

PARSHAS EKEV MEVORCHIM CHODESH ELUL

By Rabbi Yaakov Feitman

Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi

PREPARING FOR ELUL

The first word in the Sedra is *Vehaya* which is understood to convey *simcha*. What is the great joy in this posuk? The *B'nai Yissaschar* (Elul 1:20) suggests that *ekev*, the heel, represents the end of a person's body. Elul represents the end of the year. This posuk teaches us that even if we don't listen to Hashem's words (*tishmeun*) until the very end of the year, but we eventually do teshuvah at that time, Hashem is still happy with us. The *B'nai Yissaschar* also references the words from last week's Sedra "*Batzar lecha umetzaucha...b'acharis hayamim* – When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you at the end of days, you will return to Hashem..." (Devarim 4:30). The term *acharis hayamim* – the end of days – does refer to the era of Moshiach but it also refers to the end of the year. It is a time when Klal Yisrael begins to think of the upcoming *Yemei Hadin* and Teshuvah, which in turn makes Hashem *kivayachol* happy.

Perhaps this is also hinted at in Rashi's comment on the first posuk that *Ekev*, meaning heel, refers to the seemingly "minor" mitzvos which people tend to step upon. Instead, we should take them seriously and lift them up, performing them respectfully with awe and joy. Rav Nissim Karelitz shlita uses this concept to explain a cryptic posuk: "Why should I be fearful in days of evil when the sins *akeivai*—I walked upon surround me?" (*Tehillim* 49:6). The word *akeivai* –literally my heels – evokes the name of our Parshah. Rav Karelitz explains that sometimes we are so accustomed to certain *aveiros* – such as *lashon hara*, speaking during davening etc. -- that we even forget to do teshuvah. That is the real tragedy and that is why this Parshah introduces the pivotal month of Elul. We might add that the heel is not the end of a person; it is a place where there are few if any feelings (see *Sefas Emes, Likutim*, page 35). In fact, *Tosfos (Nazir 51a)* teaches that the heel is, to some extent, not considered to be alive at all. The *Ozerover Rebbe zt"l (Be'er Moshe Devarim*, page 106) thereby understands the name Yaakov, which includes the letters of *ekev*, to refer to Klal Yisrael at its lower level when we are not fully alive to our potential and ultimate mission. The Parshah is therefore, a reminder to us all, to awaken ourselves, be more alive to our current *madreigah* and elevate ourselves for the coming days of judgment.

How exactly do we do this apparently very difficult thing? The answer to this, too, is in the Parshah. The source of the mitzvah to daven is from the posuk (11:13) "*ule'ovdo bechol levavchem* – to serve Hashem with all your heart." Chazal (Taanis 2a; Yerushalmi Berachos 4:1) derive from this posuk that the way to "serve" is to pray. But still, *how* and *when* should we daven? Is it only the set times of Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv? The Chazon Ish zt"l had a tremendous *chiddush* – a novel thought – about davening. He taught (see his letters 2:132 and 3:62; Yagdil Torah, Devarim, page 227) that "the main *hishtadlus*—effort we must do to effectuate anything we want comes from davening. Even the action or physical effort is only incidental. It only *seems* as if our action "did the job," but in truth it was the prayer. May all our prayers be fulfilled iyH.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS MEVORCHIM CHODESH ELUL

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5778

PARSHAS EKEV

BY RABBI YAAKOV FEITMAN

KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

We return this week to questions and answers about being the Sheliach Tzibur -- "davening for the amud."

Question: At the end of Shemoneh Esray, when do we say *Oseh Shalom*, before taking the three steps back, after or while taking the steps?

Answer: All Poskim hold that one should take the three steps and *then* say *Oseh Shalom* (Shulchan Aruch 56:5; Mishnah Berurah 123:3 from Yumah 53b). It is important to quote the *Yesod Veshorash Ha'avodah* (5:5) who stresses that when taking the steps back one must have in mind that he is taking leave of his Master with respect. He stresses that without this *kavanah*, it is, G-d forbid as if one has not davened at all.

Question: What if the chazzan made a mistake and said *Borchu* immediately after *Yishtabach*, forgetting to say *Kaddish*. The *tzibur* did not answer to *Borchu* but reminded him to say *Kaddish*. Should he then say *Kaddish* or just continue?

Answer: The *Rivevos Ephraim* (3:50:3) cites just such a story and relates that he asked his father-in-law, Rav Boruch Yitzchok Levine zt"l who ruled that he should say *Kaddish* but not repeat *Borchu*. His reasoning was that the half-*Kaddish* was ordained to separate between *Pesukei D'zimra* which are *m'drabbanan* and *Birchas Krias Shma* which are a *d'oreisa* (*Darchei Moshe* to *Tur* 57). Since the *tzibur* did not answer to the *Chazan's Borchu*, no separation was made so *Kaddish* should then be said to make this distinction.

Question: Whenever I daven for the *amud* I am confused about how to end *Krias Shma*. Do I repeat *Emes* or not? What should or should not be repeated?

Answer: The *Shulchan Aruch* (61:3) writes that the chazzan should repeat *Hashem Elokeichem Emes* out loud so that there will be a total of 248 words which correspond to the number of limbs and organs in a human being. The *Mishnah Berurah* cites a *Medrash* that doing this properly is a *segulah* for a cure for every part of the body which requires a *refuah*. The *Gra*, however, holds that we follow the opinion of the *Rama M'Pano* that the Chazan should not say the word *emes* in his own davening, only out loud, because the repetition of *emes* would result in 249 words. The *Mishnah Berurah* (61:8) rules that the Chazan should say *emes* both times. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (*Igros Moshe Orach Chaim* 5:4) states that it depends. If the Chazan is saying *Hashem Elokeichem...* out loud immediately after his own *Shemoneh Esray* he should not say *emes* twice. However, if he is waiting for the Rov or for the *tzibur* to finish, he should say the three words twice, once silently and the second time out loud. The custom seems to follow the *Mishnah Berurah*.

Question: Can the Chazan start *Ashrei* before Mincha without a Minyan if the hour is late?

Answer: Actually the custom that the Chazan says the word *Ashrei* out loud is to alert everyone to say *Ashrei* together so that *Kaddish* can be recited. In fact, if *Ashrei* was said prematurely, another *kapitel Tehillim* should be said to justify the *Kaddish*. Therefore, one should wait to say *Ashrei* until there is a *Minyan* (*Rama* 234:1; *Yosef Ometz* 495).

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