



Eikev - The Endgame

What's "Eikev"?

"And 'Eikev'-because you will listen...." the Midrash Rabbah says repeatedly that 'Eikev' is to be understood as at the **'end'** - meaning to say at the **end of time** we will get the reward for listening to Hashem. Why is olam habah referred to as the 'heel'- end? Rashi takes a different approach and says that 'Eikev' refers to "the Mitzvos that people [do not take seriously and] trample under their heels" in the merit of those mitzvahs we deserve reward. This understanding of 'Eikev' runs contrary to where we find this term used in Sefer Bereishis by Avraham Avinu. After Avraham passes the supreme test of 'Akeidas Yitzchak' it says (22:18): "And your children will be a source of blessing for all the nations of the world 'Eikev'-because you listened to my voice" **which refers to the Supreme test of being willing to sacrifice his son!** This term is used again in Parshas Toldos (26:5) where Hashem told Yitzchak "Eikev-because because Avraham listened to me..." **Which Rashi confirms to mean when Hashem tested him.** That pasuk continues to say that Avraham kept **ALL Commandments referring even to Rabbinic ones.** Meaning that "Eikev" means the supreme test and can refer also to all Mitzvos! How do we reconcile that with Rashi in our parsha?

The Code of the Baal HaTurim

The Baal HaTurim points out that the pasuk in Toldos has 10 words alluding to the 'Aseres HaDibros' and he adds there, and in our parsha, the word **'Eikev' has a numerical value of 172 is alluding to the hundred seventy two words of the 'Aseres HaDibros'!** The baal HaTurim by 'Akeidas Yitzchak' that the final letters of "Eikev-because you listened to my voice" (Beis, Reish, Tav, Yud) spells out 'Bris'. Does that allude to 'Bris Milah'? How are we to decipher the code of the Baal HaTurim?

He should have been called "Achaz"

Our father Yaakov Avinu got his name because "... his hand was **'ochezes'**-holding the **'Eikev'**-heel of Aisov and he called his name Yaakov (Eikev – heel)" (Bereishis 25:26). **He should have been called "Achaz'-held, because he was holding!** The heel that he was holding on to belonged to Aisov! Why was he called Yaakov – heel? Undoubtedly Rashi was bothered by this and that's why he comments on the words "Eikev Aisov" (heel of Aisov): "[it was] a sign that he (Aisov) will not manage to **complete** his kingdom until this one (Yaakov) comes and **takes it from him**" It is clear from Rashi that **Yaakov takes the 'Eikev'- completion away from Aisov** and that is why he's called Yaakov (heel/completion). What does it mean that Aisov did not manage to **complete** his kingdom? What does it mean that the 'completion' is by Yaakov?

Absolute End Point

The terms **'completion'** or **'endpoint'** only mean "over and done with" **if there is a continuation past that endpoint when that thing is no longer.** What if there is an **"absolute endpoint"** to time and space where there is nothing after it? The one who occupies that **"absolute endpoint"** will be the **"Last and Everlasting"** – **because there is nothing else after that point.** Aisov wants to be the last word in history and destiny. He wants that there be no other continuation to reality past his kingdom. That's what it means he wanted to **"complete his kingdom"**. "Yaakov takes that away from him" means that **the endpoint of Destiny is occupied by us!** Only we, the Jewish people, will be at that **final** point, **everything other than "us" will cease to exist prior to that point.** That **endpoint** is what we call **"Olam Haba"** – **"the everlasting Shabbos",** the Prophets refer to it as **"Ketz Hayamin"- the end of days.** Meaning to say: it is the final point of

Destiny which lasts forever. there is no other point past that point where Destiny winds up.

Yisroel Amalek & Shemini Atzeres

This competition between Yaakov and Aisov plays out in the competition between their descendants: the Jewish people and Amalek. Both are competing for first place as Rashi says at the very beginning of Bereishis “Bereishis – ‘for the first’ - for the sake of the first for the sake of the Jewish people who are called the first”. Bilaam describes Amalek as “Reishis goyim...” (Bamidbar 24:20) the first amongst nations. This explains the irreconcilable adversity and mutually exclusive existence of the two: **there cannot be two firsts!** Bilaam further says about Amalek: “and his end is obliteration”. Amalek wants to be in the cosmic ‘first place’ **but he has no future**. The Maharal Contrasts that with the Jewish people whose very name indicates that they will make it to ‘Olam Haba’. What is ‘Olam haba’? To be together with Hashem to enjoy the “Aura of the Divine Presence” forever. That is alluded to in the very name YisroEL which **ends** with the Name of Hashem. We **end** by Hashem. When all of reality will ‘shut’ down to reveal that Hashem is the “One and Only”, at that absolute endpoint of time and space is where the Jewish people will be in front of Hashem. All the nations of the world are going to ‘shut down’ together with the rest of the world in the seventh millennium. Chazal tell us “The world will be 6000 years and one [millennium] desolate...” (Sanhedrin 97). The only nation that will make it past that point to the absolute end of time and space is the Jewish people and that is the 8th millennium. All this is alluded to and celebrated every year on ‘Shemini Atzeres’ the **8th day** which is called the **‘small feast’** of serving **‘whatever is left’** (Midrash Rabbah Pinchas) when it’s just us and Hashem alone as all the goyim **have gone** after celebrating the **7 days** of Succos. The 8th millennium is when will be a ‘small Feast’ just us and Hashem alone and everyone else belonging to the realm of seven millenia as in the seven days ohas shut down. The 8th is the end point that lasts forever and only the Jewish people will be there and that’s where we get our Eternal

reward for our Mitzvos. That is the **“point of Eternity”** because there is no point past that point.

