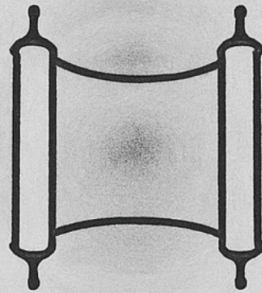


בס"ד

# Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk Parshas Eikev



לע"נ

ר' לוי יצחק בן ברוך שניאור

*Dedicated By:*

ר' נחום אהרון & חיה ליטשקאווסקי

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# The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Eikev

**“And it shall be, eikev [because]...” and “the kindness.” In light of what was said: “What wisdom made into a crown, humility made into a heel beneath her foot,”**

and the explanation is simple: that humility is the source and root of every holy thing, and it is what sustains everything.

Therefore it is called by the term “eikev” [heel], like the foot which is the foundation upon which the body stands.

It turns out that in everything a person does, there must be within that action humility.

And this is [the meaning of] “And it shall be, eikev [because] you will listen to these judgments.” Meaning: in all of these judgments you should seek to infuse within them the “eikev”—which is humility.

“And you shall guard them and do them”—meaning that in every mitzvah you should accomplish two things: the first is the performance of the mitzvah in action,

and the second is the pure thought within it—and that is humility.

And thought is called by the term “guarding,” as it guards the matter within it.

And this is [the meaning of] “and you shall guard and do them”—a hint to these two aforementioned things.

And for this our Creator, may He be blessed, promised us that for these two things you will do, I too will bestow upon you two corresponding things—

and they are “the covenant” and “the kindness.”

“The covenant” refers to one who merits to perform mitzvos, which are called “covenant.”

And “kindness” is what Hashem bestows upon a person in this world—goodness given only from kindness,

because the reward for a mitzvah is not given in this world, and yet He constantly bestows goodness upon us.

וְהָיָה עֵקֶב כּו' וְאֵת הַחֶסֶד. עַל פִּי מָה שֶּׁאָמְרוּ "מָה שֶּׁעָשִׂיתָ חֶסֶד עֲטָרָה כּו' עָשִׂיתָ עֲנָוָה עֵקֶב, לְסִלּוּלִיתָהּ",

וְהַפִּירוֹשׁ פָּשוּט שֶׁהָעֲנָוָה הוּא הַמְקוֹר וְהַשְׂרֵשׁ שֶׁל כָּל דָּבָר קְדוּשָׁה וְהוּא הַמְקִימִים הַכֹּל,

וְלָכֵן נִקְרָאת בְּלִשׁוֹן "עֵקֶב" כְּמוֹ הַרְגֵּל שֶׁהוּא הַקִּיּוּם שֶׁהַגּוּף עוֹמֵד עָלָיו.

נִמְצָא שֶׁבְּכָל דָּבָר שֶׁאָדָם עוֹשֶׂה צְרִיף לִהְיוֹת שְׂתֵהקָה בְּעוֹבְדָא הָיָה הָעֲנָוָה.

וְזֶהוּ "וְהָיָה עֵקֶב" צְרִיף "תִּשְׁמָעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה", פִּירוֹשׁ בְּכָל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה תִּרְאוּ לְהַשְׁרָה בְּתוֹכָם הָעֵקֶב הִיא הָעֲנָוָה,

וְשִׁמְרָתָם וְעֲשִׂיתָם אִתָּם, פִּירוֹשׁ בְּכָל מִצְוָה תִּפְעֲלוּ ב' דְּבָרִים, הָאֶחָד עֲשִׂיתָ הַמִּצְוָה בְּמַעֲשֶׂה,

וְהַבִּית הַמַּחְשְׁבָה הַטְּהוֹרָה בָּהּ וְהִיא הָעֲנָוָה,

וְהַמַּחְשְׁבָה נִקְרָא בְּלִשׁוֹן שְׁמִירָה שֶׁשׁוֹמֵר הַדָּבָר בְּתוֹכוֹ,

וְזֶהוּ "וְשִׁמְרָתָם וְעֲשִׂיתָם אִתָּם" רָמַז עַל ב' דְּבָרִים הֵנּ"ל.

וְלִזֶּה הַבְּטִיחַ לָנוּ בּוֹרְאֵינוּ יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּשִׁבְלֵי ב' דְּבָרִים שֶׁתַּעֲשׂוּ גַם אֲנִי אֲשַׁפֵּיעַ לָכֶם ב' דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים בְּנִגְדָן

וְהֵם הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד

הַ"בְּרִית" הוּא מִי שְׁזוֹכָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹת שֶׁהֵם נִקְרָאִים בְּרִית,

וְ"חֶסֶד" הוּא מָה שֶׁמִּשְׁפִּיעַ הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ לְאָדָם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה טוֹבָה רַק מִצַּד הַחֶסֶד

כִּי שָׂכָר מִצְוָה בְּהָאִי עֲלֵמָא לִיכָא וְאֶרְעֵל-פִּיכֹן מִיִּטִּיב לָנוּ תָמִיד,

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And this is what King David, peace be upon him, said (Tehillim 119:112), “I inclined my heart... always eikev.”

וְזֶהוּ שְׁאֵמַר דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם (תְּהִלִּים קי"ט,  
"קי"ב) "נָטִיתִי לְבִי כו' לְעוֹלָם עֵקֶב

Meaning: my primary intention was to fulfill the statutes through the trait of “eikev”—which is humility, as explained above. And this is sufficient.

פִּירוּשׁ עֵיקֶר הַשְׁגָּחָתִי הִתְּה לַעֲשׂוֹת הַחֻקִּים עַל יָדֵי  
מִדַּת הָעֵקֶב הִיא הָעֲנָוָה כַּנִּל. וְק"ל

### [NOTE Summary:

In this deeply insightful teaching, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk unpacks the opening phrase of *Parshas Eikev*—“וְהָיָה עֵקֶב תִּשְׁמְעוּן”—through the lens of humility (עֲנָוָה). Drawing on the Midrash that says “what wisdom placed as a crown, humility placed beneath her heel,” he explains that true holiness and divine service are upheld not by intellect or grandeur, but by humility, which acts as the “heel” or foundation of every mitzvah. The word “עֵקֶב” (heel) becomes a symbol of this lowliness, the quiet submission upon which the entire spiritual body stands. Every act, no matter how exalted, must be infused with humility, for this is what gives it permanence and sanctity.

He then reads the verse as an instruction: in every *mishpat* (judgment/mitzvah), one must insert humility. The dual command—“וְשִׁמְרָתָם וְעָשִׂיתָם”—refers to both external action (עֲשִׂיָּה) and internal intention (שְׁמִירָה), the latter being rooted in humble thought. If we serve Hashem with both physical performance and inward modesty, then Hashem in turn bestows upon us *two* corresponding blessings: *the covenant* (בְּרִית)—the ability to perform mitzvos with enduring connection—and *kindness* (חֶסֶד)—divine goodness in this world, even though reward for mitzvos is not given here. The verse from Tehillim, “I inclined my heart to fulfill Your statutes forever, eikev,” is reinterpreted to mean: my entire devotion to Hashem's statutes was guided by humility.

