

## PARSHAS EKEV – DAVID JOSEPH

The Parasha of Ekev begins by telling us that "Ekev" (when/as soon as) we hear Hashem's Mishpatim and we perform and keep His Mitzvot... . He will protect us and give us all the blessings that He promised the Avot. The word Ekev can also be rendered the heel of the foot. Rashi teaches us that this is meant to allude to the category of Mitzvot that a person tends to "trample with his heels", i.e, Mitzvot people tend to treat as insignificant, and therefore are not treated with the seriousness they deserve.

It is written in Pirkei Avot ch 2:1 "Be as scrupulous in performing a "minor" Mitzvah as in a "major" one, for you don't know the reward given for the respective mitzvot. Tiferet Yisrael adds that Mitzvot must also be measured in terms of their intrinsic power to help man refine his neshama. Each mitzvah contains a specific remedial aspect unique to that command. It is for this reason that there are 248 Mitzvot Aseh which parallel the 248 limbs and organs of the human body. The letters of Ekev may also be used to spell the word "keva" denoting permanence. The Torah teaches us to bring an attitude of permanence to our Mitzvah observance. Our actions should not be rushed or temporary, they should be deliberate and purposeful, with full attention and devotion, intent upon fulfilling the will of Hashem. The word "Keva" also carries the connotation of theft (Malachi 3:8). Hence, even if one is overwhelmed with responsibilities and commitments, he must steal time from his hectic schedule in order to study Torah. (Vilna Gaon and R'Nachman of Breslov).

It says in Ben Ish Hai Derashot, one explanation is that keeping the Torah and the observance of the commandments is dependant on the love and unity that the Jewish people have between them. The number of words in the 10 commandments is 172 which has the same gematria as the word "Ekev". The last word in the 10 commandments is the word "Lere'ekha". This is a word which has connotations of love and friendship (which is connected to the word lere'ekha) is a quality that you have when you hear Hashem's ordinances, then it is certain that you will be able to do and keep the Mitzvot. The Rishonim explain the word "Ekev" to mean humility. Therefore, one can understand from this that one should be humble and as a result receive all men with happiness.

The mishna in Pirkei Avot ch 3:16 says "Receive ( Mekkabel ) all men with happiness". The gematria of the word "Mekkabel" is equal to the value of the word "Ekev". Additionally the last letters of the names of our Avot which are Avraham, Yitzhak, Yakov and Yisrael also spell the word "Mekkabel". We should emulate our Avot in this great middah and receive everyone with happiness. (Pirush HaHida on Masechet Avot.) It says in Od Yosef Hai Derashot that the reason why Yaakov Avinu got his name was to teach us about spiritual humility. Instead of aggrandizing himself, he would make himself small like the letter Yud, which is the smallest in the alphabet. The remaining letter after the first letter, form "Ekev" which means heel. This shows his humility in physical matters, because the heel is the lowest part of the body and Yaakov Avinu would see himself as a heel and not as the head. The Torah emphasises that each Mitzvah is valuable and has inestimable worth. What seems to us as a simple, ordinary Mitzvah may in fact carry immense weight.