

Parshas Eikev – Yeshaya Nosson Hepner

כ' מנחם אב תשע"ד – 15 August 2014 – שבת פ' עקב

ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך וכו' (דברים י"ב)

And now, Israel - what does Hashem your G-D ask of you but to fear Hashem your G-D...

This פסוק would appear to be an inherent contradiction: the phrase “כי אם” - “but” - gives the impression that ה' is indeed asking only one thing from us. However the פסוק continues to enumerate several other requirements:

”ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאהבה אתו...” - “to go in all His ways and to love Him...”?

The תורה explains: Indeed, here the תורה makes only one requirement; to fear ה'. However, when a person strives to fear ה' correctly, ה' will provide special דשמיא (Heavenly assistance), which will enable the person to attain even greater levels of spirituality. Thus, when the פסוק says “ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאהבה אתו...”, it is a reference to these greater heights of ה' עבודת. However, these are not *requirements*, but rather *consequences* of his initial efforts in serving ה'. This follows the גמרא in ע"ב לח יומא which expresses the principle:

— one who comes to be purified receives Divine assistance. Service to ה' is rewarded with the ability to better that service.

With this in mind, we can now explain the גמ' ברכות לג ע"ב. The גמ' quotes this פסוק, and asks: Is fearing ה' so insignificant that the פסוק refers to it as “כי אם” - “but” or “merely” to fear ה'? Is not fearing ה' itself a tremendous spiritual level?! The question of the גמרא is hard to understand: Why did the גמרא limit its question to יראה – fear of ה' – alone? After all, the פסוק continues to mention many other requirements, apparently all grouped under the rather dismissive “כי אם”? The answer is, of course, that the *requirement* is to fear ה', the remainder of the list in the פסוק is a result and reward of that initial fulfilment.

The גמ' quotes this פסוק, and learns from it the requirement to recite one hundred ברכות every day.

רש"י explains that the גמ' interprets the word “מה” as being phonetically similar to the word “מאה” - one hundred.

תוספות provides another two explanations: The פסוק consists of 99 letters. Although the word “שאל” is spelt חסר ו' – missing the letter ו' (between the letters ש and א); since it is *read* as though there is a ו', that constitutes a virtual 100th letter. This, therefore, is the source for reciting one hundred ברכות daily.

An alternative explanation of תוספות uses the system of א"ת ב"ש. This links the letters of the א"ב; whereby the first letter (א) corresponds to the last letter (ת), the second letter (ב) corresponds to the second-last letter (ש), and so on through the alphabet. In our פסוק, the word מה consists of the letters ה and מ. Using א"ת ב"ש we can say that these letters correspond to the letters צ and י respectively, which have a total גימטריא of one hundred.

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber זצ"ל adds another beautiful גימטריא.

In we read: “הנה כי כן יברך גבר ירא ה'” – “Behold! For so is blessed the man who fears ה'.”

In conjunction with the word יברך, the words “כי כן” have the גימטריא of one hundred!

בר מצוה wishes to Mr David Kahn, Mr Jonathan Landau and myself, on our shared טוב מזל anniversaries.

לע"נ ר' ישראל ב"ר צבי אריה הכהן ז"ל

Dr. Issy Cohen – my much-beloved step grandfather

נפטר ג' אב תשע"ד