

TICKET TO OLAM HABA

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Eikev

Ticket to Olam Haba

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We read in our parashah (8:5), "You should know in your heart that just as a father will chastise his son, so Hashem, your Elokim, chastises you." R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270) explains: As a father places the yoke of mussar / reproach upon his son for the latter's own good.

The Gemara (Berachot 5a) teaches: "If a person experiences yissurim / suffering [from the same root as "mussar"], he should examine his deeds. If he examined his deeds and did not find a reason for the yissurim, he should blame his neglect of Torah study. [Some commentaries interpret that he should blame his yissurim on his neglect of Torah study, while others interpret that he should blame his inability to identify any sins that he committed on his neglect of Torah study.] If he has not neglected Torah study, then his yissurim are "yissurim shel ahavah / suffering of love." [Until here from the Gemara]

Rashi z"l (1040-1105) explains that yissurim shel ahavah are experienced when Hashem causes a person to suffer despite having no sins so that he can be rewarded in the World to Come more than he deserves. (Commentary to Berachot 5a)

Ramban explains the Gemara differently, as follows: If a person experiences yissurim, he should examine his deeds to determine what mitzvot lo ta'aseh / negative commandments he transgressed. If he examined his deeds and did not find a reason for the yissurim, i.e., he did not transgress any mitzvot lo ta'aseh, he should blame his neglect of mitzvot asei / positive commandments, for example, neglecting Torah study. If he has not neglected any mitzvot asei, then his yissurim are yissurim shel ahavah, meaning that Hashem is punishing him for the inadvertent sins he committed. Indeed, every person commits inadvertent sins with no awareness whatsoever and, thus, with no ability to identify them. The yissurim are an act of kindness on Hashem's part so that the soul will leave this world pure. (Sha'ar Ha'gmul)

"He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the mahn that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live." (8:3)

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) explains: A human being can be sustained by physical food or by spiritual food. That which is spiritual endures forever, while anything physical is necessarily finite. Adam Ha'rishon was created with the ability to live forever, and he was commanded not to eat from the Etz Ha'da'at because that was physical food. "On the day you eat from it, you will surely die," Hashem told Adam (Bereishit 2:17), meaning that eating from that tree would make Adam mortal.

R' Chaver continues: The mahn that Bnei Yisrael ate in the desert is described by our Sages as spiritual food. [Thus, for example, there were no waste by-products from the mahn.] Our verse is teaching that the mahn was given to Bnei Yisrael to drive home the lesson that it is not physical food which truly gives life, but spiritual food--what "emanates from the mouth of Hashem"--that gives life. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim: Potei'ach Yad p.30)

"You will eat and you will be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem, your Elokim, for the good Land that He gave you." (8:10)

This verse is the source of the mitzvah of Birkat Ha'mazon ("bentching"). We say in that blessing, "He sustains the entire world in His Goodness, with grace, kindness and mercy." R' Shlomo Amar shlita (Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel) asks: We understand the reference to "kindness and mercy," but how does "grace" fit in? Food is not given to beautify oneself with!

He explains: Some people receive their food in a way or a condition that would repulse the typical person. True, they may eat and be satisfied, but there is still a level of discomfort. When we say, "He sustains the entire world in His Goodness, with grace," we are thanking Him for our table, tablecloth, plate, etc. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi'yamim Yamimah p.156)

"Lest you eat and be satiated . . . and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem." (8:12-14)

We learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.3), "If there is no flour, there is no Torah." R' Mordechai Leifer z"l (1824-1894; Nadvorna Rebbe) comments: This is teaching man to think of himself as insignificant and

not to put on airs because he has learned Torah. In order to attain such humility, one must eat in a way that is holy and pure, as our verses teach. This is what Pirkei Avot means, says R' Leifer, making a play on the Hebrew words of the mishnah: "אין אם" / "If there is no"--if man views himself as אין / nothing--"flour"--when he eats, then "there is no"--he will be able to view himself as nothing--"Torah"--when he studies. (Divrei Mordechai p.5)

"You shall remember Hashem, your Elokim --that it is He Who gives you strength to make wealth . . ." (8:18)

The Aramaic translation Onkelos renders this phrase: "He gives you the idea to acquire assets."

