*. With this understanding we are able to appreciate why *Moshe* used the expression “*Mishpatim*” (Ordinances) and not “*Chukim*” (Statutes). He is speaking about the *mitzvos* that have been ignored or transgressed because of their perceived lack of value.

If this is the case then the cause of one’s failing is only because one’s approach to *mitzvos* was based on his evaluation rather than doing the Will of *Hashem*. If in fact the approach to *mitzvos* would have been “*Chukim*” then one could not have rationalized their transgression because of a perceived lack of value. Therefore *Moshe* is pointing out that if one regards *Hashem*’s Commandments as “*Mishpatim*” then he is susceptible to failure because his own sense of value is the determining factor in their importance. However if one performs the *mitzvos* because they are purely for the sake of doing the Will of *Hashem*, then he will merit the greatest level of reward.

Regardless of One’s Level, One Must Realize His Vulnerability

Moshe Rabbeinu tells the Jewish people, “He (*Hashem*) afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the manna that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the Mouth of G-d does man live.” What is the meaning of “*Hashem* afflicted you and let you hunger”?

One could think that the *Torah* is referring to the forty-year period in which the Jews wandered in the desert. However, the *Torah* tells us that every Jew was given a sufficient amount of *mann* to satisfy his daily need. Regardless of how much or how little he gathered in, miraculously every Jew had a sufficient amount. If this is the case then what is meant when *Moshe Rabbeinu* tells the Jewish people, “*Hashem* afflicted you and let you hunger”?

One could think that since the Jewish people only received a daily stipend from day to day, they were continuously in an uncertain state of existence, not knowing if the stipend would repeat itself the following day. If one would want to store the *mann* for the following day it did not keep and became putrid. If this was the reality of the Jews in the desert, we can understand the meaning that they were in a continuously “afflicted” and “hungry” state. However, this understanding is flawed because after an extended period of receiving the *mann* day in and day out, one would think that their fears of not receiving were put to rest. If so, what is the understanding that they were “afflicted” and went “hungry” as a result of the *mann*?

Gemara in Tractate *Yomah*: The *mann* took on the taste, texture, and nutritional value of any food that one had in mind; nevertheless, the Jews were in a continuously afflicted and hungry state. The visual effect of food is a necessary element to satisfying one’s hunger. Therefore a blind man will never be satiated, regardless of how much he eats, because he does not have the visual effect of the food. The Jews did not have the visual effect from their food. However, if a person is living in a spiritual context and is surrounded with continuous miracles, seemingly he eats only as a means to sustain his existence in order to perform the Will of *Hashem*. If this is so, then how do we understand that although the Jews did not have an enhanced visual effect from what they were eating, why did they feel deprived?

When the *Vilna Gaon zt’l* had food prepared for him it was made in such a way that he should not derive any degree of physical pleasure from it. This was because his only interest in food was as a means of sustenance and survival. If this is the case then how can we say that the most special and spiritually “enlightened” generation of Jews that ever lived were “afflicted and hungry” because they did not have visual effect from what they were eating?

Gemara: “The greater the person the greater is his inclination (evil inclination).” This principle is true because if one’s inclination is not in sync with his spirituality then he loses the power of choice. Therefore as he advances himself spiritually, so too does his inclination intensify. The generation of the desert experienced revealed miracles on a continuous basis, i.e. the *mann*, the wellspring of *Miriam*, and the Clouds of Glory. *Hashem* had to keep their evil inclination in pace with their spiritual growth. Therefore within this context, although it should not have been considered a test, they were tested because of the *mann*’s lack of visual appeal.

Gemara in Tractate *Avoda Zarah*: Similarly, after the Sinai experience, the Jews should not have sinned with the Golden Calf; nevertheless, *Hashem* intensified their evil inclination to give them the choice to reject idolatry or to succumb to its temptation. Since *Hashem* wanted to teach the Jews the lesson that one does not live by bread alone, but rather by the Word of *Hashem*, He caused the Jews to feel afflicted and denied.

How Does One Guarantee His Spirituality Despite His Material Success

Torah: “You will eat and You will be satisfied, and bless *Hashem*, your G-d, for the good Land that He gave you.” This verse is the basis for the *Birchas HaMazon* (Grace after Meals), one’s obligation to acknowledge *Hashem* after we have eaten to a sated level.

Torah: “Take care lest you forget *Hashem*, your G-d, by not observing His commandments, His Ordinances, and His Decrees, which I commanded you today...” The *Torah* is warning that one may come to forget *Hashem* as a result of prosperity. After one has achieved prosperity he may say, “My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!” How does one forget *Hashem*? Certainly the *Torah* does not mean that suddenly one day a person awakens and does not remember *Hashem*. Rather, forgetting *Hashem* is a gradual process which begins with neglecting His commandments, His Ordinances and His Decrees. *Torah* Judaism is not a conceptual religion, but rather its essence is the observance and the study of the *Torah*.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos* based on the verse quoted earlier: There is an obligation to recite a blessing after one is satisfied from a meal. “How do

we know that one also has an obligation to recite a blessing before one eats?”

Gemara based on the principle of *Kal V’Chomer* (one of the methodologies of interpreting the *Torah*): If one is obligated to bless *Hashem* when one is sated, is it not logical to say that one must acknowledge Him before he eats when he is hungry?

Reb Meir Simcha of *Dvinsk zt’l*: The grace after meals is a *Torah* obligation while the blessing recited before eating is only rabbinical. If the obligation of reciting a blessing after eating is derived through the principle of *Kal V’Chomer* (which is a *Torah* principle), shouldn’t the pre-blessing be considered a *Torah* obligation also?

Reb Meir Simcha: There is a fallacy in the cogency of the *Kal V’Chomer* and therefore it is not valid. The reason why the *Torah* obligates one to acknowledge *Hashem* after one is satisfied is because it is the tendency of a human being to forget *Hashem* when he is in a state of complacency. When a person is not needy but feels content and secure, his tendency is to reject *Hashem* and attribute all that he has to his own accomplishment. Because of this human vulnerability, the *Torah* obligates one to immediately acknowledge the source of his satiation in order to counter one’s natural tendency. However, when one is hungry and insecure he naturally understands that he needs *Hashem*. Therefore, the *Torah* does not obligate him at that time to identify his source of sustenance; thus, the blessing that precedes eating is only rabbinical.

Rambam: The obligation of *tefilla* (prayer) is Biblical. This *Torah* obligation is to pray to *Hashem* once a day using the format of: introductory blessings (praise and glorification), middle segment of requests, and concluding segment to give thanks to *Hashem* for all that He has provided us. However, rabbinically we are obligated to pray (*Amidah*) three times a day; morning (*Shachris*), afternoon (*Mincha*), and evening (*Arvis*). The question is – why did the Rabbis of Blessed Memory feel it necessary to enact an two additional prayer services within one twenty-four hour period.

Rambam: If one omits the middle section of “requests” from the *Amidah* he has not fulfilled his *Torah* obligation of *tefilla*. The question is – if *tefilla* is acknowledgment of who G-d is and recognition that all that we receive

is from Him, then why is it that if one omits the middle section of requests does he not fulfill his obligation of *tefilla*? The answer is – if one omits the section of requests from his *tefilla*, it is the equivalent of behaving as if He is not needed. If in fact G-d is the provider, then how do we not beseech Him for our needs?

At the beginning of prayer one may have acknowledged G-d's greatness, however, if "requests" are omitted regarding his own existence, whether it is for health or livelihood, it is like saying that G-d does not play a role. Therefore it is not sufficient only to acknowledge who G-d is but rather one must request G-d to address all of his needs. If one does not do this it is the equivalent of saying, "My strength and the might of my hand has made me all this wealth!"

