Points to Ponder

Eikev 5778

**עקב תשמעון והיה And it will be when you listen (7:12) - The Daas Zekanim** notes that we need to listen to the mitzvos that people trample on with their feet. What mitzva do people trample with their feet? He answers that the mitzva of Tzitzis is an example of one such Mitzva that a person tramples. **Rav Zilberstein Shlita** explains that this is the basis of the Halacha (O.C. 21:4) not to let the Tzitzis drag on the ground for it appears that one who does so disgraces the Mitzva. The problem is that the mogen Avraham seems to limit the prohibition of the dragging Tzitzis to dragging them over a grave implying that everywhere else should be ok?A similar problem arises when we think of the praise due to Ben Tzitzis Hakesses (Gittin 56a) whose Tzitzis went on pillows while everyone else’s did not -- implying that he was unique -- not that he was simply following the law? Rav Zilberstein explains that the issue in the cemetery is when the Kever is raised -- that even then one should not let the Tzitzis drag. And in regard to Ben Tzitzis, the prohibition is when they drag at the time of putting them on. At that point the Tzitzis look like he is sweeping with them. At other times this is not a problem.

**כל המצוה אשר אנכי מצוך היוםAll of the Mitzvos that I am commanding you today you should be careful to keep (8:1) -  Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl.** the Mitzva referred to in the possuk is the concept of putting ourselves on the side for the will of Hashem whether we get it fully or not. If we started doing it, we should finish -- with the same energy as the time of the undertaking.

**ואכלת ושבעת וברכתAnd you will bless Hashem (8:10) - Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** once came to test some students and did not bring any prize for those who excelled. He offered the students a great thought instead. He noted that the one letter not in Birkas HaMazon is the letter “Peh” because when one bentches with Kavana, Hashem has no anger toward him and his food is found before him in abundant supply. One of the students who overheard the thought took it upon himself to always bentch with calm and to do so out of a bentcher -- always. During the Holocaust, this young man found himself as part of a Nazi selection and davened to be saved in the merit of his bentching. As the selector came close, he stood on his toes and was saved. Later, he was working in the kitchen in the camp where it became obvious that he did not know a thing about a kitchen. He was punished to dig a hole of large proportion with only a few forks as digging implements. A wagon came by dropping fruit and vegetables which he gladly scooped up. The other prisoners begged him for some which he gladly exchanged for their assistance in digging the hole. By the time the guard came back, the hole was dug and the man’s life was saved -- with an abundance (the vegetables) as a result of the bentching he was careful with **(Rav Elimelech Biderman).**

**ואשב בהר ארבעים יום וארבעים לילהWhen I went up to the mountain to get the Luchos ...I stayed on the mountain for 40 days and nights (9:9) - Rashi** notes that the word staying refers to tarrying. What is Rashi trying to tell us? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl**. pointed out that when one is somewhere for a short period of time, he tends to devalue the time due to its shortness. Here the Torah tells us that Moshe did not do so. Despite being on the mountain for 40 days, he learned as if he was going to be there for the rest of his life. It is a great message for the rest of us.

**ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמךAnd now Yisrael what does Hashem ask from you Kee Im L’Yirah (10:12)** - The Gemara (Berachos 33b) explains that in regard to Moshe, Yirah WAS a small thing. But why would Moshe, speaking to the simple people, present Yirah as a small request? For THEM it was a big deal? **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** who explained that the comma needs to be replaced -- that Bnei Yisrael COULD show respect to Moshe (L’Gabei Moshe to show respect it is a simple matter that everyone could follow). **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often add that the measure of success that a student has in Torah study often is a result of the Midda of Hisbatelus he shows to his teacher.

**השמרו לכם פן יפתה לבבכםBe careful lest your heart be swayed (11:16) - Rav Hutner ztl.** would comment that a human being is like an open door. If he allows the room to be filled with Torah and Mitzvos  then his life will be full. However, if he is not careful, the room will still become filled -- but instead of being filled with Torah, it will be filled with waste -- like Avodah Zara.

**כל המקום אשר תדרוך כף רגלכם בו לכם יהיהAny place that you tread upon will be yours (11:24) - Ramban** learns 2 critical Halachos here. The first is that Kedushas Eretz Yisrael is a concept promised to the Avos. The other is that when we capture other lands that were not previously endowed with Kedushas HaAretz, that land too, will be endowed with the responsibility for Mitzvos HaTiluyos BaAretz. **Rav Gifter ztl.** wondered if there was a Mitzva of Yishuv HaAretz on these lands. In other words, is Yishuv HaAretz a Mitzva of Yirusha and only inherited lands have a Mitzva of Yishuv or is the Mitzva dependent on Kedushas HaAretz and does it apply anywhere that has Kedushas HaAretz?

**Haftorah: גם אלה תשכחנה ואנכי לא אשכחך Even if these are forgotten, I shall not forget you (Yeshayahu 49:16 ) - Rav Uri Sharki Shlita** notes that Bnei Yisrael were worried lest their sins be permanently etched in the mind of Hashem. To that Hashem answers that Gam Ela -- the Eleh of the Eigel will be forgotten. Then the Jews feared that their merits in Har Sinai would also be negated -- to that Hashem responded that Anochi ( the rest of the Sinai  experience) would NOT be forgotten. Why? Rav Sharki explains that the message here is that while Hashem has the ability to “forgive and forgo” sin -- he is interested in the RELATIONSHIP with us. That relationship is not undone easily -- and is never forgotten.