R' Itamar Schwartz shlita (Yerushalayim) writes: Imagine that a person buys a house and the house later doubles in value. Many people would pat themselves on the back for making such a wise investment. "No!" says our verse, as explained by Onkelos. "You contributed nothing to your success. Not only did the money to buy the house come from G-d, even the very idea to buy the house came from G-d." (B'lvavi Mishkan Evneh Vol. II p.205)

"Then I shall provide rain for your [plural] Land in its proper time, the early and the late rains, that you will gather in your [singular] grain, your wine, and your oil." (11:14)

R' Aryeh Leib Gordon z"l (1845-1913; Yerushalayim) writes: Serving Hashem and performing mitzvot are more meaningful, more complete, and more apt to fulfill the purpose for which the Torah was given when they are performed with a tzibbur / group than when they are performed by individuals. Thus, the Gemara (Berachot 8a) teaches: Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says, "If one studies Torah, performs acts of kindness, and prays with a tzibbur, it is counted as if he has redeemed Me and My sons from among the nations." In this teaching, the words "with the tzibbur" modify not only prayer, but also Torah study and performing acts of kindness, R' Gordon writes.

The Gemara (Yoma 9b) states that the second Bet Hamikdash was destroyed even though the people were studying Torah, performing mitzvot and doing acts of kindness because there was senseless hatred among the people. R' Gordon explains that, because of this senseless hatred, they studied Torah and performed mitzvot individually, but not in groups. The Torah's goal, in contrast, is to make us as one body with one soul. [Since the people's Torah study and mitzvah performance was not accomplishing its goal, the nation was deserving of exile.]

In contrast, R' Gordon continues, when mitzvot are performed in their ideal manner, the entire nation, as a unit, is blessed. Thus, our verse says that, if we heed the mitzvot, the rains of our [plural] land

will come in their proper time. Indeed, when rains fall, it is always based on the needs of the many, without consideration for the convenience of the individual. In fact, the Kohen Gadol would pray on Yom Kippur that G-d not heed the prayers of travelers when they pray that rain not fall.

Nevertheless, our verse tells us, the blessing that results from the rains will be individualized according to each person's needs. That is why our verse concludes, "You will gather your [singular] grain." (lyun Tefilah)

Letters from Our Sages

The following letter was written by R' Akiva Eiger z"l (1761-1837; rabbi of Posen, Germany and other communities), who is considered to have been among the most outstanding Talmud commentators and halachic authorities of recent centuries. The letter appears in Igrot R' Akiva Eiger, p.139.

B"H, Monday night, 12 Nissan "Titzdak" [5594 / 1834], Posen

Much peace and blessing to my honorable friends, the dear and honorable nobles, the unique individuals of the holy congregation of Strasbourg:

Your [second] letter reached me today. Let your honors not be upset that I have not answered until now. There are many burdens placed upon me from this community and the surroundings, more than the hairs on my head, and the ability to speak is gone from me. My apologies. You did well to write to me again to remind me.

Regarding the substance of your request - that I sign your charter to indicate my support and strengthen your enterprise - I find it wondrous. What need is there to strengthen or to confirm that which will bring joy to anyone who sees it? [This refers to] reciting Tehilim in public every Shabbat, spending the day in holiness and not wandering in the streets, visiting the sick and providing the needs of the ill poor, and properly observing the seventh day of Adar [the yahrzeit of Moshe Rabbeinu, traditionally a day for strengthening the chevra kadisha / burial society]. Who could possibly question the merit of such activities? Indeed, I am so surprised that I wonder if there are facts that are being hidden from me. Also, since you already have appointed my friend, the rabbi, the light of the diaspora, the head of the rabbinical court of Golub, to judge and instruct you, it is fitting that you honor him to sign first. May Hashem be with you, and may you strengthen yourselves further and further in the service of Heaven, and may the pleasure of Hashem be upon you.

The words of Akiva son of my teacher Moshe Ginz ztz"l

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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