

This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances. (7:12)

In this instance, the word *mishpatim*, statutes, is a general term to describe the various divisions of the *mitzvos* – *eidus*, *chukim* and *Mishpatim* – under one title. All *mitzvos*, whether they commemorate an historic religious event, a legal obligation to a fellow Jew, a form of Heavenly service, or a *mitzvah* which defies human comprehension, are all included in the category of *mishpatim*, legal maxims. As such, it is our duty to execute them simply because it is Hashem's command; it is our duty – with no thanks or reward to be claimed. Yet, by doing all of these, we establish a harmonious condition in which our nation will receive the richest blessings. As the *eikev*, heel, comes along naturally with the forward movement of the foot, so, too, do these blessings follow our total obedience.

We are neither to weigh *mitzvos*, nor are we to attempt to determine and establish the value of each individual *mitzvah*, to consider which *mitzvah* engenders greater promise, larger reward. Each *mitzvah* in the Torah interlocks with one another, with the smallest, and seemingly most insignificant, “holding hands” with the weightiest, most critical *mitzvah*. We are not the ones who determine the importance of a *mitzvah*. Our function is to carry out the word of Hashem without raising questions, without deciding for ourselves in which areas of Jewish life and observance we would like to express greater obedience. This is why all *mitzvos*, without distinction, should be carried out with equal conscience, faithfulness; all are to be of equal importance to us; all are to be performed without the thought of greater or lesser reward hanging in the back of our minds.

This is what the Torah means when it uses the word *eikav*, which is often translated as heel, something which is often not considered, as it moves along with the rest of the body. When we turn our attention to the seemingly insignificant and do not capriciously distinguish between *mitzvos*, between what should be important and what in our small minds might not carry the same relevance, we undermine Hashem's Torah. If, however, we are *eikav tishme'un*, listen, pay attention to the *eikav*, we will garner the reward that is so richly deserved by those who are Torah observant.

When one takes such a non-questioning attitude towards the Torah, he ascribes to the obedience expected of a Torah Jew. We have questions, but we do not ask. Clearly, traumatic events occur which would challenge a non-believer, raising penetrating questions which weigh heavily on their faith in G-d. The believing Jew, however, understands and accepts that this is Hashem's decree. While there certainly is a rationale for everything, it is beyond his human grasp of understanding.

A noted *Rav* and educator had a meeting in one of the Israeli Ministry buildings. As is common throughout *Eretz Yisrael*, he had to pass through security in order to be cleared to enter the building. The security guard was a nice, friendly fellow, non-observant, but that had no bearing on his position. He was in charge of making sure that no suspicious person or package entered the

ministry building. This is a country which takes its security seriously.

“*Kavod Horav*,” the guard began, “do you know the story concerning the *bas melech*, princess?” For a moment, the *Rav* was taken aback. This was not the conversation he had expected to have with a non-observant security guard. “No, I do not recall a specific story. Perhaps you can jar my memory and remind me of the story.”

“I am surprised that such a distinguished *Rav* is unaware of the story of the princess. Nonetheless, I will be happy to share the story with you.” Obviously, the guard had a specific point that he wanted to make.

“This story is from the *Ramak*” (acronym for the name of the noted *Kabbalist*, *Horav Moshe Cordovero*, *zl*, author of *Tomar Devorah* and many other seminal volumes of *chochmas ha’nistar*, mysticism). Once the holy mystic’s name was attached to the story, it took on renewed significance.

“There was once a princess whose father provided for her every need. There was nothing this girl could not access. The king arranged for her to have the finest teachers who instructed her in every educational subject and every sport. Her clothes came from the finest shops, designed and constructed by the best and most sought-after designers and seamstresses. All that was necessary was for the princess’s servants to say to the king that the princess requires ‘this or that’ and, immediately, it was delivered.

“One day, the princess herself approached the king with a request. ‘My master, the king, can I have ‘something?’ The king was shocked by her request and replied, ‘My dear daughter, it is not necessary for you to address me as, My master, the king. I am your father. All you have to say is, Daddy, can I have something?’

“Sadly, the child did not pick up on the meaning of the king’s request. Being raised by nannies and servants, with very little access to the king as a ‘father,’ all that she ever heard was, ‘my lord, the king, or your royal highness.’ Never did she have the opportunity to interact with him as ‘Daddy.’ While she might not have realized this, the king was brokenhearted, yearning for that sweet sound of ‘Daddy’ to emanate from his daughter’s mouth.

“Another few times, the princess made requests of the king, but it was always either, ‘Your royal highness,’ or, ‘My lord, the king,’ never ‘Daddy.’ One day, the young princess took a walk outside of the palace compound, and the king had set upon her two large, trained dogs who were told to frighten her, but not to hurt her. The princess immediately began to scream hysterically, ‘Daddy! Daddy! Help me! Help me!’

“When the king heard his daughter calling out ‘Daddy,’ it was music to his ears. When his daughter was in a frightening situation, she remembered her father.”

The security guard turned to the *Rav*, and said, "We are similar to the princess. When our Father in Heaven wants us to call out to Him, *Avinu Malkeinu*, He sends dogs to frighten us. Dogs come in all shapes and forms; terrorists, bombs, disasters. All of these are our Holy Father's way of saying to us: 'You have not called out to your Father lately.'"

Things take place around us and throughout the world, events which defy our ability to rationalize. We accept them because we believe in Hashem. When we think about it, however, do we ever ask ourselves: "When was the last time we cried out to our Father in Heaven?"