



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Eikev

Man is Judged by the "Little Things"

The *parashah* begins, "Ve'haya **eikev** tishma'un eis ha'mishpatim ..., And if you will hearken to the statutes..." Rashi comments that the word *eikev*, which literally means "heel," comes to hint to those mitzvot that man tramples upon with his heel. In other words, mitzvot that man considers to be minor. It is similarly stated in *Masechet Avodah Zarah* [18a], "What is the meaning of the *pasuk* [Tehillim 49], 'Sins of the heel surround me?' Sins that man trample upon with his heel surround him on the day of judgment."

Question:

1 – According to the explanations of our Sages and of Rashi, the Torah is dealing specifically with minor sins that man treads upon with his heel, and man's blessings depend upon avoiding transgressing them. At first glance, the opposite should be true – shouldn't man's blessings be dependent on taking care not to violate major transgressions?

The Way of Thinking Nowadays

The prevalent thought in society nowadays is that a very great action or a multitude of actions have value. The more grandeur that accompanies a particular action, the more publicity it garners, the more it is valued and receives larger accolades. Sometimes a particularly great deed might earn the one who performs it a badge of honor or Nobel Prize and the like. Furthermore, when people wish to appoint an individual to a public position, they look at the monumental deeds and the public service he has performed. The public recognition he has received becomes the deciding factor in determining whether he will get the position. As a result, people try to accomplish achievements that will earn them honor, and these accomplishments give them great satisfaction. The same thing applies to negative deeds. Individuals distance themselves from "larger" sins such as murder, theft, and the like, depending on what each person on his own level considers a serious sin. However the Torah teaches us that man's measuring stick is specifically the "smaller" actions. Performing great actions and refraining from enormous negative transgressions could be motivated by a number of external factors, but not because of an inner yearning to perform the Will of Hashem. Rather, they may be done to earn recognition from society. On the other hand, the public does not value smaller deeds and certainly does not grant awards for performing them. Yet if despite that, the individual performs a more minor act or refrains from violating a more minor transgression, it points to man's true greatness. This is because this act is a reflection of his inner drive to perform the Will of Hashem and not to earn honor and glory. The same thing applies to enormous sins. Every individual knows that that he must be careful not to transgress them. However, he generally does not give much thought to sins that are considered less severe in the eyes of man, those upon which he treads with his heels. It is man's responsibility to contemplate **Who** is the one Who has commanded the mitzvot and not **what** He has commanded. For the One Who has commanded the severe mitzvah and the "less severe" mitzvah is one and the same – the King of All Kings. Therefore we must relate to them with the same caution and seriousness. You see therefore that man's measuring stick, both for good and bad, is specifically the smaller actions. It is from them that we can discern if he is acting out of considerations of desire, honor, or out of embarrassment from those surrounding him, or if they are being performed because he innately wishes to perform the Will of Hashem.

Words of Our Sages Regarding the Fear of David Hamelech

The aforementioned idea is echoed by the words of David Hamelech, as related to us by our Sages [*Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim remez* 758]. The *pasuk* states, " 'Why should I be fearful in the days of evil when the sins of my heel surround me?' Our Sages expound: Said David, 'You gave us 613 mitzvot, less severe ones and more severe ones. I am not fearful of the severe mitzvot of the Torah, because they are severe. Rather, [I fear] the less severe commandments, those that people are not mindful of and throw under their heels. And You have said, 'Be just as careful with a less severe mitzvah as you are with a severe mitzvah.' Therefore David said, 'The sins of my heel surround me.' Similarly it states, 'And if you will hearken (*eikev*),' which refers to those mitzvot that individuals



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tread upon with their heel. And it states, 'In observing them there is great reward (*eikev rav*),' stored away for the one who observes the less-severe mitzvot ..."

