

Kindert Torah

Parashas Eikev

ד'בס

Dedicated in Loving Memory of Chaya Rochel (Karen) Portnoy o"n

Your Credit is Good

"How much is the bill Bernice?"

"Three hundred and fifty seven shekels, Mrs. Meshulem."

"Please put it on my tab."

"With pleasure, Mrs. Meshulem."

Mrs. Meshulem picks up four huge sacks full of groceries and begins leaving the store. An *olah chadasha* (newcomer to the Land of Israel) looks on, wide-eyed with disbelief. She approaches Mrs. Meshulem.

"I am new in this country. Do you mind if I ask you something?"

"Not at all. But first let me welcome you to the Holy Land."

"Thank you very much. Is this shop keeper really letting you walk out of here without paying for all of these groceries?"

"Yes. She lets me shop on credit."

"What stops you from running away and not paying your bill?"

Mrs. Meshulem thinks for a moment and then answers.

"Three things. Number one, not paying constitutes stealing, which is a very serious sin. Number two, when I pay my bill, the shopkeeper learns to trust me. Therefore, she will give me credit the next time that I shop here. Number three, the shopkeeper can now confidently order more supplies, knowing that the customers will pay. This keeps the store going, which is a great service for all of us."



This is a parable from Rav Yaakov Krantz, who is known to us as the Dubno Maggid. The verse in this week's parasha states, "And you will eat and you will be satisfied, and you will bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He gave you" (Devarim 8:10). To whom does this good land belong? The verse states, "The land and its fullness is Hashem's" (Tehillim 24:1). However, a different verse seemingly contradicts. "The heavens are Hashem's and the land He has given to man" (Tehillim 115:16). The Gemora (Berachos 35a) resolves this contradiction. Before the *bracha* (blessing), the land and its fruits belong to Hashem. After the blessing, it belongs to us; therefore, we may eat the fruits. This concept goes so far, that one who takes pleasure from this world without blessing Hashem is considered stealing from Him and from the Jewish people. How do we explain this? The answer gives us a fascinating insight

into the deep meaning of *brachot*. The Shela explains that each *bracha* has a tremendous influence in the Heavenly realm and in our world. A *bracha* has an effect in Heaven, which translates to a blessing of abundance of that type of fruit in the coming year. Therefore, a person who eats with no *bracha*, or makes the wrong *bracha*, steals from others by preventing the blessings of sustenance from coming down to this world. He also steals from Hashem by not allowing Him (so to speak) to shower the world with His kindness.

Hashem is like the storekeeper, who extends us credit, by giving us food to eat. On one condition - that we pay by blessing Him. When we pay our bill, He can continue to provide us with an abundant food supply.

Kindertlach . . .

We all know that one of the purposes of a *bracha* is to thank Hashem for the food that He gives us. That is simple *derech erez*, to thank the One Who provides for you. Now we see that *berachos* have a deeper meaning. They reach to the very Heavens, bringing Hashem's kindness down to this world. Make your *berachos* carefully and deliberately, *kindertlach*. They bring good things to Hashem, others, and you.



The Foundation

"Avi, can you come here please?"

"Yes, Abba."

"Avi you look like you are limping. What happened?"

"I hurt myself, Abba. I stepped on a thorn and it went into the heel of my foot. I took it out but my heel is still sore."

"Oy vey. *Refuah shelayma* (May you have a complete recovery). The heel is a critical part of your body. You stand upon it. If it is hurt, your whole body is affected."

"I feel it, Abba."

"I will tell you a Devar Torah that may make you feel better, Avi. First sit down and take the pressure off your heel."

"Thank you, Abba."

"The parasha begins with the words, '*Vi'hoya eikev tishmiun.*' 'It will be if you heed these laws, safeguard, and perform them; Hashem your G-d will safeguard you...He will love you, bless you, and multiply you...' (Devarim 7:12-16). Moshe Rabbeinu describes the great blessings that Klal Yisrael will receive for observing the mitzvos."

"Wonderful, Abba."

"The word '*eikev*' has a second meaning, Avi - heel. The Noam Elimelech quotes our sages (Yalkut Shemoni Tehillim remez 870). 'Just as Hashem made wisdom a crown on man's head, He made humility the bottom of his foot, as the verse states, 'Fear of Hashem comes from humbly lowering oneself'" (Mishlei 22:4). Humility is the source and root of everything that is holy. It is the foundation of all Avodas Hashem (Divine Service). That is why the word '*eikev*' (heel) is used when describing humility. Just as the body stands on its foundation - the heel, so too all of a person's deeds must stand on the foundation of humility."

"What a beautiful thought."

"That is how we understand the verse, 'It will be if you heed these laws...' (Devarim 7:12). All of these laws must be clothed with humility. 'And you will safeguard them and perform them.' Performing them refers to the physical action of the mitzvah. Safeguarding them refers to the pure thoughts at the time of the mitzvah. Which thoughts? Humility. We must be thinking, 'It is a privilege to serve you, Hashem. I hope that I am worthy of it.'"

"May we all be worthy of it."

Kindertlach . . .

When you have a chance, observe how a humble person conducts himself. He dresses humbly, not flashy. He walks, sits, and stands humbly, never showing his greatness. He talks humbly, not mentioning himself or his accomplishments, rather attributing everything to Hashem. He learns humbly, listening to his *chavrusa* (study partner). His only goal is understanding the Devar (Word of) Hashem. He respects his teachers, parents, and elders. Every one of his thoughts and actions shows deference to his Creator. As Avi and his father said, "It is a privilege to serve you, Hashem. May we all be worthy of it."