

D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Ekev 5775 (2015)

Human nature is such that, if something good happens to us, or if a particular happenstance goes our way, we tend to take credit for the end result regardless of whether or not we deserve that credit. "It was because of my brilliant approach" or, "I planned it just like that!" are just a sampling of our arrogant approaches to success.

For the most part, we tend to take G-d totally out of the equation when it comes to accomplishments, reserving his existence to take "the blame" when anything goes wrong. "Why did G-d do that to me?" Or, "How could G-d be so insensitive if he really exists?"

In this week's Parsha, Eikev, we find Moshe Rabbeinu transmitting a message to Klal Yisroel that should sit with us for eternity.

Should!

Although he begins his soliloquy by acknowledging that, if we follow in the path of Hashem's wishes, He will guide us and protect us, Moshe also goes on to say as follows: In a time when we do NOT follow in Hashem's Torah (yet we seem to be conquering land), "Do not say in your heart, when Hashem pushes them away from before you, "Because of my righteousness did Hashem bring me to take possession of this land, and because of the wickedness of these nations did Hashem drive them away from before you." (Devarim 9:4).

Moshe further explains that any success that we are experiencing in conquering other nations is as a result of "their" wickedness and as a result of the promise that Hashem made to our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok and Ya'akov. These are not anything for which we can take credit, or of which we can be proud.

Everyone would like to believe that they are being just as observant as they need to be. "I am just "PERFECT" in the eyes of Hashem." And the proof is that Hashem seems to be rewarding me for my goodness, right?

Moshe already forewarned this mode of thinking in order to prevent us from falling subject to the curses that follow in the Parshios to come.

So, what can we do? How can we know if what we do is really enough or not? Nobody can realistically be expected to "DO IT ALL."

What should we use as a barometer?

The Ma'or Va'Shemesh offers an interesting interpretation of the first Passuk of our Parsha that I believe we can use to answer this question.

Chazal teach us that, when the Torah uses certain words, it is meant to give us an indication of the mood of the statement as well as the actual meaning of the words. For example, when the Torah says "Vayehee" (as in, "Vayehee be'yemai Achashverosh"), it is meant to indicate a time of "pain."

In our Parsha, the first word, "Ve'hayah," is a term the Rabbis tell us means "Simcha" (joy).

The second word, "Eikev," infers humility. Just as the heel is the lowest part of the body, so, too, a humble person knows his position in relation to others.

So now we can read the Passuk as follows:

If a person will be B'Simcha (operate in a joyous mode), and you will also be humble when you listen to the laws of Hashem, then Hashem will watch over you and fulfill for you the promises that He made to your forefathers.

The barometer to use to know if you are serving Hashem properly is "joy" and "humility."

If you will utilize these two attributes in ALL of your service to Hashem, then you can be assured that you are on the right path.

We are living in times where Eretz Yisroel is under constant attack from its neighbors. Deals hanging in the air sound more and more ominous every time we review them. We know that eventually Hashem will return our land to us because of the promise that He made to our forefathers. However, we have the power to make that eventual day happen much, much sooner. If we do all of our Avodah to Hashem with Simcha and humility, then Hashem will return our land NOW, because we earned it, and not make us wait for the eventual fulfillment of the promise made to our forefathers.

Have a Great Shabbos