### Practical Takeaway:

Holiness does not reside in brilliance, charisma, or intensity alone—it is anchored in humility. In every mitzvah we perform, whether grand or simple, we must check: am I doing this with עֲנָוָה? Is there self-nullification or a trace of spiritual ego? The external action is not complete without an inward posture of lowliness. Practicing mindfulness before, during, and after mitzvos—seeking to infuse each one with humility—draws down divine kindness and deepens our covenant with Hashem. The “heel” sustains the body; so too, humility sustains the soul.

### Chassidic Story:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk was once approached by a wealthy, proud man who boasted of his pious deeds—how much he gave to tzedakah, how many mitzvos he performed, how punctual he was with prayer. Rebbe Elimelech said nothing at first. Then he quietly stood up, walked to the window, and pointed at the cobbler mending shoes in the street. “Do you see him?” the Rebbe asked. “His hands are blackened with glue, and he knows no great Torah. But each day, he sings to Hashem as he works, and every coin he earns, he



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shares with the poor. He bows his head in gratitude for even a crust of bread. In Heaven, his footsteps make more noise than your boasts.”

The man was stunned. Rebbe Elimelech continued, “One who walks with humility carries the world. One who speaks with pride carries only himself—and even that, poorly.”

(Source: *Noam Elimelech* oral traditions, cited in *Ohr Elimelech* and *Sichos Tzaddikim*)

### END NOTE]

Or it may be said [regarding the verse], “And it shall be, eikev [because] you listen...”—it appears to me as follows: behold, a person must study Torah *lishmah* [for its own sake], and constantly examine his motivations—

if during his learning any ulterior motive arises, such as desiring to boast before someone else, or similar matters—then he must break the strength of that motive.

And then, when they conduct themselves in this way, Hashem will grant him to come to pure thoughts.

And this is [the meaning of] “And it shall be, eikev you listen...”—meaning, when you pay attention to those matters that a person tramples under his heels, as Rashi of blessed memory explained, and this is as we said above—

“And you shall guard...”—meaning, through this you will merit to arrive at pure thoughts, and this is called ‘guarding,’ as it says, “And his father guarded the matter.”

“And you shall do them”—behold, it is written, “For six days Hashem made the heavens...” and “on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”

It follows that the weekdays are called “action” with regard to Hashem, as it says “for six days He made.”

And “the seventh day”—meaning holiness—is the spiritual soul. And this is the meaning of “He rested and was refreshed”—that Hashem placed and infused a soul into Shabbos—meaning holiness and attachment.

And for us, it is said in the opposite order: “And Bnei Yisrael shall guard the Shabbos to make the Shabbos”—meaning, the

או יאמר "והיה עקב תשמעו כו'", נראה לי  
דהנה האדם צריך ללמוד תורה לשמה ולהסתכל  
תמיד על הפניות

אם יבוא לו בתוך למודו איזה פניה להתפאר בפני  
שום אדם וכיוצא בהם, אז ישבר פת הפניה הזאת

ואז כשיתנהגו כך, יתן לו השם יתברך שיבוא לידי  
מחשבות טהורות

וזהו "והיה עקב תשמעו כו'", פירוש כשתסתכלו  
על אותן הדברים שאדם דש בעקביו כפירוש רש"י  
זכרונו לברכה והינו כנ"ל

ושמרתם" ר"ל על-ידי זה תזכו לבוא לידי  
מחשבות טהורות שזה נקרא בשם שמירה כמו  
"שכתוב" ואביו שמר את הדבר

ועשיתם אותם, דהנה כתוב "ששת ימים עשה ה'  
את השמים כו' וביום השביעי שבת וינפש

נמצא ימי החול נקראים אצל השם יתברך עשיה כמו  
"שכתוב" ששת ימים עשה

יום השביעי" דהינו הקדושה הוא הנפש הרוחנית,  
והינו "שבת וינפש" ר"ל שנתן והכניס השם יתברך  
נפש בתוך השבת דהינו הקדושה והדבקות

ואצלנו נאמר בהפך "ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת  
לעשות את השבת" דהינו השמירה והמחשבה  
והדבקות שיש לנו בשבת, הוא נחשב לעשיה

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guarding, thought, and attachment we have on Shabbos is considered *making* it.

And this is “And you shall guard...”—as above, that you should have pure thought—

“And you shall do them”—this is considered by you as full action, that by this you are performing a complete *asiyah* [act].

And this is what King David, peace be upon him, said: “My soul [longs] for Hashem, [more than] guards for the morning...”

Behold, Hashem placed within us—within our body—a *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*,

which correspond to three worlds: namely, the world of angels, the world of spheres [celestial orbs], and the lowly world [earthly realm].

That is, the *neshamah* corresponds to the world of angels,

who are all cleaving with great attachment and have no other thought at all,

only their will and desire is always to cleave to the Creator, blessed is He.

So too, the *neshamah* has no other cause for action except its will and desire to cleave to the blessed, exalted Creator,

and always it guards and hopes for this.

And the *ruach* corresponds to the world of the spheres, through which power and influence are given to [the world of] vegetative, animal, and mineral life (דצח"מ).

So too, through the *ruach* that is in a person, he draws down influence below.

And the *nefesh* corresponds to the lowly world,

for within the *nefesh* is also the *animal soul* (*nefesh habehamis*) that desires physical matters.

And the *neshamah* and *ruach* both guard and hope for holiness and attachment.

And King David, peace be upon him, said: “My *nefesh* [is] for Hashem,”

meaning he prayed that he should reach the level where even his *nefesh* will not desire anything—

וזהו "ושמרתם" כנ"ל שיהיה לכם מחשבה טהורה,

ועשייתם אותם" שזה נחשב אצלכם עשייה, שאיתם" עושים בזה עשייה שלימה.

וזהו שאמר דוד המלך עליו השלום "נפשי לה' ממשומרים לבקר כו",

דהנה השם יתברך נתן בתוכנו בגופנו נפש רוח, ונשמה,

שהם כנגד שלשה עולמות דהינו עולם המלאכים, ועולם הגלגלים ועולם השכל

,דהינו הנשמה היא כנגד עולם המלאכים,

שהם כלם דבוקים בדבקות גדול ואין להם שום מחשבה אחרת

,רק רצונם וחסדקם תמיד לדבק אל הבורא יתברך

כך הנשמה אין לה שום סיבת עשייה אחרת רק רצונה וחסדקה לדבק בבורא ברוך הוא יתעלה.

ותמיד שומרת ומצפה על זאת

,והרוח הוא כנגד עולם הגלגלים

,שעל ידיהם נתן כח והשפעה לדצח"מ

.כן על-ידי הרוח שבאדם הוא שואב השפעה למטה

,והנפש הוא כנגד עולם השכל

שבנפש יש גם-כן נפש הבהמית המתאווה לדברים גשמיים

והנשמה והרוח שניהם שומרים ומצפים אל הקדושה והדבקות

",ואמר דוד המלך עליו השלום "נפשי לה'

שהנה מתפלל שיבוא אל הבחינה הזאת שגם נפשו לא תתאווה לשום דבר

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only to cleave to holiness—like the *neshamah* and *ruach*,  
which are always “guarding” and hoping “for the morning”—  
meaning holiness, attachment, and loving-kindnesses—which  
are called “morning.”

So too should his *nefesh* long for this.