Hashem Does Not Bestow Greatness Upon an Individual Until He Tests Him With a Small Item

The aforementioned principle is explicitly stated in the Midrash [*Shemot Rabbah* 2:3]. The Midrash states that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* does not bestow greatness upon an Individual until He tests him with a small item. Only afterwards does the individual ascend to greatness. For we find that Hashem tested both David Hamelech and Moshe Rabbeinu with the sheep that they were shepherding, and only afterwards did they become leaders of the Jewish Nation. This is stated even more explicitly in *Shemot Rabbah* [2:2]. There, quoting the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (11) which states, "Hashem will test the *tzaddik*," the Midrash asks how Hashem tests the *tzaddik*. It answers that Hashem tests him with his sheep. It continues that Hashem tested David with his sheep and found him to be a fine shepherd. This is as it states [*Tehillim* 78], "And He brought him from behind the nursing (*mi'michlaot*) sheep." The Midrash asks what *mi'michlaot* means. It explains that it is an expression which means "to stop." The Midrash explains that David would prevent the larger sheep from grazing before the smaller ones. He would take the smaller ones out to graze the softer grass, and then the elderly sheep to graze on the grass which was neither soft nor hard. Last he would take out the young, strong sheep to eat from the harder grass. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* said that one who knows how to let each sheep graze according to its capability is fit to be the shepherd of His people. The Midrash continues that Hashem also tested Moshe with the sheep. The Sages state that Moshe was the shepherd of Yitro in the desert. One young goat ran away from Moshe. Moshe chased after him until he reached a shady area in the desert. There it came upon a pool of water and the goat stopped to drink. When Moshe caught up with him and saw it drinking, he exclaimed, "I did not know that you were running because of thirst. You are tired." He therefore placed the young goat on his shoulder and began to walk. Hashem therefore said that just as Moshe shepherds the sheep of human beings mercifully, so too, is he fitting to shepherd the Jewish Nation, the flock of Hashem.

Even Someone Who Greatly Benefits the Public is Measured by a Small Deed

We can also learn this from the words of our Sages in *Avodah Zarah* [18a]. The Gemara relates that when R' Yosi ben Kisma fell ill, Rabbi Chaninah ben Tradyon went to visit him. R' Yosi mentioned to R' Chaninah that the Roman Nation who destroyed His house, burned His Sanctuary, and murdered His pious ones is still in power, yet he heard that R' Chaninah sits and engages in Torah study. He publicly gathers groups and teaches them Torah, while holding a Torah scroll in his lap. R' Chaninah responded that Heaven would have mercy upon him. R' Yosi responded that he was speaking logically, why, then, was R' Chaninah responding that Hashem would have mercy? He wondered aloud if the Roman's would not burn him together with his *sefer Torah*. R' Chaninah then asked R' Yosi what his portion would be in the World to Come. R' Yosi asked if he had done any noteworthy deeds. R' Chaninah answered that he had once accidentally taken the money he had set aside for the Purim feast and distributed it to the poor, thinking that the money was meant for charity. However, even after realizing his error, he did not remove money from the charity fund in order to pay himself back. Hearing this, R' Yosi remarked that he wished that his portion in the World to Come would be as great as R' Chaninah's.

This Gemara is very puzzling. It first mentions the unbelievable deeds of R' Chaninah, who sacrificed his life for the sake of teaching Torah, sanctifying the Name of Hashem. Despite that, however, R' Yosi ben Kisma was satisfied only by one righteous act of R' Chaninah's, an act of giving up a small amount of money. Could this act have evoked such amazement by R' Yosi ben Kisma until he said that his portion should be like R Chaninah's? The answer is that this act was between R' Chaninah and Hashem. There was no one standing around to witness it, and there was no one to publicize it and accrue him honor. This small deed was refined and pure and revealed only to Hashem. Therefore, R' Yosi was very impressed with this act, and he said that on account of it, he was sure that he would earn a portion in *Gan Eden*. He even said that he wished to have the same size portion as him.



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Concern Over One Student Affected the Entire Generation

Our Sages [*Eiruvim* 54b] furthermore teach us that R' Preida had a student who needed to be taught a lesson 400 times until he finally grasped the material. One day, R' Preida was needed to assist in a matter which was a mitzvah. He taught the student 400 times, but he still did not understand. R' Preida therefore asked him why he was having a more difficult time today than usual. The student answered that from the moment R' Preida was asked to assist in the mitzvah, he wasn't able to concentrate, thinking that at any moment he would pick up and leave. R' Preida therefore taught the student an additional 400 times. A Heavenly voice then asked R' Preida if he wished to live 400 years or if he preferred that he and his entire generation merit the World to Come. He answered that he preferred that he and his generation merit the World to Come. Therefore Hashem said that he should receive both.

