

# Kinder Torah

בס"ד

## Parashas Pinchas

### The Yoke of Mitzvos

"Avi, we have now finished the first *parasha* (paragraph) of *Kriyas Shema*. Let us begin our study of the second *parasha*."

"May I ask you a question, Abba?"

"Yes, please, Avi."

"I have been looking over the second *parasha* of *Kriyas Shema*, and I notice that everything that we have mentioned in the first *parasha* is mentioned in the second *parasha* also. There are even some additional points in the second *parasha*."

"Can you give me examples, Avi?"

"Yes Abba. Both *parshios* contain *ahavas* (loving) *Hashem*, self-sacrifice for Him, learning Torah, and *emunah* in His Oneness as a result of there being no other gods or powers. Additionally, the second *parasha* contains *sechar* and *onesh* (reward and punishment) for *mitzvos* and *aveyros* respectively. Taking this into consideration, why do we need to say the first *parasha* at all? The second *parasha* alone should suffice."

"I am so impressed, Avi! That is a very intellectual question. You give me so much *nachas*. May you always continue to learn, *shteig*, and think deeply into everything that you are learning."

"Amen!"

"I will answer your question with the first Mishna in the second *parasha* of *Berachos* (13a). Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Korcha asks, 'Why does the *parasha* of *Shema* precede the *parasha* of *ViHoyo Im Shomoa*?' The *Siddur Otzar HaTefillos*<sup>1</sup> explains that Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Korcha is asking your question, 'Why say the first *parasha* at all? It appears unnecessary since all of its points are contained in the second *parasha*.'"

"What is the answer, Abba?"

"Rebbe Yehoshua Ben Korcha answers his own question in the Mishna, 'In order to first accept the yoke of heaven, and afterwards accept the yoke of mitzvos.'"

"Hmmm. The yoke of heaven ... the yoke of mitzvos. What is the difference between the two?"

"Another excellent question, Avi! The *Siddur Otzar HaTefillos* defines the yoke of heaven as the belief with *emunah shelayma* (perfect faith) that Hashem is One, and He is the sovereign ruler of the entire universe. After this *emunah* has settled into a person's heart, and he has taken upon himself the yoke of heaven, he is now ready for an additional commitment, the yoke of mitzvos, to follow all of the Almighty's commandments to the letter."

"Abba, doesn't the yoke of heaven include the yoke of mitzvos? Part of accepting the rule of Hashem is to follow His laws."

"Yes, in a manner of speaking, Avi. The yoke of heaven is allegiance to Hashem. We will not rebel under any circum-

stances. We understand intellectually that He is in total control of the world, and therefore everything that happens to us is from Him. He is completely good and kind, and therefore it is all good. Although some experiences may be unpleasant, they are no reason to resent or rebel against the Creator. We emotionally feel in our heart the Almighty's kindness in every aspect of our lives. Therefore, we lovingly accept His decrees. That is *kaballas ole malchus Shomayim* (acceptance of the yoke of heaven) – the submission to Divine rule. The next step is to take action. He gave us a big, beautiful Torah with 613 mitzvos. We commit ourselves to intellectually learn and understand His commandments, and then physically and emotionally fulfill them with all of our abilities. That is *kaballas ole mitzvos* (acceptance of the yoke of mitzvos)."



"What a privilege, Abba!"

"Indeed, Avi. There is an additional attribute of the second *parasha*. It is stated in the plural, '*bichol livavichem uvichol nafshichem* (with all of your hearts and all of your souls)', as opposed to the first *parasha*, which is stated in the singular '*bichol livavicho uvichol nafshicho* (with all of your heart and all of your soul)'. The commentary *Iyun HaTefillah*<sup>2</sup> points out that the *avodas Hashem* (Divine service) of a unified community is much more powerful than that of the separate individuals."

"Yes, Abba."

"The verses then go on to describe the reward that awaits those who serve the Almighty with all of their hearts and souls – an abundance of rainfall and crops – they will eat and be satisfied. However, beware! Let your hearts not be drawn away from Hashem and into the physical delights! If that happens, the wrath of Hashem will blaze against you! He will close the heavens, no rain will fall, the earth will not yield its produce, and you will swiftly be banished from the land!"

"Oy vey! That is certainly a terrible punishment. However, Abba, this appears to

contradict a Gemora and a Mishna. The Gemora<sup>3</sup> says that there is no reward for a mitzvah in this world. And the Mishna<sup>4</sup> says that one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah ... for the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah. Here, the verse states that the reward for the mitzvos is an abundance of rainfall and crops! How do we resolve these apparent contradictions?"

"Another brilliant question, Avi! This question is asked by Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler zt"l.<sup>5</sup> He answers with a passage from the Rambam.<sup>6</sup> If we perform the mitzvos with happiness, goodness in our souls, and conduct ourselves wisely, Hashem will remove from us all of the stumbling blocks which prevent us from fulfilling His mitzvos, for example sickness, war, and famine. Instead He will bless us with all the good things we need to keep His Torah, for example plenty, peace, and wealth. This will allow us to spend our time learning His wisdom and doing His mitzvos, in order to earn reward in the next world, rather than looking after our physical needs."

"Are you saying, Abba, that the blessing that the Torah promises for loving Hashem and serving Him with all of our hearts and souls is not prosperity for its own sake, rather to give us the opportunity to further serve Him with all of our hearts and souls?"

"Precisely, Avi. This is what we accept upon ourselves in this second *parasha* of *Kriyas Shema*. May we all succeed in fulfilling it!"

"Amen!"

*Kinderlach* . . .

*We spoke about Hashem's love for us in the second bracha before Kriyas Shema. We now see how He demonstrates that love. He gives us the opportunity to realize that He is the Sole Ruler of the universe, and accept His rule upon ourselves. He gives us a big Torah full of mitzvos for us to fulfill with all of our hearts and souls. For this we earn reward in the next world, and blessing in this world. The blessing comes to give us the means to garner more reward in the next world. What an outpouring of love! What can we do for Him in return? Give Him nachas by loving Him, accepting His yoke of heaven, His yoke of mitzvos. This will enable Him to give us the reward that He so dearly wants us to have. Kinderlach, accept the yoke of mitzvos and give our father in Heaven endless nachas.*

<sup>1</sup> Tikkun Tefillah דף קכה

<sup>2</sup> Siddur Otzer Hatefillos קמג דף. See also Ramban (Devarim 11:13).

<sup>3</sup> Kiddushin 39b

<sup>4</sup> Pirkei Avos 4:2

<sup>5</sup> Michtav MiEliyahu, Volume 1, pp. 4-7

<sup>6</sup> Hilchos Teshuva 5:1