And who will cause me this? “Shomrim la'boker”—the  
*guardians for the morning*,

these are the *neshamah* and *ruach*, they will compel and bring  
the *nefesh* also to be like them—

to belong only to Hashem alone. And this is sufficient.

רק לדבק לקדושה, כמו הנשמה והרוח

, "שָׁמֶרֶם" שומרים תמיד ומצפים "אל הבקר

, דהיינו הקדושה והדבקות והחסדים הנקראים בקר

, כמו בן התאנה נפשו לזאת

"ומי יגרם לי זאת? שומרים לבקר

הם הנשמה והרוח יכריחו ויביאו גם הנפש להיות  
כמותם

. בלתי לה לבדו. וק"ל

### [NOTE Summary:

Building on the previous teaching, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk here expounds upon the verse “נפשי לה” —“My soul is for Hashem more than watchmen for the morning.” He explains that within every person reside three soul-levels: *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*, each corresponding to one of the three spiritual worlds—*nefesh* to the lowly material world, *ruach* to the celestial spheres, and *neshamah* to the world of angels. The *neshamah* and *ruach* are inherently drawn toward holiness and attachment to God, their desire and yearning pure and unceasing. However, the *nefesh*—especially the *nefesh habehamis* (animal soul)—naturally gravitates toward physical pleasures and worldly desires.

King David’s prayer, then, was that even his *nefesh*—the lowest, most earthbound part of the soul—should be transformed to long only for Hashem, just like his *neshamah* and *ruach*. The “shomrim laboker”—the guardians who yearn for the morning—are metaphors for the higher soul levels that await the light of holiness. David asks that his *nefesh* be influenced by these “guardians,” so that it too should cease desiring material things and instead cleave to the Divine. The inner hierarchy of the soul becomes a spiritual ladder: the upper faculties guiding the lower toward pure divine service.

### Practical Takeaway:

We are not meant to suppress the *nefesh* or deny its physicality—but to gently educate it through the influence of our higher faculties. Let your spiritual desires (*neshamah*), emotional refinement (*ruach*), and contemplative awareness guide your physical instincts (*nefesh*) toward holiness. This is the lifelong inner work of integration: aligning even your most basic self to desire only connection to Hashem. The key is *attunement*: to pause during the day and ask—what does my *nefesh* crave right now? Can I invite it to yearn for something higher?

END NOTE]

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Or it may be said [regarding the verse] “And it shall be, eikev [because] you listen...”—“eikev” is an allusion to such people who do not have intellect and understanding to grasp the greatness of the Creator and to serve Him with truth and completeness,

only that they attach themselves to people of righteousness and truth—who know and recognize the greatness of the Creator, blessed is He, and serve Him in truth.

Then it is considered also for them as if they too did their service with completeness like the complete tzaddikim.

And this is [the meaning of] “And it shall be, eikev you listen to these judgments...” as above—

that those who are limited in understanding should listen and attach themselves to those tzaddikim who know these judgments.

“And you shall guard and do them”—meaning, it will be considered for you as if you too guarded and did like them.

And this is [the meaning of] “My soul is for Hashem, [more than] watchmen for the morning”—

meaning: when I attach myself to Hashem because of those righteous people who guard and yearn for the morning as explained above—

“watchmen for the morning”—meaning: I too am considered among those who watch for the morning.

And this is sufficient.

### [NOTE Summary:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk teaches here a powerful and compassionate insight into spiritual inclusion. He interprets the word “עקב” (“heel”) in והיה עקב תשמעון as referring to those who, due to limited understanding or capacity, cannot grasp the greatness of Hashem or serve Him with the intellectual or emotional fullness of the righteous. Nevertheless, when such individuals attach themselves with sincerity to true *tzaddikim*—people of truth and righteousness who do know and serve Hashem with depth—their attachment itself elevates them. It is as if they too have fulfilled the mitzvos completely. The mitzvah of *hearing* (“תשמעון”) thus becomes a metaphor for this humble connection to the righteous.

The verse “ושמרתם ועשיתם אותם” is reinterpreted to mean: even those who did not understand or perform on their own are credited with having “guarded” and “done” through their heartfelt alignment with those who did.

או יאמר "והיה עקב תשמעון כו'", "עקב" הוא רמז לאנשים כאלה שאין להם שכל ובינה להשיג גדולת הבורא ועבודתו שלמה לעבדו באמת, ובשלימות

רק שהם מחברים עצמם אל אנשי צדק ואמת היודעים ומכירים גדולת הבורא ברוך הוא ועובדים באמת

אז נחשב גם להם כאלו גם הם עשו עבודתם שלמה. בהצדיקים השלמים

ונהו "והיה עקב תשמעון את המשפטים האלה" כנ"ל

שהאנשים הפחותים בשכלם ישמעו ויחברו את עצמם אל אותן הצדיקים היודעים המשפטים האלה

ושמרתם ועשיתם אותם" ר"ל יהיה נחשב להם כאלו גם אתם שמרתם ועשיתם כמוהם

"ונהו "נפשי לה' משומרים לבקר

ר"ל כשאני מדבק עצמי לה' מחמת אותם אנשים הצדיקים השומרים ומצפים לבקר כנ"ל

שומרים לבקר" ר"ל גם אנכי נחשב עם אותם השומרים לבקר

נ"ל

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This theme is then extended into the verse “נפשי לה' משומרים לבוקר”—King David’s cry to be considered among those who wait for the dawn of divine revelation. Rebbe Elimelech explains: even someone who is not on the level of yearning and spiritual clarity can still be counted among “the watchers for the morning” if he cleaves to those who do. In this way, even the spiritual “heel” can rise with the head.

### Practical Takeaway:

Not everyone has the tools, knowledge, or emotional clarity to serve Hashem like the great *tzaddikim*. But no Jew is left out. Simply by sincerely attaching oneself to people of truth—through love, learning, respect, or emulation—one is elevated and included. Never underestimate the spiritual power of **connection**. Even if you don’t yet feel the fire of yearning, just standing near someone who does can light your soul. Your “עקב”—your heel—becomes your merit.

### Chassidic Story:

Once, a simple villager traveled to Lizhensk to see Rebbe Elimelech. He didn’t understand Torah learning or mystical concepts, but he loved the *Rebbe*. When asked why he had come, the man said, “I don’t know how to serve Hashem like you or your students. But if a wagon has only one wheel, it cannot move. I thought—maybe I could be a fourth wheel to your wagon.”

Rebbe Elimelech stood up and kissed the man on the head. “You are not a wheel,” he said, “you are the oil that makes all wheels turn.”

(Source: *Ohr Elimelech*, oral tradition from the Lizhensk court) **END NOTE]**

**Or it may be said [regarding the verse] “And it shall be, eikev [because] you listen...”** Let us first explain the verse (Tehillim 72:7): “In his days may the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace until there is no moon.”

It is taught in the Gemara: the moon said before the Holy One, blessed be He, “It is impossible for two kings to use one crown.”

And Hashem said to her: Diminish yourself. And He said: The righteous will be called by your name, namely “Shmuel the small,” “David the small.”

And this is [the meaning of] “And it shall be, eikev you listen”—meaning that one must listen to the judgments with humility, and not, Heaven forbid, become exalted.