“Eikev” according to Rashi

We've explained why ‘Olam Haba’ is called the ‘heel’ as it's the end of time and space. We have to do our part to be worthy of making it to the end. We have to be willing to go to the **end** of our abilities to serve Hashem with the **totality** of our being. ‘Eikev’-the end could mean keeping the entirety of Torah including the Rabbinic mitzvos. ‘Eikev’ could mean being willing to sacrifice and giving Hashem “our all” “down to the **LAST** drop” as it means by the test of the ‘Akeida’. “Eikev” could mean not leaving any Mitzvah unfulfilled even “the Mitzvos that people trampled under their heels” **because if you need to complete a journey to the end you cannot be short by even one-foot step!**

Asares HaDibros & Bris Milah

We can now understand the allusions of The Baal HaTurim. Shavuos is called the “holiday of the giving of the Torah” - but how is that so if all we got on that day were the ‘Aseres HaDibros’? **It is unanimous in the Rishonim that the ‘Aseres HaDibros’ encapsulate the entirety of Torah.** So indeed the 172 (numerical value of Eikev) words of the ‘Aseres HaDibros’ means it is the entirety of Torah **from beginning to end** as all the 613 mitzvot are encoded there. There's one mitzvah that’s also parallel to the **entirety** of the Jewish being and that is Bris Milah. The importance of Bris Milah is well-known and it represents having a connection to Hashem even at the lowest level (the heel). Chazal tell us that when Dovid HaMelech was in the bath house he was able to reassure himself that he still has a connection with Hashem because of Bris Milah. It’s more than that. The Mishnah in Nedarim says that if a person swears off getting pleasure from any “Oreil”-uncircumcised person he is **prohibited in all goyim, circumcised or not, and permitted to all Jews, circumcised or not!** The same is true in reverse: If a person swears off pleasure from all people who are “Mohul” – circumcised he is **prohibited in all Jews circumcised or not, and he is permitted in all goyim circumcised or not!** We

learn from this that the Jew is innately called a “person of the Bris” - it represents being connected in the essence of our beings whether we actually merited to fulfill the action of Bris Milah or were barred from it for whatever reason.

*[On a deeper level the Zohar says that the Bris is in the middah called “Yesod” which is called “Siyuma d’Gufa”- The **End** of the body! It is all connected to the same idea that Bris reaches until the end and that’s why Bris is numerical value of 612 which means it encompasses **all** the 612 branches of the unity of Torah which is the 613th]*

Rebbe Akiva’s Role in Destiny

With this we can appreciate Rebbe Akiva’s role in Destiny. Rebbe Akiva’s greatness and tragic end was shown to Adam HaRishon and Moshe Rabbeinu. He was destined to be a very great man and yet to have a very tragic end. What’s interesting to note is that when Moshe is told about Rebbe Akiva Hashem told him: “.... There will be a man at the end of a number of Generations....” (Menachos 29). The Shelah HaKadosh in his drush for the days of the Omer points out that Adam HaRishon was set up in a state of adversity with the snake for all generations. The continuation of Adam is the Jewish people and the continuation of the snake is Edom which includes all the descendants of Aisov of including the Roman Empire. Hashem tells the snake “man will slay you by the head and you will slay him at the heel”. When Yaakov beat the ministering angel of Edom he demonstrated that he is worthy of being called Yisroel because “he ruled over man and angel” i.e. he was “at the head” - we slay the snake when we are at the head. **Rebbe Akiva remained a heel (Akiva=Eikev) and it was fulfilled in him “and you (the snake) will slay him at the heel”. That’s why he was killed by the Roman Empire that is considered to be a continuation of the snake. The idea is that Rebbe Akiva is to give us strength to endure in this state where we were “at the heels”!** Rebbe Akiva was there to sustain us at the “end” **to insurance that we reach the end**. Rebbe Akiva always sees the future. This is clear from many places particularly the Gemara we

dealt with last week. He sees the good reward the righteous get in the future and he sees that the bad times are stepping stones for the good future. He and his Talmidim were the ones that created the literature of the oral law and put it in an organized written form allowing it to be preserved and not forgotten - **so that the Torah will make it to the end of time** and never been forgotten by the Jewish people.

“Ikvasa d’Mashicha”

The final generation before Moshiach comes is called “Ikvasa d’Mashicha” - the heels of Moshiach. It’s at the **end** of time. Just like the heels are the lowest part of the body farthest away from the head which has the intellect, so also the generation at the end will be on the lowest level and the world will be at its lowest moral state. It will be the **‘heels of history’** and the generation at that time may well be the **‘heels of the Jewish people’**. That makes no difference! Every generation is equally important! If a single foot step is missing you have not arrived at the destination. This **final generation will be the generation that crosses the Finish Line Of destiny and** will get us ‘out of the box’ of this world to the absolute endpoint. Prior to that which all the other nations ‘fall out of the game’. This LAST generation may be ‘heels’ relative to earlier generations, but they play the greatest role in destiny. They will be the final step and link the ‘endpoint’. Rebbe Akiva was created with the destiny of giving us the power to survive being at the ‘heels’ and to make it to the ‘heels of time and space’ – where all other nations drop out and we receive our eternal infinite reward.

Good Shabbos



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