

LampLighter

17 Av
Eikev
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion opens with an unusual expression: "Eikev ("if" or "because") you listen to these laws..." Instead of the more common word "im" to denote "if," the Torah uses the word "eikev," which means "heel."

According to the Torah commentator, Rashi, eikev alludes to the "simple mitzvot (commandments) usually trampled underfoot" - those mitzvot whose importance is sometimes denigrated.

Rashi's explanation is based on a Midrash which states: "These are the simple commandments that people are not always careful to keep; they toss them under their heels."

The Midrash is not referring to a person who considers these mitzvot to be trivial, G-d forbid, or who scorns them intentionally. Rather, the Midrash refers to a Jew who accepts that these mitzvot must be observed and who endeavors to keep them, yet keeps postponing their observance until they are "tossed under the heel."

Such a person is likely to divide G-d's commandments into categories, according to what he perceives as important.

To him, the "important" mitzvot are the "head" and must take priority. "Let me first observe the 'important' mitzvot perfectly," he says, "then I'll start with the others." The simplest mitzvot are left for last. According to this way of thinking, the Jew does not demand of himself a level of conduct that is "within the letter of the law" until he considers himself to have mastered the "important" mitzvot.

What is the consequence of such an outlook? When this person is asked to love every single Jew - including those he does not know personally - he replies, "How can you ask that of me? It's hard for me to love people I do know! How can you expect me to extend it to Jews I've never met?"

When pressed to observe mitzvot even more scrupulously than is required he replies, "No! There's got to be a certain sequence in observing mitzvot. Demanding that I do more than the basics is like asking me to walk in the street barefoot while wearing a beautiful tie around my neck! You've got to start at the beginning and work your way up."

While these arguments may sound logical at face value, they are nothing but the counsel of the evil inclination.

In truth, the foundation of a Jew's G-dly service is his faith; it is predicated on the acceptance of the yoke of heaven, not on intellectual arguments or rationalizations.

The function of the mitzvot is to connect us to G-d. Every mitzva that a Jew observes strengthens his bond with G-d, regardless of whether it is an "important" commandment or a "simple" one, i.e., related to the "head" or to the "heel."

If any mitzva allows us to draw nearer to G-d and unite with Him, why not do it immediately?

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Unsatisfied or Unfulfilled?

By Lazer Gurkow

"And He afflicted you; He made you hunger and He fed you the manna" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

To describe the manna experience as one of hunger and affliction seems a bit curious. What does the Torah have in mind?

Two Groups

This question is best addressed by the following parable. A great rabbi delivered a deep lecture and presented an entirely new approach to the study of Talmud. Among the students, there were two groups who walked away unsatisfied.

To the first group, the new insight opened a host of new possibilities, and they were left unsatisfied with their previous understanding. They returned to their books to study again. To the second group, listening to a lecture of such depth felt like a waste of time, for they could barely grasp it.

The manna which our ancestors ate in the desert was a material food of spiritual quality. It was not digested in the conventional manner, nor did it have the aesthetic appearance and appetizing texture that we associate with the experience of food. Eating manna was more nourishment of soul than of body, and many Jews were left unsatisfied.

Two Hungers

There were those who could not relate to the spiritual fulfillment and craved the pleasure of material food; they were left physically "afflicted" and "hungry." Others related to the spirituality so well that they found themselves unsatisfied and wanting more. They were left spiritually "afflicted and hungry."

The same concept holds true today with regards to prayer and Torah study. There are those who find prayer monotonous and boring and are completely oblivious to the spirituality inherent in prayer. The prayer experience leaves them feeling deprived and spiritually barren.

Others arrive at services eager to "commune with G-d." However, when their meditations allow them a glimpse of an even greater sphere that is as of yet beyond them, they, too, walk away unsatisfied and yearn for more.

The difference between the two groups is that the first is left demoralized and uninspired. The latter receive an encouraging boost that raises them to the next level.

Fortunate are those who belong to the second group of G-d's "unsatisfied customers."



The Girl with the Gold Watch

By Chana Weisberg

Toronto, 2004

I glance hurriedly at my wristwatch on this busy Friday afternoon and I'm reminded of a story about a watch from another land and generation.

My young daughter notices my far-off expression. I begin to describe to her a different time when my own mother, Rebbetzin Batsheva Sudak-Schochet — her grandmother — was a youngster, not much older than she.

"In that foreign land, observing Shabbat was not as simple as it is today, a matter of just adding an extra potato to the simmering pot of cholent," I explain while peeling potatoes. "For Savta, keeping Shabbat was a perilous practice — one that could cost dearly."

I begin to tell her of a time when the moments ticking on a wristwatch might have marked the very gift of life...

Samarkand, 1943

The sounds of footsteps did not bode well for the young Sudak family, gathered around their Shabbat table. Adjacent to their home stood their underground soap factory. The factory was illegal in the Soviet Union and its discovery could mean instant imprisonment, being sent to the front, or languishing in frigid Siberia for years.

But, as dangerous as it was, the factory also spelled the Sudak's salvation, providing their sustenance while allowing them to avoid working on Shabbat. In those days of the Communist Party's all-out war on religion, observing Shabbat was not only an unheard of luxury that no employer would tolerate — it was a literal death sentence.

Rabbi Pinchas Sudak had taken all possible precautions to ensure that the factory's entrance was well hidden from any prying or meddling eyes, covered over by large planks of wood. But the approaching footsteps sounded like they knew where they were headed.

Someone had informed the authorities.

To the harsh sounds of wood being ripped apart, Pinchas and Batya made quick deliberations.

"Pinchas, run away," Batya ordered. "If they arrest you, you will surely be sent to the front. I will remain with the children, vehemently denying that the factory belongs to me. Hopefully, the penalty will not be as grave for me and they will have compassion for a lone mother with young children.

"Go now. Run, Pinchas!"

Pinchas gazed one last time at his beloved wife, before hastily leaping off the high wall surrounding their home. With a prayer in his heart that he would again be reunited with his family, Pinchas fled, racing to avoid detection and capture, his heart beating wildly.

Batya was promptly led off to prison, leaving her oldest child, eleven-year old Batsheva, to tend to her own fear and that of her two younger siblings, Nachman and Bracha.

But there wasn't the luxury of tears or fright. It was time for action.

Batsheva received a message via a family friend to immediately try to meet with her mother's interrogator, a cold-hearted female prosecutor who would determine the outcome of the case and who therefore held the keys to her mother's freedom.

"Tell her that your mother does not own the factory. Your father is in the army fighting valiantly for Mother Russia. The man who ran away was your mother's Polish friend who was helping the family make ends meet. He got the family into this illegal mess, while your mother is innocent," Batsheva was instructed.

With the heavy Communist indoctrination in the school system, officials tended to believe young children who, often enough, would succumb to the brainwashing they underwent and convict their own parents for "crimes" committed against the State.

Though only a youth, Batsheva understood her grave responsibility and its sweeping implications. With immense faith and a heartfelt prayer on her lips, she squared her slight, young shoulders and confidently went to meet the prosecutor.

Batsheva convincingly told her tale and tearfully concluded, "Please, I miss her so much. I want my mother back!"

The prosecutor was touched by this attractive and personable young girl. "I'll see what I can do," she replied coolly.

The following day, Batsheva received a new message from her anxious father. "Go upstairs, into your mother's room, and open her drawer. You'll find an expensive gold watch. This time, go to the prosecutor's home. Tell her you want to present her with this gift. Don't ask for anything in return; just explain to her that you want to see your mother."

Batsheva did as instructed. For the next few days, she kept a vigilant watch in front of the prison. She was able to see her mother sitting outside on the cold ground, in a fenced-

in area of the prison. She brought a coat for her to keep warm and daily delivered kosher food for her to eat.

Though it was comforting to see her mother, it was painful to see her behind bars in such woeful conditions. Those were difficult days for such a young girl, filled with intense anxiety about the future fate of her parents and family.

After two weeks, to Batsheva's delight, her mother walked out of the prison door, a free woman. The prosecutor had closed the case, recording that the owner of the illegal factory was a Polish man who had fled upon its detection.

Pinchas remained in hiding. The plan was that Batya and her children would leave Samarkand shortly and the family would be reunited in far-off Tashkent.