Now, by way of analogy: at the time fruits blossom, it is a very beautiful and pleasant sight,

as Chazal said: One who goes out in the days of Nissan and sees trees blossoming, he recites a blessing, etc.

או יאמר "והיה עקב תשמעון", ונקדים לפרש פסוק (תהלים ע"ב, ז') "יפרח בגמיו צדיק ורב שלום", עד בלי גרם

דאיתא בגמרא אמרה לבנה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא אי אפשר לשני מלכים להשתמש בכתר אחד

ואמר הקדוש ברוך הוא תמצטי עצמך, ואמר צדיקים יקראו בשמך דהינו שמואל הקטן דוד הקטן

וזהו "והיה עקב תשמעון", ר"ל שצריך לשמע את המשפטים בענוה ולא להתגדל חס ושלום

והנה המשל בשעת פריחת הפרות אז הוא דבר נאה מאד ונחמד למראה

כמו שאמרו חז"ל היוצא בימות ניסן וראה אילנות מלבלבים מקבץ כו



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And after the fruit is complete, it is good for eating.

ואחר גמר הפרי הוא טוב למאכל

It turns out that regarding physical things, at the time of blossoming the main desire is visual—the eyes—and a blessing is required.

ונמצא דבר גשמי בשעת הפריחה עקר התאוה הוא לעינים וצריך לברך

But at the time of the fruit's completion, the main desire is to eat.

ובשעת גמר הפרי העקר התאוה למאכל

And this is what was said regarding Chavah: “And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat and a desire to the eyes.”

וזהו שנאמר אצל חוה "ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל ותאוה הוא לעינים",

That is, in one moment she had two kinds of desire, and she understood that this was something very holy—therefore: “she took... and she ate.”

דהינו שבפעם אחת היתה לה שני תאוות והבינה שנה "דבר קדוש מאד, לכן "ותקח.. ותאכל"

And it is taught: “And Avraham was old, coming in days”—and it is explained that none of his days were missing,

ואיתא "ואברהם זקן בא בימים" ופירשו שלא חסר מימיו כלום

that each and every day he completed the service of the Creator, blessed is He.

שכל יום ויום השלים עבודת הבורא ברוך־הוא

And this is “In his days may the righteous flourish”—meaning: the tzaddik whose every day is complete in service of Hashem.

וזהו "יפרח בימיו צדיק" ר"ל הצדיק שכל ימיו שלמים בעבודתו יתברך

They are like the analogy of fruit blossoming—he blossoms in his holiness and his deeds are pleasing and beautiful all his days.

והם כמשל פריחת הפרות שפורח בקדושתו ומעשיו באים ונחמדים כל ימיו

“And abundance of peace until there is no moon”—this tzaddik increases peace in the world, even though he is not in smallness, i.e., the level of the moon.

ורב שלום עד בלי ירח" הצדיק הנה הוא מרבה שלום בעולם, אף שאינו בקטנותו דהינו מדרגת ירח

And this is sufficient.

נק"ל

### [NOTE Summary:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk explains the verse “והיה עקב תשמעון” by connecting it to the concept of **humility** as the foundation of divine service. Drawing on the Midrash where the moon is told to “diminish itself” because “two kings cannot share one crown,” he teaches that greatness in avodas Hashem requires *self-nullification*. The tzaddikim are those who accept this diminishment—calling themselves “small” like David and Shmuel—and thereby become vessels for divine light.

He compares spiritual growth to the **blooming and ripening of fruit**. At the stage of פריחה (blossoming), the fruit is beautiful to the eye—representing early stages of spiritual excitement and inspiration. Later, when the fruit is ripe, it becomes nourishing—symbolizing deep integration and substance in divine service. Chava erred when she saw both the beauty and desirability of the fruit at once and mistakenly assumed it was inherently holy.

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Avraham, by contrast, represents perfection in time—בא בימים—not wasting a single day, with each day blossoming like fruit in its proper season. This is the meaning of “יפרח בימיו צדיק”—a tzaddik who flowers in holiness every day. Such a person brings abundant peace even beyond the limitations of the *moon*—symbolizing smallness—because his greatness is rooted in humility.

### Practical Takeaway:

True spiritual greatness is not found in brilliance or charisma, but in **humble consistency**. The tzaddik is one who “flowers” every day—meaning he never lets a day pass without purpose, growth, and connection to Hashem. Begin to treat each day as a holy opportunity. Even if your deeds are small, let them be genuine and beautiful. Don’t chase greatness—seek sincerity, and greatness will follow in its season. **END NOTE]**

And furthermore, it appears we may explain the grammatical nuance that the earlier commentators already questioned: namely, that it says, “Because you will listen... and you will guard... and Hashem will guard... the covenant... that He swore to your forefathers.”

ועוד נראה לפרש הדקדוק שכבר דקדקו קמאי, והוא שאמר "עקב תשמעונו כו' ושמרתם כו' ושמר ה' כו' את הברית כו' אשר נשבע ל'אבותיך',

But if they themselves are guarding and performing the statutes and laws—then why is this promise needed, that “He swore to your forefathers”?

הלא כשהם בעצמם ישמרו ויעשו את החקים והמשפטים, למה להם הבטחה זו אשר נשבע ל'אבותיך?

But it appears: the Gemara states, “Children, life, and sustenance do not depend on merit but on mazal.”

אכל נראה דאיתא בגמרא "בני, חיי ומזוני לאו ב'זכותא' תליא מילתא אלא במזל

And seemingly this needs explanation—why do they not depend on merit?

?ולכאורה יש להבין למה אינם תלויים בזכות

Also, the Gemara says: “There is no mazal for Israel.”

וגם הא איתא בגמרא אין מזל לישראל

It seems the intention of Chazal is this: these three—children, life, and sustenance—are basic needs of the world that must be continuous and unbroken.

ונראה כונת חז"ל דהשלשה האלה הם צרך העולם, בתמידות בלא הפסק

And Hashem, in His great mercy and kindness, did kindness in this: that He did not make these three depend on the person’s own merit—

והשם יתברך ברוב רחמיו וחסדיו הגדולים חסד בזה, שלא תלה השלשה אלה בזכות האדם עצמו

for perhaps he will not have enough merit to merit these three.

כי אולי לא יהיה לו זכות כל-כך שיזכה לשלשה, אלה

What did Hashem do? He made them depend on mazal.

מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא? תלה אותם במזל

That is: the merits and mitzvos of our ancestors—He made from those mitzvos and merits a *mazal*,

דהינו הנכונות והמצוות של אבותינו, עשה מאותן מצוות והנכונות מזל

so that their children would receive these three through *mazal* necessarily—even those who are not so worthy.

כדי שיבוא לבניהם השלשה אלה על-פי מזל בהכרח, אף למי שאינו הגון כל-כך

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And the mitzvos that the children perform—Hashem stores those also for their children after them, and so on forever.

And this is truly the meaning of “אין מזל לישראל”—that they are not ruled by external *mazal* like the other nations.

But rather they have such a *mazal*—from the merits of their ancestors.

Therefore it is said of Avraham: “And He took him outside,” and Chazal interpreted: “Go out from your astrology—what did you see, that Jupiter stands in the west,” etc. (see there).