Understanding human nature, the Rabbis felt it necessary to obligate one to pray three times a day. Regardless of one's success or failure at any particular period of the day, one must acknowledge that the determining factor is whether G-d wishes to provide or not. If one does not have the anchor of *tefilla* on an ongoing basis throughout the day, then one could be easily swept away by the successes of daily life and cause him to forget about *Hashem*. If we are continuously cognizant and understand that everything emanates from Him then we will never forget *Hashem* or our need of His Kindness.

When will the Jewish People be Esteemed by the Nations of the World?

(from Va'eschanan)

Moshe: "See, I have taught you *Chukim* (statutes) and *Mishpatim* (Ordinances)... You shall safeguard (*Shmartem*) and perform them, for it is your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the peoples, who shall hear these statutes and who shall say, 'Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation!'" *Chukim* (Statutes) are laws that are not based on rational human thinking but are derived from Divine decrees. For example, dietary laws, *Shatnez* (not wearing a garment made of wool and linen), the law of the Red Heifer etc, are statutes. *Mishpatim* (Ordinances) are rational laws the value of which one is able to comprehend. Even if these laws were not dictated by G-d, very possibly they would have been promulgated by man anyway.

Moshe Rabbeinu told the Jewish people that if they want to be esteemed by the world and be viewed as wise and discerning, they must be proficient in the laws of the *Torah* as well as abide by them. If the Jew is consistent with the *Torah* in his personal life then the world will esteem him. However, if the Jew lives his life just like society as a whole, even though it may be ethical and moral, he will not be esteemed by the world. In fact, ultimately the world will despise him because he is not living his life as a Jew is meant to – according to the dictates of the *Torah*.

At the beginning of the twentieth century *Reb Meir Simcha* of Dvinsk *zt'l* predicted in his commentary on *Bechukosai* (the Portion that describes the curses that will befall the Jewish people if they deviate from the pathways of the *Torah*), that the holocaust will originate in Berlin because the Jews of Germany referred to Berlin as "Jerusalem". The reason he gave for his understanding was that the Jews were behaving no differently than German society. The gentile does not want to see the Jew outpacing him in his own ways. When the Jew lives a life that is consistent with *Torah* values and laws, *Hashem* says that the nations of the world will esteem him; however, if he does not live according to the dictates of the *Torah*, then ultimately holocaust will come.

The verse states that when the nations of the world will hear of the Statutes that the Jewish people abide by, they will respond by saying, "Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation!" The question is why will the nations of the world be impressed when they see the Jews living within the context of laws that seem to be humanly irrational and without any relevance to human comprehension? On the surface, *Mishpatim* (Ordinances), such as the prohibitions against stealing and killing etc, seem to be rooted in humanitarianism, because they are logical and necessary to maintain order in society.

On the other hand, *Chukim* (Statutes) which are laws that cannot be understood by the human mind are kept only because they were commanded by G-d. Yet, this is not the case. The basis for *Mishpatim* is no different then the basis for *Chukim*. The reason why the Jew does not kill or steal is not because it is immoral or unethical - but because G-d said "You Shall not Kill and You Shall not Steal." This is what makes these acts unethical and immoral.

In essence there is no difference between *Chukim* and *Mishpatim*. The basis for both is the Will of *Hashem*. We refrain from killing not because it is “inhuman” to kill, but rather because G-d commanded us not to kill. If humanism was the reason for the prohibition against killing, then one could justify euthanasia as a correct and proper way to end one’s life. However, since “Thou Shall not Kill” is rooted in the Word of G-d, regardless of one’s justification, it is considered murder.

If we observe the *Mishpatim* for the same reason that we observe *Chukim*, solely because G-d commanded us to do so and not because of our own subjective reasons, then there is no basis or circumstance that will allow one to justify compromise. If the Jew adheres to the *Torah* and lives his life in this manner, then the nations of the world will esteem him. If the Jew however is corrupted because of his conflict of interest and compromises the truth of the *Torah*, then the world will despise him because falsehood is not something to be esteemed. We, the Jewish people are not esteemed by the world by mimicking and imitating its values and lifestyles. This will only occur when we are proficient in *Torah* and observe its Statutes and Ordinances, because G-d commanded us to do so.

