

Parashat Eikev 5782, 2022:

The Power of Talmud Torah

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

The first *pasuk* in our *parasha* contains the well-known phrase, “*v’haya eikev tishm’un eit hamishpatim ha’aleh.*” There are a variety of classical approaches regarding its translation and interpretation. Onkelos (1st Century CE) suggests, “And it will be in exchange [that is, a quid pro quo] if you accept these laws.” In contrast, Rashi (1040-1105) maintains the phrase refers to a specific set of laws, “If you will heed the minor commandments which one [usually] tramples with their heels [that is, which a person treats as being of minor importance].” (Translation, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*). The Ibn Ezra (c. 1089-1092 until c. 1164-1167) asserts that *eikev* refers to *schar b’achronah*. As such, he would translate our expression as, “And it will be that the ultimate reward will accrue to you if you hearken to these laws.”

Closer to our own time, the Netziv (Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (1816-1893) takes a very different tack, explaining *v’haya eikev tishm’un eit hamishpatim ha’aleh* as referencing deep-level Torah analysis (*sh’yachkaru ba’Torah*). He would, therefore, translate this phrase as, “And it will be if you engage in deep-level Torah study.” He focuses on the word *tishm’un*, as the source of his unique interpretation, noting that it is spelled with a grammatically unnecessary letter *nun*. This is quite significant, since the nine other times the word, *tishm’u*, appears in *Chamishah Chumshei*

Torah it is without the letter *nun*. In the Netziv's opinion, the *nun* comes *l'haktin*, to make smaller or delimit. As he explains, its purpose is to inform us:

... that not everyone within the Jewish people could possibly have been involved in intensive Torah study [at this historical moment,] since the [vast majority] were involved in war [and all it entailed]. Nonetheless, it was necessary for there to be people engaged in *Talmud Torah* [as this *mitzvah* was as significant as the actual fighting itself]. (Translation and brackets my own, in addition, see the Netziv's gloss on *Sefer Devarim*, 33:18)

As the Netziv makes clear in his subsequent glosses on our phrase, such intensive Torah study will lead directly to Hashem's fulfillment of His promise to bestow *chesed* and *brachot* upon the Jewish people. As the Torah states:

... the L-rd, your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your soil, your grain, your wine, and your oil, the offspring of your cattle and the choice of your flocks, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples: There will be no sterile male or barren female among you or among your livestock. And the L-rd will remove from you all illness, and all of the evil diseases of Egypt which you knew, He will not set upon you... (*Sefer Devarim* 7:12-15, translation, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

May we witness the complete realization of this promise soon, and in our days. *V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

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*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpyd>

*** I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)