From this episode, our Sages are teaching the following lesson: It may have seemed that the tremendous investment of time and energy in this sub-par student was in vain and squandering time which could have otherwise been spent studying Torah. Nevertheless, R' Preida taught the student 400 times, and in this case, 800 times, even though the student ought to have been paying attention. This pure act of teaching Torah to a single individual had the power to earn the entire generation eternal life. It also gained R' Preida 400 more years of life. This was a greater reward accrued than if he had taught Torah to the masses. This is as we stated above, that one does not know the value of one student or pauper. One pure act for the sake of a mitzvah has inestimable worth in Heaven.

Story About R' Yisrael Salanter

Well known is the story about R' Yisrael Salanter on *erev Yom Kippur*. It was before sitting down to partake of the *seudah hamafseket*, a time when all Jews are anxious to greet the holy day and run to the *beit haknesset*. However, R' Yisrael requested his attendant to call a poor young man from Kovno who had been a guest there. When he arrived, R' Yisrael took out a sheet of paper and wrote him a letter of recommendation, which he needed for a certain matter. R' Yisrael was asked why writing the letter could not have been delayed until after Yom Kippur. R' Yisrael replied that he remembered that this young man had been awaiting this letter for two days. He therefore did not wish to squander this act of kindness before the holy day that was approaching, in order that the young man should not enter Yom Kippur worrying and distraught over the matter. Such is the lofty level of the *gedolei Yisrael*, to give heed and contemplate even the smaller items, even at lofty times or when they are involved in exalted matters.

Story About the *Rishon Le'Tzion, Maran Rabbeinu Ovadiah zt"l*

Along the same lines is a story that happened with me and *Maran Rabbeinu Ovadiah*. I once brought him my *sefer Sheilot ve'Teshuvot Derech Hamelech* on the topic of *Sifrei Torah*, *tefillin*, and *Mezuzot* with hopes of receiving his letter of approbation. Much to our sorrow, the *Rabbinit* had passed away at that time, and I went to be *menachem avel* during the *shiva*. As is well known, Harav Ovadiah understandably cried very much over her passing, and it therefore did not occur to me to request a letter at that time. However, when I passed before him to be *menachem avel*, due to his great pain, he did not notice me at first. However, his son *ybl"c* the *Rishon Letzion, Rabbeinu Yitzchak Yosef shlita* who was sitting next to him, mentioned that I was being *menachem*. He immediately called me, asking me to return and apologized for not noticing me. I was stunned when he called to his secretary at that time, Harav Raanan, and requested that he go with me to his study and give me the letter for my *sefer* which he had already prepared. I tried to dissuade him at this difficult time, but it was useless, as he persisted. All were astonished by his great character traits, modesty, and consideration for his fellow man even at that difficult time.

Rav Shach's Message About Reciting *Birkat Hamazon* From a Siddur

I remember attending one of the large gatherings. Everyone was waiting to hear the words of Maran Harav Shach *zt"l*. The media was also interested in hearing what he had to say, yet all he spoke about was reciting *Birkat Hamazon* from inside a siddur and not by heart. This appeared to be a rather simple point, and it seemed to be



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lacking a message for the masses. However *Maran* Harav Shach wished to teach that man's greatness is not measured by a great act such as saving someone's life. Rather, it is measured by those mitzvot that man treads upon with his heel. He was the living example of how to relate to each individual and his questions even if it was a simple one. The young women of the seminar *Ohr Hachayim* would regularly visit his house to ask his advice. With a shining face, he would take interest in each thing they asked. Rav Shach would exert great physical effort over seemingly minute matters to the extent that many times people would wonder why he needed to exert himself so much. He could simply have made a phone-call, and the matter would have been resolved without the exertion. But he always wished to teach how much each an individual must relate even to the smallest, most minute matter. Even such things must be approached with seriousness and self-sacrifice because, this is how man is truly judged.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka