

Parshat Eikev: All the Mitzva

Based on a shiur by Mrs. Chana Prero

Chapter 8:1 states "Kol hamitzva asher anochi metzavcha hayom tishmerun la'asos. All the mitzva that I command you today, you should keep to fulfill." What mitzva is Moshe referring to? The following verses command the Jewish People to remember their experiences in the desert. Is this the mitzva Moshe refers to in verse 1? Additionally, why does he say "the entire mitzva" or "all the mitzva?" If he is referring to a specific mitzva, he does not need to say "entire." If he is referring to many mitzvot, then he should have said "all the mitzvot." All refers to many; mitzva is singular. Why the inconsistent grammar?

Rashi responds in two ways: The pshat, basic explanation, and a midrashic, or homiletical interpretation. The basic explanation is that when Moshe says "mitzva", he refers to all the mitzvot. Sometimes the Torah refers to many in the singular form, perhaps because the parts are all connected. We should read the verse, "All the mitzvot that I command you today, you should keep to fulfill." The midrashic interpretation is that the word kol does not mean all – it means entire. Moshe is commanding the Jewish People to complete any mitzva they begin. In order to get credit for a mitzva, one must do the entire mitzva.

Ohr HaChayim explains that people frequently do not fulfill all the mitzvot that they are commanded to do. Sometimes this stems from

a belief that if I am good at a specific mitzva, I do not have to focus on other mitzvot, especially ones that seem unimportant. Moshe wants to combat this wrong philosophy, so he repeatedly warns the Jewish People to keep all the mitzvot. In our verse, he calls the entire Torah one mitzva, so that no one will mistakenly think, I don't have to fulfill some mitzvot. Just like I understand that I am supposed to do an entire mitzva, I should understand that all the mitzvot in the Torah are connected. If I don't fulfill some of the ones that I can, then it is as if I did not complete one mitzva.

Malbim agrees that "all the mitzva" refers to the entire Torah. He explains that people have asked why G-d gave the Jewish People 613 mitzvot? Weren't the seven Noachide Laws sufficient to achieve shleimut, completion?

One way people respond is that these are different ways to achieve shleimut. They explain by comparing to a sick person who goes to a doctor to get medicine. The doctor prescribes Medicine A. Then, he goes to a second doctor. This doctor prescribes several medications and tells the patient that he can choose the one he prefers. Malbim rejects this approach to the Torah. G-d is not giving us choices – to fulfill the seven Noachide Laws or the 613 mitzvot. He does not give 613 mitzvot to choose one from among them. We are commanded to fulfill them all – they are one

unit, which why Moshe refers to them in singular.

The seven Noachide Laws enable a person to attain completion in this world and allow society to function. In order to have a functioning, productive life in this world, people cannot kill, steal, serve idols, curse G-d, abuse animals, commit adultery, and they must set up a system of courts to enforce these laws.

Torah, and its 613 mitzvot, enables a person to attain a higher level of spiritual completion. One who keeps the mitzvot can cleave to G-d and attain prophesy. He or she will merit eternal satisfaction – in the World to Come, not just in this world.

Some of the mitzvot of the Torah only apply to the Land of Israel. The Malbim explains that there is an even higher level of shleimut that can only be attained in the Land of Israel. However, to attain this high level of shleimut, one must be in the land of Israel. Eretz Yisrael is suited for completion because there are many mitzvot that are unique to it.

"All the mitzva" then, explains the Malbim, is one unit – consisting of all the mitzvot –that must be fulfilled in its entirety. It is a set of commandments that bring us to a higher level of personal perfection.

Mesilat Yesharim Perfection of Thought, Speech, and Action

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

In the tenth chapter of Mesilat Yesharim, the Ramchal discusses the virtue of nekiut, cleansing one's soul of evil traits. This includes not only those sins we are aware of and acknowledge as bad, but all the sins which our heart rationalizes as permitted.

One who strives for nekiut will go beyond the letter of the law. Rav Shimon ben Shetach once purchased a donkey from an Arab. After bringing it home, he found a bag of precious stones hidden in the animal's neck. According to Jewish law he could have kept the find. The Arab wasn't aware of the stones and perhaps someone hid the bag on the donkey after Rav Shimon purchased it. But the great tzadik

refused to take it and ordered his students to return the bag. He would not gain from a possible desecration of Hashem's name. When the Arab received the find back he proclaimed, "Baruch Elohai Shimon ben Shetach."