Several weeks before their departure, on a Friday afternoon, as she was walking from her mother's house, Batsheva happened to meet up with the prosecutor. The woman, who had taken a liking to Batsheva, amicably told her that she had "another case on this street."

Having grown up in the Soviet Union, Batsheva understood the veiled meaning of her words. "A case" could only bode dangerously for her people. Immediately she informed her uncle. He ran ahead to the home of Rabbi Binyamin Gorodetsky, who lived on that street, and warned him of the imminent danger. R' Binyamin exited through his back door and raced to inform his brother, R' Simchah, of the peril.

R' Binyamin escaped, and eventually left Russia to settle in Paris. Unfortunately, his brother didn't heed the warning and was imprisoned for ten long years.

Two weeks later, on a Friday morning before the Sudaks' departure from Samarkand, Batsheva was walking from her grandmother's home and once again met the prosecutor.

"I'll be making an arrest," she matter-of-factly informed Batsheva.

Batsheva ran to the home of her uncle, R' Yisroel Leibov, but he dismissed her warning, thinking that a young girl couldn't possibly be privy to such information.

Late that night, Batsheva's aunt was arrested and her passport confiscated.

Early the next morning, a pale and tense R' Yisroel entered the Sudak home, asking Batsheva to bring some jewelry to the prosecutor. To the relief of the family, Batsheva was, once again, able to secure her aunt's release.

In the darkness of night, at the close of Shabbat, the Sudaks left Samarkand to make the long journey for Tashkent. Over three hundred kilometers away, they hoped that the long arm of the Soviet secret police wouldn't follow them.

But that is a whole other story. Not one to be told on a busy Friday afternoon....

Conscious of the approaching Shabbat, I pause to glance down at my wrist. A young girl... a gold watch... the holy day of rest... and the indomitable spirit and invincible faith of our people.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Peace and Harmony

Purim-Koton, 5719 [1959]

Sholom u'Brocho [Peace and Blessing]:

I duly received your letter, and this is in reply to your questions:

- a. Whether you should insist on having the Chuppah [wedding canopy] 'outside.'

No doubt you mean having the Chuppah under the sky, which is the important thing, and this can often be done inside, since many halls have a retractable, or removable roof so that the Chuppah can indeed be under the sky.

I trust you will not have to 'insist' very much but that this will be readily acceptable, for having the Chuppah under the sky is something which is connected with Mazzel [good fortune]. In as much as the question concerns marriage, which makes the foundation for the everlasting edifice (Binyan adei-ad) a happy home; surely everything should be done to fulfil all the aspects which are connected with Mazzel at the time of the Chuppah, and this is one of them, as is stated in many holy books.

- b. On the matter of disagreement regarding furniture.

Generally speaking, in matters connected with the house furniture and furnishing and the like, the matters which our Sages call the 'mundane' aspects, one should consider the wishes of the future housewife. At the same time, it is clearly a matter of good sense not to get involved in debts which may be difficult to meet afterwards, all the more so as you have to undertake mortgage obligations, etc., as you write.

- c. With regard conduct becoming a Yeshivah Bochor [student], etc.

The thing to keep in mind is that your conduct is bound to have an immediate influence on the conduct of your entire home, especially that of your wife, the Akeres Habayis [the foundation of the home]. The father and husband sets the tone for the others to follow. In practice, when one tries to emulate someone else, even with the utmost effort, it rarely comes up to the full 100%. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct oneself so that after making allowances the copy not fall too short of the original, so that at least the minimum requirement of the Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law] (even without Hiddurim [enhancements]) would be fulfilled.

This should be your guiding principle also, and even more so, in your meeting with other people, especially in your teaching position, and general standing in the congregation and community.

Referring specifically to the question of going to certain places of amusement, in view of the fact (in addition to the above considerations) that you have told your fiancée that you will discontinue this, you should bear in mind that if you do not practice as you preach, it will not only display a weakness on your part in matters of Yiras Shomaim [fear of heaven], but your fiancée will consider it a precedent to further concessions and liberties in this direction.

- d. You ask my advice as to how to ensure mutual peace and harmony in married life.