And [Hashem said,] “I will change your *mazal*,” because Avraham had no merit of ancestors, and therefore it was necessary that he have a child by changing the *mazal*.

And his merits and righteousnesses would remain and be stored for his descendants after him, so that they will have it as *mazal*, as explained above.

And this is the meaning of: “And it shall be, because you will listen... and you will guard... and Hashem will guard for you what He swore to your forefathers.”

Your own merit will remain for you and for your descendants after you.

And why is this so? It says: “And He will love you”—that is, He desires to benefit you with these three things:

“And He will multiply you”—this hints to *life*, that your days will be increased;

“And He will bless the fruit of your womb”—this refers to *children*;

“[He will bless] your grain and your wine...” —this refers to *sustenance*.

And for the sake of these three, “He will guard for you what He swore to your forefathers”—this will be your *mazal*, as explained above.

And your own merit will likewise be “for your descendants after you forever.” May it be His will.

והמצוות שעושים הבנים הקדוש ברוך הוא מצפין אותם גם כן לבניהם אחריהם וכן לעולם וזה באמת אין מזל לישראל שיהיו נהוגים על פיו, כשאר האמות

רק שיש להם מזל כזה מזכויות אבותיהם

ולכן נאמר באברהם "ויצא אתו החוצה", ודרשו חז"ל "צא מאסטרונומיה שלך, מה חזית דקאי צדק, במערב כו" ע"ש

ואשנה את מזלך, מחמת שלא היה לאברהם זכות אבות והכרח שיהיה לו בן על-פי שנוי המזל

וזכויותיו וצדקותיו ישארו ויגנו לזרעו אחריו שיהיה להם כמזל כנ"ל

וזהו "והיה עקב תשמעו כו' ושמרתם כו' ושמר ה' לך אשר נשבע לאבותיך

וזכות עצמך ישאר לך ולזרעך אחרך

ולמה כן? ואמר "ואהבך", דהינו שרוצה להיטיב עצמך את שלש האלה

דהינו "והרבך" רמז לחיי שירבו ימך

וברך פרי בטןך הינו בנך

דגנה ותירשך כו" הינו מזונך

ובשביל השלשה האלה "ישמר לך אשר נשבע לאבותיך" שיהיה למזל כנ"ל

וזכות עצמך יהיה גם כן "לזרעך אחרך עד עולם", אכ"י"ר

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## [NOTE Summary:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk continues his profound teaching on *Parshas Eikev* by exploring why the Torah promises that Hashem will fulfill what He swore to our forefathers *even when we ourselves keep the mitzvos*. He notes the seeming redundancy: if we are doing our part—guarding and observing the commandments—why do we need the merit of the *Avos*?

To answer, he brings a striking teaching from the Gemara: “Children, life, and sustenance do not depend on merit, but on *mazal*.” This is puzzling—especially since we’re told “אין מזל לישראל.” Rebbe Elimelech explains that Hashem, in His mercy, *intentionally removed* these three critical blessings from being tied to individual merit, since not every person is worthy at every moment. Instead, He rooted them in the accumulated merits of the forefathers—*turning their righteousness into a spiritual mazal* for their descendants. These merits flow generationally, ensuring that even those less deserving still receive the essentials of life through inherited blessing.

Avraham is the prototype of this model: he had no ancestral merit, so Hashem had to override his astrological fate to grant him children. From that point on, however, his own righteousness was stored away as “*mazal*” for his children. Thus, when the Torah says that Hashem will “guard for you what He swore to your forefathers,” it means: He will allow their merit to serve as your spiritual inheritance. And even your own mitzvos, Rebbe Elimelech adds, are preserved and stored away to become future *mazal* for your children.

## Practical Takeaway:

You are never alone in your spiritual struggle. Even if you don’t feel worthy, you are upheld by the love and merit of generations before you. Every mitzvah you perform is not lost—it becomes a hidden wellspring of blessing for your children and grandchildren. Approach mitzvos with this awareness: you are not only earning merit for yourself, but building a *mazal reserve* for those who will follow you. This is how the legacy of holiness is sustained across time.

## Chassidic Story:

A young man once came to Rebbe Elimelech in tears. “I’ve failed so often,” he said, “and now my wife is expecting. I don’t deserve to be blessed with a righteous child.” Rebbe Elimelech looked at him gently and said, “Do you think Hashem only gives based on what *you* deserve? You are drinking from the cisterns dug by your fathers. And now, dig your own wells. Your tears today may water your grandchildren’s prayers.”

(Source: *Ohr Elimelech*, teachings on Eikev; story preserved in *Tiferes Elimelech*)

## END NOTE]

Or it may be said [regarding the verse] “And it shall be, eikev [because] you listen...” in connection with the verse in Tehillim: “Like the good oil upon the head, running down upon

או יאמר "וְהָיָה עֵקֶב תִּשְׁמָעוֹן כּו'...", בְּצִרוּף הַפְּסוּק  
בְּתִהִלִּים "כְּשֶׁמֶן הַטּוֹב הַיּוֹרֵד עַל הָרֹאשׁ זָקֵן אֶהְרֵן  
", "שִׁיּוֹרֵד עַל פִּי מְדוּתָיו



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the beard—the beard of Aharon—that runs down upon the hem of his garments.”

For it is taught in the Gemara: one does not seat an elder on the Sanhedrin,

and the reason is because the nature of an old man tends slightly toward cruelty and does not possess so much the trait of mercy.

But not like the trait of Hashem is the trait of flesh and blood.

For Hashem revealed Himself at the sea as an elder filled with mercy.

And this is because the mercies flow from the upper worlds, where all is mercy,

and from there the mercies descend and pour upon the elder, and he too becomes merciful.

And this is [the meaning of] “Like the good oil”—meaning the complete mercies—

“upon the head”—an allusion to the upper worlds which are called “head,”

“runs down upon the beard”—that is, the mercies descend from there upon the elder,

and the elder becomes “the beard of Aharon”—that is, complete mercy,

for Aharon loved peace and pursued peace, and the *kohen* is kindness and mercy.

“That runs down upon the hem of his garments”—meaning: that the mercies descend according to the attributes of Hashem, as explained above.

Not like the trait of Hashem is the trait of flesh and blood—for the trait of man is that the elder is naturally cruel,

and the trait of Hashem is [an elder] full of mercy. Understand this.

Not like the trait of Hashem, etc.—for Hashem, blessed be He, sweetens from above to below, as explained above.

But we, when we wish to sweeten judgments, must begin from below to above to sweeten them up to their root.