Just as a mikvah does not purify if one is not completely immersed in the water, nekiut demands that one's entire being be pure, including one's thoughts.

Rav Yisrael Salanter once visited a small town near Vilna. When he entered the shul to pray he noticed that there was only one small bucket of water to wash. Although the Rambam writes that one must wash one's

hands before davening, Rav Salanter took very little water and some say he didn't take any at all. He worried that if he would wash generously he would force the shul attendant to bring new water from the well. He wouldn't wash his hands at the expense of another Jew. Nekiut is not just having clean hands for davening, but caring for others.

In discussing nekiut, the Mesilas Yesharim warns that one must be careful with other people's possessions. Taking something from someone without permission, even if one has in mind to return it, is stealing. The Gemara tells the story of an innkeeper whose silver cup was stolen. Shortly after the incident, Rav

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Page 1

Amram Chasida saw a Jew wipe his hand on a cloth that didn't belong to him and immediately pronounced the Jew the thief. A person who

lacks nekiut, sensitivity for another person's property, will likely steal. The Gemara says if one eats without a bracha one is considered a thief. This too is part of nekiut.

May we strive to go beyond the letter of the law, may our actions and thoughts always be pure so that we may grow in Torah, avodah, and nekiut.

Parshat Eikav: Mind and Heart United

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In Parshat Eikav, we read, "*Vayaha eikav tishmaun..*"- If you will listen to my laws, then I, Hashem will keep the promise I gave to the Avot to bring you blessing. The word "*eikav*" seems extraneous. The Shem Mishmuel brings a Midrash- one who assembles a light fixture on Shabbat is obligated to bring a Chatas sacrifice. Keeping Shabbat earns a Jew reward in this world. In contrast, the reward for other mitzvot will be "*eikev*"-at the end of time. The Shem Mishmuel follows with another Midrash about a King who gave his Queen two beautiful stones and then straight-away two more

What does the jeweled crown represent? Hashem gifted us with a heart and mind so that we could perfect our intellect and emotions to serve Hashem. Both are equally essential in developing an intellectual and emotional relationship with Hashem and the Torah. Avraham taught the Jewish people, *tzedakah u'mishpat*-mind and heart. *Tzedakah* means giving from the heart without judgement.

Mishpat employs the mind and the strict letter of the law. In return, Hashem gave us, *chesed v'rachamim*. *Chesed* is kindness beyond what the recipient deserves. *Rachamim* is a fusion of *chesed* and *din*, kindness beyond what is necessary, but in a certain sense deserved. When we sinned and perverted *tzedakah u'mishpat*, Hashem responded by taking away *chesed v'rachmim*. However, *l'assid lovo*-in the future, the Jewish people will repent and will restore *tzedakah u'mishpat* out of their own efforts. Hashem will then bring back *chesed v'rachmim*. Our spiritual struggles are continuous and our staunchest ally is Hashem who never leaves us even when we sin. So too, Hashem credits our repentance for His return to us. These are the four jewels that create the final crown of Israel.

The Shem MiShmuel explains, "*Ki ner mitzvah v'Torah Ohr*, the the lamp in the Midrash corresponds to Mitzvot and the Torah is light. A lamp contains light and both are purposeless without the other. This symbolizes the indivisi-

bility of Torah and Mitzvot and the mind and heart. During the week, a Jew struggles to unite mind and heart to serve Hashem. On Shabbat, the lamp comes together on its own, we don't build it. This signifies the sense of completion and cessation of struggle that is the gift of Shabbat. Varying people have different size lamps on Shabbat. Their size is determined by how much effort we invested during the week in the mind/heart struggle. We can experience pleasure and true eternal reward for keeping Shabbat because Shabbat is on a kind of Olam Habah plane. The reward for other mitzvot can only be "*eikev*"-at the end of time because our weekday world is too defiled to be able to feel that otherworldly connection to Hashem. Therefore it says, "*Vahaya eikev tishmaun..*" There is one mitzvah that is olam habah and olam hazeh combined. Our struggle finds completion on Shabbat. Let us merit to attain complete unification of mind and heart so that we can merit to truly experience Shabbat, a foretaste of *Yom Shekulo Shabbat*-the great Shabbat of Olam Habah