As you know, the Torah is the key to it, as it is written, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." In matters of the Torah pleasantness should be coupled with firmness, especially in such fundamental aspects of marriage as Taharas Hamishpocho [the laws of Family Purity], and all other things of Torah and Mitzvoth [commandments] which the Torah requires with the utmost stringency. Yet, it is this very stringent observance that ensures the pleasantness and peace of married life, while capitulation or concession even 'temporarily' in these matters, 'in the interests of peace,' can only have lasting contrary effects.

Nowadays, environment and the people one mixes with, have a considerable effect on one's personal conduct and the conduct of the home. Therefore, one should always seek the company and environment of only such real friends as have a beneficial and encouraging influence in all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, and introduce your fiancée into a similar environment.

With blessing,

A MITZVA A DAY

Positive Commandment 38: *Marriage of a High Priest*

The High Priest's position was very special. He was the only one ever allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. Therefore, the Torah established special guidelines for everything he does. Regarding his marriage, the Torah commands that his bride may not have been previously married. This is learned out from the passage: "He must marry a maiden" (Leviticus 21:13).

A WORD from the Director

This Shabbat we will study the fourth chapter of Ethics of the Fathers, in which a saying is attributed to Rabbi Elazar Hakapar: "Envy, desire, and seeking honour drive a man from the world." An envious person is troubled if he is not as rich or successful as his neighbour. It eats him up; he is consumed by jealousy.

A person who is driven by desire allows his evil inclination to lure him from one physical pleasure to the next. But the evil inclination is insatiable.

A person who seeks undue honour and recognition craves a sense of power over others.

Our Rabbis explain that these three negative character traits prevent an individual from developing and growing as a person. Chasidic philosophy, however, adds another dimension to our understanding:

What is holiness? Holiness is nullification before G-d. Conversely, the opposite of holiness is the perception of self. For example, the more Maimonides learned Torah and delved into the significance of the Divine commandments, the more awe of G-d he experienced and humble he became. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, by contrast, grew increasingly arrogant along with his knowledge.

We may legitimately ask, why did G-d create human beings capable of manifesting such character traits? In fact, the potential to yearn for or crave something is not necessarily bad; our task as Jews is to take this natural potential and channel it towards positive, holy matters. This, in essence, is the totality of the Jew's Divine service: to utilize all of his inborn, G-d-given talents and abilities in the pursuit of ever-higher levels of holiness and sanctity.

So it's okay to be jealous - as long as we're jealous of someone's positive character traits or Torah knowledge and resolve to acquire them for ourselves.

J.I. Gutnick

MOSHIACH MATTERS

When the (Previous) Lubavitcher Rebbe proclaimed: "L'alter l'teshuva, l'alter l'Geula" (immediately to repentance, immediately to Redemption), he did so with great publicity; everyone knew that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was speaking very strongly about Moshiach's coming. Once, two Jews were riding the subway train, and they passed the station near the Rebbe's house. Said one to the other, "This is where the Lubavitcher Rebbe lives!" "And who are the Lubavitchers?" asked his companion. The first responded, "They are the 'wild ones,' Jews who actually believe in Moshiach!" (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, 1953*)

It Happened Once...



There was once a person who lived in the vicinity of the Baal Shem Tov. Because of his all-consuming pride, he decided to become an ascetic, and in that way, attract to himself a following of as many admirers as the Besht [Baal Shem Tov] had.

To that end he wore only white garments, fasted interminably, and tortured his body by rolling around in the ice and snow.

Imagine his disappointment when, in spite of all his attempts, he in fact attracted no following at all.

He decided to visit the court of the Baal Shem Tov to see where it was that he had failed. What did the Besht have that he lacked that caused thousands to flock to him?

He made his presence known to all the Chasidim and tried to gain their friendship. But they easily saw beneath his pious exterior and rebuffed all his advances.

Before he took his leave of the Besht, the man managed to gain entrance to the presence of the tzadik.

The Besht took the man by the shoulder and said to him, "Come outside with me for a minute. Do you see that horse over there tied to the post?"

His garments — white; his food — hay; his bed — straw; and in winter, he, too, rolls in the snow. But in spite of all of this, he will always remain a horse."

A simple Chasid once approached the tzadik, Reb Bunim of Pshischa. "It is written in our holy books that if one fasts a certain number of days, one will have a revelation of Elijah the Prophet.

Now I have fasted many, many days — exactly what is prescribed in the texts — and still I haven't had the revelation. What have I done wrong?"

Reb Bunim said to the Chasid, "I will explain it to you by means of a parable I heard in the name of the Baal Shem Tov.

It is known that when the Besht travelled in his coach he covered extraordinary amounts of territory in an impossibly short period of time. But, you see, he used the coach only for the sake of appearing to operate in a normal fashion. The reality was that he travelled by miraculous means — kefitzat haderech — supernaturally contracting distance. One time he was on a journey, and, as usual, he was covering an enormous expanse in no time at all. The two horses that were flying before the coach began to think. Said one horse to the other, "Look, we are passing by all the usual rest-stops without ever stopping; when do you suppose they will feed us?"

The other agreed. "You're right. All along the road, I see carriages stopped off to the side where the horses are treated to some water or oats. Only we have to continue racing on non-stop like lightning. I wonder when we will finally be able to stop?"

Then the first exclaimed, "I think I've figured out the answer! Maybe we're not horses after all! Maybe we're actually human beings, and that's why we don't stop very often, for people can go longer periods without eating and drinking."

"I have to congratulate you on your conclusion! I bet you're right. Let's wait and see what happens when we reach the next inn. If we come to a place where people stop to rest and eat, and we're given some supper, then we'll know."

So the horses continued their unnatural pace, which they accomplished with little effort or exertion. They passed inns, hotels and taverns, but they did not stop. The first horse again spoke to his companion:

"Well, we haven't stopped anywhere on the way to rest or partake of a bite to eat. I suppose we aren't human beings after all. Maybe we're angels in disguise."

"You know, I think you must be right! We must be angels, because angels don't need to rest or to eat. I'm so happy that you have figured that out!" And the two horses dashed on with renewed strength.

They continued until their master, the Baal Shem Tov, ordered them to halt. They had stopped in front of an inn where they were immediately taken to the stable and given an ample amount of hay.

When the two horses saw the delicious-looking hay, they began eating as if they were starved.

Reb Bunim concluded his parable:

"This story refers to one who sits and fasts; even if he continues his fasting for weeks on end. It may be that he will even convince himself that he is an angel. But how does that person end his fast? If he pounces on his food like a horse, then he has remained the same horse as he had been before."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

And [He] will bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your land, your grain and your wine and your oil (Deut. 7:13)

The Torah specifically mentions grain, wine and oil, for they are the mainstay of man's sustenance. (*Ibn Ezra*)

Then your heart will be lifted up (Deut. 8:14)

Humility is not enumerated among the Torah's 613 commandments; if being humble were considered a mitzva, many Jews would rush to observe it in the most beautiful manner possible, with the end result being pride in just how humble they are! (*The Baal Shem Tov*)

With 70 persons...as the stars of the heaven for multitude (Deut. 10:22)

This verse begins and ends with the Hebrew letter beit, alluding to Jacob's exhortation to his children that they remain attached and devoted to their households ("beit" means "house" in Hebrew) and not assimilate amongst the Egyptians. It is for this reason that the Jews are known as "Beit Yaakov—the House of Jacob." (*Baal HaTurim*)

And you turn aside, and serve other gods (Deut. 11:16)

The Baal Shem Tov taught: As soon as a Jew "turns aside," i.e., moves away from his attachment to G-d, he is automatically considered to be "serving other gods," engaged in idol worship. For the Jew, there is no middle ground. Either he is connected to G-d, or connected to the pleasures of this world. (*Tzeva'at HaRibash*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHASEIKEV 18 AV • 8 AUGUST

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:19 PM
	MINCHA:	5:30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:00 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:18 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN – FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	5:30 PM
	MAARIV:	6:25 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 7 AUGUST 2009



BEGINS	ENDS
5:19 MELBOURNE	6:18
5:20 ADELAIDE	6:17
5:04 BRISBANE	5:58
6:23 DARWIN	7:14
5:02 GOLD COAST	6:00
5:26 PERTH	6:22
5:01 SYDNEY	5:58
5:05 LAUNCESTON	6:07
5:21 AUCKLAND	6:20
5:13 WELLINGTON	6:14
5:07 CANBERRA	6:05

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

זצוקללה"ה נב"מ זי"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty
to redeem His people speedily in our days.