

Kinder Torah®

בס"ד

Parashas Eikev

The News

"Chaim, did you hear the news?"

"Oh no. What happened now?"

"You've got to hear this."

"Wait a minute, Avi. Let me prepare myself. I don't want this news to be a shock to me. There are so many terrible things happening. War, sickness, terrorism, poverty . . . it's not easy to take."

"Nothing to worry about, Chaim. This is good news."

"Great! Did the stock market go up?"

"No."

"Did someone give birth to quadruplets?"

"No."

"Did someone donate his life's savings to a yeshiva?"

"No."

"What is it? I'm plotzing! Please tell me the news."

"If we listen to Hashem's mitzvos, we will prosper. And if we don't, Hashem will be angry with us and He will punish us."

"That's news??? That is from the second paragraph of Kriyas Shema; this week's parasha. The Torah was given 3300 years ago. That's not news."

Avi smiles warmly.

"Let me explain, Chaim. Let's begin with the news. Why are people so excited about the news?"

"Ummm. I guess because it is new. It never happened before. Also because it is interesting, and it affects their lives."

"Very good. Now, let's look at this verse."

"Behold if you will surely listen to My mitzvos which I command you today' (Devarim 11:13)."

"Rashi explains that the mitzvos must be new to you, as if you heard them today."

"I see. Something new is special. A new baby, a new book, a new gift . . . you get excited over it."

"Exactly, Chaim. That is how we should treat the mitzvos. They should always have that special feeling of newness."

"Avi, when we see the mitzvos as new, we will be much more motivated to study them and observe them. They are new, they are interesting, they are exciting, they are relevant to our lives today."

"Right. Hashem's Torah is called Toras Chaim (the living Torah). It is alive. It is dynamic. It is relevant. It is new."

"Wow. This is great. I can't wait to tell people. Thank you for sharing this with me. Avi, this is the best news that I've ever heard!"

Kinderlach . . .

Did you learn about a mitzvah today?

One of the halachos (laws) of Shabbos observance? Blessings before eating food?

Giving tzedaka? Honoring parents? Wonderful! Do you remember when Imma took you to buy new shoes? Do you remember that special feeling, wearing them the first time? That excitement of having something new? That is how we should feel about Hashem's mitzvos. So special. So new. Kinderlach, remember this twice a day when you say Kriyas Shema.

Hashem's mitzvos are so special. So new.



Humble Yourself

"Abba, you have prepared me very well for the Amidah prayer. I now realize that I am about to stand before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. However, knowing this fact in my head is not enough. I want to feel it in my heart and in my bones."

"Excellent Avi! 'Rachmana liba boy! (The Torah requires heart [emotions]).' How do you harness your emotions to feel the awesomeness of standing before the Creator? Let us have a look in the Sefer Chayei Odom chapter 22, paragraph 11. 'Align your feet next to each other, bend your head down slightly, and close your eyes so that they do not see anything. If you are praying from a Siddur, do not lift your eyes out of the Siddur... Rest your hands upon your heart, the right one on top of the left, and stand with awe and fear, for the Shechina (Divine Presence) rests opposite the mispallel (one who is praying).'"

"Doesn't Hashem's Presence fill the entire universe, Abba?"

"Indeed it does, Avi, and the Chayei Odom mentions this. This does not contradict the fact that now the mispallel stands opposite the Shechina, and wishes to ask for everything that he needs. 'It is not within the power of any created being, angel, planet, or star to fulfill his wish, if not for the will of the Blessed One. One should pray like a poor person

at the door, with all of his heart.' The Chayei Odom continues in chapter 23, paragraphs 1 and 2. 'Tefillah is similar to making an appeal before a king of flesh and blood. At first, one must bow and speak praises of the king. After that, he can make his requests. When he finishes and wishes to be excused, he must bow again and ask for permission to leave.' So too, we bend our knees when we say 'boruch', bend our backs and heads down until all of the vertebrae of the spine protrude when we say 'Atto', lift up our heads and slowly come to an upright position before we say Hashem's Name."

"I am beginning to realize Abba, that performing actions of humility – carrying my body in the manner of a servant to the King – will bring feelings of awe of the Creator into my heart."

"Brilliant, Avi! This is the axiom of the Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 16, 'The hearts are drawn after the actions.' If a person wishes to feel awe and fear of the Almighty in his heart, and ultimately become truly humble, he must perform actions of subservience. He must bow humbly before he begins speaking to his Creator. He must place his feet together, his head down, and his hands over his heart. Gradually these actions will have a powerful effect upon his emotions, and he will come to true humility and fear of Hashem."

"Thank you Abba, I hope to succeed."

"With Hashem's help, you will, Avi."

Kinderlach . . .

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 93:2) states that one should not stand in prayer without awe and humility (in his heart). How can we accomplish the mighty feat of controlling the emotions in our hearts? The Sefer HaChinuch gives us the key. Perform actions that will arouse the emotions. If you carry yourself in the manner of a humble person, your actions will accomplish something. They will have a positive effect on your heart. Slowly but surely, you will feel the awe of the Creator. Ultimately, you will become truly humble. This is what we achieve with our posture and bowing during the Amidah prayer. We conduct ourselves in the manner of a servant of the Almighty. We humbly present our praises and requests before Him. The intellectual realization that we are standing opposite the Shechina, along with the actions that promote the emotions of fear and awe in our hearts, enable us to totally experience the reality of what we are doing – speaking privately with the Creator of the universe! This is tefillah, kinderlach. Put your entire minds, bodies, and hearts into it. Humble yourselves before Hashem.