דאיתא בגמרא אין מושיבין זקן בסנהדרין

והטעם מחמת שטבע הזקן הוא קצת אכזריות ואינו כלל כך במדת רחמים

אבל לא כמדת הקדוש ברוך הוא מדת בשר ודם

שהקדוש ברוך הוא נגלה על הים בזמן מלא רחמים

והוא מחמת שהרחמים נשפעים מעולמות העליונים ושם כלו רחמים

ומשם יורדים הרחמים ונשפכים על הזקן ונעשה גם הוא רחמים

וזהו "כשמן הטוב" הינו רחמים הגמורים

על הראש" רמז לעולמות עליונים הנקראים ראש

יורד על הזקן" ר"ל שהרחמים יורדים משם על הזקן

ונעשה הזקן "זקן אהרן" הינו רחמים גמורים

דאהרן היה אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, והפכה הוא חסד ורחמים

שיוורד על פי מדותיו" פירוש שהרחמים יורדים על פי מדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא כנ"ל

שלא כמדת הקדוש ברוך הוא מדת בשר ודם, שמדת בשר ודם הזקן הוא טבע אכזריות

ומדת הקדוש ברוך הוא הוא זקן מלא רחמים, והבן

ולא כמדת הקדוש ברוך הוא כו', שהשם יתברך הוא ממתק מלמעלה למטה כנ"ל

ואנחנו ברצוננו להמתיק הדינים, אנו צריכים להתחיל מלמטה למעלה להמתיקם עד שרשם

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And this is [the meaning of] “And it shall be, eikev... the judgments”—that is, the *dinim* [judgments],

וְזֶהוּ "וְהָיָה עֵקֶב כּו' הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים" ר"ל הַדִּינִים

“you will listen”—to sweeten them from the “heel,” that is, from below, as explained above.

תִּשְׁמָעוּן" לְהַמְתִּיקָם מִן ה' עֵקֶב" דְּהִינוּ מִלְמָטָה  
כֵּן"ל

“And you will guard and perform them”—meaning, through having pure thought, as explained above.

וְשָׁמְרָתֶם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אוֹתָם" פִּירוּשׁ עַל־יְדֵי שְׁתִּתְּהֶן" לְכֶם מִחֲשָׁבָה טְהוֹרָה כֵּן"ל

“Guarding” is a hint to thought—and through this, “you will perform them,” that is, you will transform them into mercy.

שְׁמִירָה" הִיא רָמֵז לְמִחְשָׁבָה, עַל־יְדֵי זֶה "וַעֲשִׂיתֶם" אוֹתָם" שְׁתִּתְּפָכוּם לְרַחֲמִים

And this is sufficient.

וְכֵן"ל

### [NOTE Summary:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk reveals a deep mystical structure underlying *Parshas Eikev*, using the imagery from Tehillim—“like the precious oil upon the head, running down the beard of Aharon”—to illustrate the heavenly flow of **divine mercy**. He contrasts two types of “elders”: the natural human elder, whose nature tends toward severity and judgment, and the *divine archetype* of an elder as seen in the vision at the sea—an elder “**filled with mercy**.” This difference stems from where the mercy originates. Human elders draw from their own nature, but Hashem’s mercy **flows from the upper worlds**, which are entirely chesed (kindness). As this spiritual oil flows downward, it transforms even human strictness into compassion, turning a “harsh judge” into a “beard of Aharon,” the symbol of peace and loving-kindness.

In the realm of human avodah, however, the process works in reverse: **we must begin from below**, from our own heel (“עקב”), through our thoughts and intentions, to sweeten the harsh judgments (*dinim*). The verse “וְהָיָה עֵקֶב תִּשְׁמָעוּן” is thus reinterpreted: “If you listen from the עקב”—meaning, if you begin the work of transformation from the lowest part of yourself, using pure thought (“שמירה”)—you will succeed in converting judgment into mercy (“ועשיתם אותם”).

### Practical Takeaway:

When you encounter harshness—in yourself, in others, or in life’s circumstances—don’t retreat. Begin from *below*. Use pure thoughts, quiet humility, and prayer to sweeten those judgments. You don’t need to be lofty to reach Hashem. Even the עקב, the heel, can rise. When you initiate kindness from your end, Hashem meets you from above, pouring down divine compassion that transforms you and your surroundings. **END NOTE]**

“And you shall consume all the nations...” It appears we may explain this according to the verse, “Behold, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and among the nations it shall not be reckoned.”

וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת כָּל הָעַמִּים כּו'. נִרְאָה לְפָרֵשׁ עַל פִּי  
"הַכְּתוּב 'הֵן עַם לְבָדֵד יֵשֶׁב וּבְגוֹזִים לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב

And Rashi, of blessed memory, explained: “When they rejoice, no other nation rejoices with them; but when the other nations

וּפִירְשׁ רַשִׁי"י זְכוּרוֹנוֹ לְבָרְכָה: "כִּשְׁהֵן שִׂמְחִין אִין  
אוֹמְרָה שִׂמְחָה עִמָּהֶם, וּכְשֶׁהָאוֹמֹת בְּטוֹבָה הֵם אוֹכְלִים  
",עַם כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד וְאִין עוֹלָה לָהֶם מִן הַחֲשָׁבוֹן

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enjoy good, they consume along with each one, and it is not counted for them.”

We may similarly apply that explanation here: “And you shall consume all the nations”—that is, when the nations are in a state of prosperity, you will consume with each one.

“And your eye shall not pity...”—for behold, it is the nature of a person that when he receives goodness from someone, he feels gratitude and grace toward him and has mercy upon him in his time of distress.

And Scripture says: “Your eye shall not pity him, and you shall not have mercy upon him.”

And even though the trait of the Jewish people is to be merciful, as Chazal said: “Whoever has mercy on creatures is surely from the seed of Avraham... and whoever does not...”

And perhaps you might feel concern and say: “If I do not have mercy on them, it will seem as though I do as they do and act as they act.”

And Scripture says: “You shall not serve their gods”—meaning, in this you are not considered as one who serves their deity, Heaven forbid.

“For it is a snare to you”—that is, when you wish to be concerned for this and have mercy upon them, it will become a snare to you.

Do not have mercy, and do not grant them favor at all.

And Scripture teaches us, in saying: “If you shall say in your heart: These nations are too many...”

Meaning: the word “כי” here is as in “rather”—that is, you should constantly cry out against them and say in your heart that they are many.

“How can I dispossess them?”—if not through the salvation of Hashem, Who will wage war for us.

Then, certainly, you will not fear them. And this is sufficient.

וַיֵּשׁ לָכֵן גַּם-כֵּן הַפִּירוּשׁ כָּאֵן, "וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת כָּל הָעַמִּים", ר"ל כְּשִׁיחִיו הָאֲמוֹת בְּטוֹבָה תֹּאכֵל עִם כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד,

וְלֹא תַחֲסוּ כו", דְּהֵנָּה מְטַבֵּעַ הָאָדָם שֶׁמִּקְבֵּל טוֹבָה מֵאִיזָה אָדָם הוּא מִחֲזִיק לוֹ טוֹבָה וְחֲנוּת וּמִרַחֵם עָלָיו בְּשַׁעַת דּוּחֶקוֹ,

וְאָמַר הַפֶּתוּב "וְלֹא תַחֲסוּ עֵינֶךָ עָלָיו וְלֹא תִרַחֵם",

וְאִם שְׂמַדְתָּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהִיּוֹתָם רַחֲמָנִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲז"ל: כָּל הַמִּרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁהוּא מִנְרַעו, 'שֶׁל אֲבִרְהָם, וְכָל שֶׁאִינּוֹ מִרַחֵם כו

וְשֶׁמֶא תַחֲסוּ וְתֹאמַר: בָּאֵם שֶׁלֹּא תִרַחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם תִּהְיֶה חָשׁוּב כְּעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם וְעִבּוּדוֹתֵיהֶם,

וְאָמַר הַפֶּתוּב "וְלֹא תַעֲבֹד אֶת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם", ר"ל שֶׁבִּנְיָן לֹא תִהְיֶה חָשׁוּב כְּעוֹבֵד אֱלֹהֵיהֶם חֹס וְשָׁלוֹם,

כִּי מוֹקֵשׁ הוּא לָךְ" כְּשֶׁתִּרְצֶה לַחֲוֹשׁ לָזֶה וּלְרַחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם יִהְיֶה לָךְ לְמוֹקֵשׁ,

לֹא תִרַחֵם וְלֹא תַחֲנִם כָּלֵל וְכָלֵל וּמִלְמַד אוֹתָנוּ הַפֶּתוּב בְּאֹמְרוֹ "כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְכֶּךָ, "רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם",

ר"ל "כִּי" הוּא לְשׁוֹן אֵלָּא, דְּהֵינּוּ שֶׁתִּצָּעֵק תָּמִיד עֲלֵיהֶם וְתֹאמַר בְּלִבְכֶּךָ שֶׁרַבִּים הֵם,

אִיכָּה אוֹכֵל לְהוֹרִישָׁם, אִם לֹא בְּתַשׁוּעַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ שֶׁהוּא יִלָּחֵם לָנוּ,

וְאִזּוּ בּוֹדָאֵי לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם. וְק"ל

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### [NOTE Summary:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk explains the command “ואכלת את כל העמים” not only as a call to physical conquest, but as a spiritual warning against misplaced compassion. Drawing on the verse “הן עם לבדד ישכון,” he recalls Rashi’s comment that when the nations rejoice, Israel does not join them—but when Israel is in good fortune, the nations do share in the benefit. This context sets up a moral tension: When Israel “eats among the nations,” benefiting from them or their kindness, there’s a natural human instinct to feel gratitude and mercy in return.

Yet the Torah warns: “לא תחוס עינך עליהם”—**do not pity them**. Why? Because even though mercy is a defining trait of the Jewish people (“כל המרחם על הבריות בידוע שהוא מזרעו של אברהם”), misplaced mercy toward the enemies of Hashem can become a spiritual *trap*. One might think that showing mercy means you are rising above the cruelty of war—but the Torah says clearly: this is not viewed as moral refinement, it is **dangerous identification** with those who oppose Hashem. The verse anticipates this confusion and reassures: refusing to show mercy here does **not** equate to idol worship. On the contrary—mercy in the wrong place becomes “מוקש”—a snare.

Finally, the Torah acknowledges the fear: “כי תאמר בלבבך רבים הגוים”—if you say in your heart, “How can I defeat them?” The answer is not more diplomacy or empathy—it is trust in Hashem, Who alone can deliver the victory. Your job is spiritual clarity; the triumph is His.

### Practical Takeaway:

True compassion must be anchored in divine wisdom, not emotional instinct. There are times when mercy builds the world—and times when it breaks it. Don’t let guilt, fear, or sentimentality cloud your judgment when the Torah demands firmness. And when you’re overwhelmed by the seeming power of opposing forces—whether inner or outer—turn to Hashem with faith. It is not your strength that wins the battle, but His.

END NOTE]

“And now, O Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you, but only to fear... to walk... and to love... with all your heart...”

The grammatical difficulty is clear: what is the verse missing that it needs to list and count all these actions—fear, love, and walking in His ways?

What more is there to do, that the verse says “asks of you—only...”?

It seems we may explain: behold, the Creator, blessed is He, created His world only in order to bestow goodness upon His creations.

ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם  
'ליראה בו' ללכת בו' ולאהבה בו' בכל לבבך בו

הדקדוק מפורש, מה המקרא חסר עוד מלפניו  
שחושב ומונה כל העבודות האלו יראה ואהבה  
וללכת בכל דרכיו

ומה יש עוד לעשות שאמר הכתוב שואל מעמך כי  
אם בו

ונראה לפרש דהנה הבורא יתברך לא ברא את  
עולמו רק להיטיב לברואים



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However, there must be a proper and fitting vessel to be able to receive this goodness.

אָבֵל שְׁצָרִיף לְזֶה כְּלִי נָכוֹן וּמוֹכָשׁ שְׂיוּכָל לְקַבֵּל  
הַהֵטְבָּה

Here is a parable: one who wishes to send a barrel of wine or honey, but he has no fine and beautiful vessel—

וְהִנֵּה הַמְּשַׁל מִי שְׂרוּצָה לְשַׁלּוֹחַ לְחֵבִית יֵין אוֹ דְבִשׁ  
וְאֵין לוֹ כְּלִי נָאֶה וְיָפָה

he asks his friend who has a beautiful silver vessel, and he fills it with wine or honey and sends it to the one for whom the vessel belongs.

שׂוֹאֵל מִחֵבֶרֶז זֶה שֵׁישׁ לוֹ כְּלִי נָאֶה וְשֶׁל כֶּסֶף וּמַמְלָא  
אוֹתָהּ יֵין אוֹ דְבִשׁ וְשׁוֹלַח לְזֶה שֶׁהַכְּלִי שֶׁלוֹ

And the moral is understood: that the person is the vessel for receiving.

וְהַנְּמָשֵׁל מוֹכֵן, שֶׁהָאָדָם הוּא הַכְּלִי לְקַבֵּל

And this is the preparation and repair of the vessel—that is, the person must be fit to receive the goodness and flow of the Creator, blessed is He.

וְזֶהוּ הַכְּשָׁרוֹ וְתַקּוּנוֹ שֶׁל הַכְּלִי דִּהְיִנוּ הָאָדָם שְׂיִהְיֶה  
מוֹכָשׁ לְקַבֵּל הַטּוֹבוֹת וְהַשְּׁפָעוֹת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ

That is: fear and love and observance of Hashem's commandments and statutes and all His ways.

הוּא הִירָאָה וְהֶאֱהָבָה וְקִיּוּם מִצְוֹת ה' וְחֻקוֹתָיו וְכָל  
דְּרָכָיו

Then he is a beautiful and fine vessel, and Hashem asks for this vessel and fills it with all goodness.

וְאָז הוּא כְּלִי נָאֶה וְיָפָה, וְשׂוֹאֵל הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ הַכְּלִי  
הַזֶּה וּמַמְלָא אוֹתָהּ כָּל טוֹב

And this is: “What does Hashem your God ask of you...”

”וְזֶהוּ ”מָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ שׂוֹאֵל מֵעַמָּךְ

Meaning: when does Hashem ask for what is with you—that is, your vessel—in order to fill it from His goodly flow and blessings?

ר"ל אֵימָתִי הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ שׂוֹאֵל מֶה שֵׁישׁ עַמָּךְ, דִּהְיִנוּ  
הַכְּלִי שְׁלֶד, כְּדִי לְמַלְאָה מִשְׁפָּע טוֹבוֹ וּבִכְרוֹתָיו

“But only to fear”—meaning, this is only possible if you serve Him with all the actions enumerated in the verse.

