

Ekev Torah Study w/ Rabbi Josh

1) Kedushas Levi (Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, 1740–1809)

**"And it shall be, because (*eikev*) you listen... etc., that YHVH your God will keep for you the *brit*/covenant and the *chesed*... etc."
(Deuteronomy 7:12).**

The principle is this: in truth, what the Holy Blessed One, gives as *reward* for a mitzvah is the lesser of the delights (*ta'anugim*). The essential delight — the true reward — is the mitzvah *itself*, the fact that a person brings satisfaction (*nachat ruach*) to their Creator, does the Divine will, and fulfills God's mitzvah. As the Tanna said (Avot 4:2), "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" — meaning that the very essence of the mitzvah *is* the delight and the reward for the mitzvah.

What the Holy Blessed One, pays out as reward in the World that is Coming is [only] the lesser of the delights. But the essential delight is the mitzvah itself — that a person does the Creator's will and, as it were, brings joy to the Creator and to all the worlds.

This is the meaning of "*ve-hayah eikev*" — [read *eikev* not only as "because" but as related to] "heel" (*eikev*), i.e., the end, the last and final thing. "The matter which you shall listen to, and YHVH your God will keep for you" — meaning, what God will safeguard for you — "the *chesed* and the *brit*," The Holy One will do good for you and pay you a reward — that is [only] the lesser of the delights. But the essential delight is the very doing of the will of one's Creator, etc.

-Trans. Claude AI and Rabbi Josh

בן עזאי אומר, הוי רץ למצוה קלה כבחמורה, ובורח מן העברה. ששמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה. ששכר מצוה, מצוה. ושכר עברה, עברה:

Ben Azzai said: Be quick in performing a minor commandment as in the case of a major one, and flee from transgression; For one commandment

leads to another commandment, and transgression leads to another transgression; For the reward for performing a commandment is another commandment and the reward for committing a transgression is a transgression.

-Mishnah Avot 4:2, trans. Dr. Joshua Kulp (on Sefaria). Shimon ben Azzai lived in Eretz Yisrael, early 2nd century CE.

3) From Rabbi David Seidenberg:

The Torah praises Canaan as “a land of mountains and valleys”. Only “through the rain of the heavens will she drink water.” (Deut 11:11) “She is not like the land of Egypt, which . . . you gave drink with your foot (by pumping water from the Nile), like a garden of greens” (Deut 11:10). By the same token, this land is also not like the garden of Eden, for the garden of Eden was watered by four rivers, and was the source of those rivers.

A land that must drink from the heavens is a precarious land, a land where people can’t control irrigation and are completely dependent on rainfall, a land that is subject to drought. How then could this be the ideal, the promised land?

And yet it is, the Torah tells us, and the sign of this is that the “the eyes of YHVH the Lord your God are on her always” (Deut 11:12). This mystical-sounding relationship with the divine is simpler than it sounds: it means that God is continually assessing whether the people merit rain. Canaan is not like the land of Egypt, which can go for centuries sustained by the flooding of the Nile and the technology of the pedal pump, no matter the state of the weather or the state of justice, until it finally gets its proverbial seven years of famine or its ten all-consuming plagues. Unlike Egypt, the feedback loop in Canaan is short and swift – the loop may be closed, the consequences felt, within a season or two.

This paradoxically is what attracted our ancestors to Canaan: it was a place where they could experience the immediacy of God's judgment, and hence God's presence. It is this very fact – that our tenure is tenuous – that makes Canaan/Israel a holy land.

- <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/to-pluck-out-the-eyes-of-the-lord/> Article is from 2016.