The Forecasting of Our Destruction is in Essence of Our Survival (from Va’eschanan)

Torah Portion read on *Tisha B’Av*: “You will be for a long time in the land and you will become corrupted (idolaters). When you will do evil in the Eyes of *Hashem*, your G-d, He will become Angered and Heaven and Earth will be witnesses that I (G-d) will destroy you.”

Rashi citing the *Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: “You will be for a long time in the land” alludes to the fact that the Jewish people would go into exile after 852 years. However, he continues that the Jews actually went into exile two years earlier than this. He says that had they remained in the land for 852 years, *Hashem* would have destroyed them. As the verse states, “You will be destroyed quickly from the land.”

Rashi quoting from *Daniel*: “*Hashem* was diligent to bring about the evil (the exile) that he brought upon us because *Hashem*, our G-d, is a *Tzaddik*.” Meaning, it was because of the righteousness of *Hashem* that we went into exile two years earlier.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: How could *Hashem* be considered a *tzaddik* for exiling the people from the Land of Israel sooner rather than later? At the time of the First Bais HaMikdash (First Temple) there were a number of exiles which led up to the final one when the Jews were driven out of the Land of Israel. When the exile of *Tzidkiyahu*, the King of *Yehudah*, took place, the previous exile of *Yechanya* was still in effect. Meaning, that the people of the first banishment were still alive in Babylon when the people of the second one arrived.

Verse in Kings: There was a group of sages exiled with *Yechanya* who were of a great *Torah* dimension. When they would speak, people would listen and accept their words as if they were “deaf mutes”. When these same *Torah* sages would give a *halachic* ruling it would be the final word and no one would debate the issue any longer. If the second exile had been delayed for another two years, these special *Torah* sages would have already passed away. Consequently, the Jews who followed would not have been exposed to people of this dimension, resulting in the spiritual destruction of the Jewish people.

Therefore, when *Hashem* brought about the destruction of the Temple two years earlier, which resulted in the exile, it was a blessing. When the *Torah* tells us that if the Jews would have been in the Land for the numerical value of 852 years, and they would have “been destroyed quickly from the Land” does not mean physical destruction, but rather spiritual destruction. Ultimately this would have cast the Jewish people into oblivion.

The essence of the Jewish people is the *Torah*. If they are not connected to G-d through His *Torah*, then it is only a matter of time before they wither and die. Thus, *Hashem* is referred to as a “*tzaddik*”. We see from this that punishment is not restricted only to the physical. To be put into a state of spiritual dislocation is also punishment. If the Jew is spiritually cut off then it is the equivalent of his annihilation.

Chazal: “An evil person during his lifetime is considered as dead.” This is why the Prophet states, “*Hashem* is a *Tzaddik* for hastening the destruction.” The Jews who immigrated to America and sacrificed for the sake of *Torah* by not working on the *Shabbos* are the for-bearers of the *Torah* community of today. On the other hand, those who did not sacrifice for

their Judaism have been left with descendants that may not even be Jewish. If a person understands the value and importance of the *mitzvos* and the study of *Torah*, then whatever “sacrifices” that may be needed will not be perceived as hardships.

Mishna: “The reward of a *mitzvah* cannot be given in this existence” because the value of a *mitzvah* is eternal. Despite the exiles and the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people, *Hashem* promised us that the *Torah* will never be forgotten from the Jewish people.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: Even if *Hashem* has to install a king whose decrees are as harsh as those of *Haman*, He will do so to compel the Jew to do *teshuvah* (repentance). There are circumstances in which it may appear that the Jews are experiencing great tragedies or hardships;

Chazal based on the verse in Prophets: What is perceived as tragedy is in fact the greatest gift. As it is stated, “*Hashem* is a *tzaddik* for expediting the exile.” Similarly, there are many situations which we perceive as tragedy or hardship, but in time to come it will be revealed to us that they were the source of our greatest blessing.



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