

Parshas Eikev

This week's Parsha is Eikev, which begins with: "It will be, if you heed the seemingly insignificant parts of these laws, and safeguard them and carry them out, then Hashem will keep you for his promise of the covenant and the kindness He promised to your forefathers..." In previous years, I referenced the name Eikev in relation to Yakov in various iterations. And keeping with the theme of how Devarim, which is Mishnah Torah, and finding references to Bereishis, as opposed to Shemos onwards, i.e. redemption through the giving of the Torah and the travels through the desert, there have to be references to Bereishis as well, if the Torah is being repeated by Moshe throughout Chumash Devarim. The obvious connection is the reference of Eikev to Yakov, but there is an even deeper connection.

In the first Rashi of the Parsha, he alludes to the idea that if you heed even the light Mitzvos, a person would trample on them with his heel (Eikev). This is because, for a Tzadik, even small items are considered valuable. As Rashi says in Bereishis 32:25, quoting the Gemara in Chullin 91a, he forgot his small vessels and went back to get them, because, as the Gemara said, possessions by a Tzadik are dearer to them than their bodies. Why do they care so much about their possessions? Because they don't stretch

their hands out to partake in stolen property...

Here is the connection between Moshe's repetition of the Torah in Devarim and the accompanying reference to Bereishis. That is, heeding the small Mitzvos, "pachim ketanim," as they matter to the Tzadik more than their bodies. The Gemara in Nedarim 41a says that acquiring wisdom (of Torah) is the only possession a person truly has. Just as one gets paid for their work, they acquire reward for their performance of the Mitzvos as possessions, for their reward in this world and the world to come. That means the story of Yakov going back for these "small packages" and the Gemara in Nedarim's explanation that the small items matter is how Moshe is telling the Jews to be as Jews. Sweat the small Mitzvos, don't disregard them, because in doing so, you are giving a deeper love to Hashem, and Hashem will reward you. Furthermore, by going granular and making the small items count, you are showing that Hashem, Torah and Mitzvos mean something to you in every facet, be it a grand gesture or a small action. But the small action, which takes effort and thought, takes work, and sometimes the same work as the grand gesture. Nevertheless, if you perform them and make them matter, you are showing your love, as a Tzadik does, even for the small possessions. There is a connection to the point the Gemara makes about not taking stolen handouts,

because perhaps this can be interpreted as not stealing or wasting time, or, importantly, the time gifted to us by Hashem, with our time on this earth. Even small Mitzvos and good deeds can take up your time, so it is always filled with connecting to Hashem, thinking about Hashem, and binding yourself with Hashem. Not just, as the Alter Rebbe points out in Perek 11/12 in Tanya, during Tefilla, but penetrating every facet of your life, so that good prevails over evil, and good rules over the kingdom of your body. By performing the “Pachim Ketanim”, you will uplift yourself to the level of Tzadik V’Tov Lo, or to a full Benoni, because you will, like a Tzadik, see that every part of your life is consumed and occupied with the service of Hashem. May the blessings of Hashem be revealed, so that we can collectively welcome Mashiach now.

Good Shabbos!