כִּי אִם לִירָאָה ר"ל זֶה בְּלִתִּי אֶפְשָׁרִי כִּי אִם שֶׁתַּעֲבֹד  
אוֹתוֹ בְּכָל הָעֲבוֹדוֹת הַמְּנוּיִים וְהַמְּפֹרָשִׁים בַּפָּסוּק

Then you will be a fine and beautiful vessel, fit to receive—and Hashem will ask from you your vessel, that is, yourself—

וְאָז תִּהְיֶה כְּלִי יָפָה וְנָאֶה וּמוֹכָשׁ לְקַבֵּל, וְיִשְׁאֵל מִמֶּךָ  
הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ אֶת הַכְּלִי שְׁלֶד, דִּהְיִנוּ אֶת עַצְמָךְ

“for your good”—so that He may bestow goodness upon you, and through you blessings and divine flow will come to all Israel.

לְטוֹב לָךְ כְּדִי שְׂיִיטִיב לָךְ, וְעַל-יָדֶךָ יָבוֹאוּ טוֹבוֹת  
וְהַשְּׁפָעוֹת לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל

And this is sufficient.

וְכָ"ל

### [NOTE Summary:

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk offers a profound reinterpretation of the verse, “ומה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם...” —“What does Hashem your God ask of you, but only to fear...” At first glance, the verse seems redundant, listing many qualities—fear, love, walking in Hashem's ways—while claiming Hashem asks for only one thing. But the Rebbe reveals that all these spiritual actions are not separate demands—they are parts of **a single, essential purpose**: becoming a vessel to receive divine goodness.

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Hashem created the world solely to **bestow good**, but for this goodness to be received, it must have a proper container. Just like someone cannot send wine or honey without a beautiful vessel, Hashem cannot pour His blessings into a soul that is unprepared. The vessel is the human being—his thoughts, actions, and spiritual refinement. When one possesses *yirah* (awe), *ahavah* (love), and walks in Hashem's ways, he becomes that **"beautiful silver vessel"** worthy of being filled with divine blessing. The verse is not a list of demands—it is a description of the container Hashem wishes to fill. When you become that vessel, Hashem says, "I ask of you your *kli*—your self—not to take, but to **fill with good**."

### Practical Takeaway:

You are not being asked to earn Hashem's love—you are being invited to receive it. But a vessel that is dirty, cracked, or sealed cannot receive anything. Every mitzvah, every moment of inner work, polishes your soul and prepares it to hold blessing. Instead of asking, "What does Hashem want *from* me?" ask, "What is Hashem ready to pour *into* me—if I prepare myself?" Your *yirah*, *ahavah*, and good deeds are not ends in themselves—they are how you become the vessel for divine light. **END NOTE]**

**"And it shall be, if you will surely listen to My commandments... and I will give the rain of your land..."**

וְהָיָה אִם שְׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי כו' וְנָתַתִּי מָטָר  
'אֶרְצְכֶם כו'

It appears we may explain as follows: behold, a person must engage in Torah *lishmah* (for its own sake), with complete intention,

נִרְאָה לְפָנֶיךָ, דְּהֵינָה צָרִיךְ הָאָדָם לַעֲסֹק בַּתּוֹרָה לְשִׁמָּה  
בְּכוֹנֵנָה שְׁלִימָה

and likewise every word and word that comes out of his mouth—he must intend greatly that it not be a wasted word,

וְכֵן כָּל דִּיבּוּר וְדִיבּוּר שְׂוִי צָרִיךְ לְכַנֵּן בּוֹ מְאֹד  
,שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה דְבָר בְּטֵל

and that he bind the word to the upper worlds.

וְלִקְשֹׁר אֶת הַדִּיבּוּר בְּעוֹלָמוֹת הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים

And we may say that this is the meaning of what Chazal said when they expounded: "And there shall not be among you an *akar* (barren one)"—that your prayer should not be *akuroh* (uprooted).

וַיֵּשׁ לֹאמַר שֶׁהוּא כּוֹנֵנֵת חַי"ל שֶׁדָּרָשׁוּ "וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָּךְ  
עֵקֶר" – שְׁלֹא תִהְיֶה תַּפְלָתְךָ עֲקוּרָה

And Rashi, of blessed memory, explained *akar* to mean "one who does not give birth"—and it is all one.

וּפִירֵשׁ רַשִׁי זְכוּרֵנוּ לְבִרְכָּה עֵקֶר שְׂאִינוּ מוֹלִיד, וְהַכֹּל  
אֶחָד

For *tefillah* (prayer) is a term of connection (*keshirah*), and Scripture says, "There shall not be among you an *akar*,"

דְּתַפְלָה הוּא לְשׁוֹן קֶשֶׁר, וְאָמַר הַכָּתוּב "וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָּךְ  
עֵקֶר",

and its explanation is: your prayer, that is, the word that you bring out of your mouth—you must bind it to the upper worlds.

וּפִירוּשׁוֹ שְׁלֹא תִהְיֶה תַּפְלָתְךָ, דְּהֵינָה הַדִּיבּוּר שֶׁאַתָּה  
מוֹצִיא מִפִּיךָ, שֶׁצָּרִיךְ אֵתָּה לְקַשְׁרוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹת  
הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים

That your connection not be *akuroh*—meaning, that your word should not fail, Heaven forbid, to accomplish anything.

שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה קִישׁוּרְךָ עֲקוּרָה, ר"ל שְׁלֹא תִפְעַל חֵם  
וְשְׁלוֹם בְּדִיבּוּרְךָ

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And this is what Rashi explained: “one who does not give birth”—that his word does not give birth to any offspring, that is, any goodness.

וזהו שפירש רש"י זכרוננו לברכה שאינו מוליד, שדיבורו אינו מוליד איזה וילדות, דהינו הטבה,

Rather, you must sanctify yourself in your learning and your speech, that no idle word should leave your mouth.

רק שצריך שתקדש עצמך בלימודך ובדיבורך שלא יצא דבר בטל מפיך

And examine your words very carefully—to what purpose will your speech serve? Then you will accomplish whatever you desire.

והסתכל בדיבורך מאד לאיזו תועלת יהיה דיבורך, ואז תפעל כל אשר תרצה

And this is the intent of the Tanna: “Do not treat anything lightly, for there is no thing that has no place.”

וזהו פונת התנא "אל תהי מפליג לכל דבר כי אין לה דבר שאין לו מקום"

Its explanation is as above: do not let your word be for nothing and become distant or separated, Heaven forbid, from the upper world.

פירושו כנ"ל, שלא תוציא דיבורך לבטלה ויהיה מפלג ומפרש חס ושלום מעולם העליון

And this is: “Do not treat anything lightly”—that is, not any word. Rather, intend strongly to bind it in the upper world.

וזהו "אל תהי מפליג לכל דבר" ר"ל לכל דיבור, רק תכוון מאד למשרו בעולם העליון

“For there is no thing that has no place”—for the upper worlds are called “place,” and every word spoken in holiness has its own world in which it operates.

כי אין לה דבר שאין לו מקום, דהעולמות העליונים נקראים "מקום", וכל דיבור ודיבור היוצא מפי אדם בקדושה, יש לו עולם מיוחד לאותו דיבור בעולם השני לו לפעל פעולתו

And this is: “And it shall be, if you will listen,” and our Sages of blessed memory expounded: “Let your ears hear what your mouth is speaking,”

וזהו "ויהיה אם שמע", ודרשו חז"ל השמע לאזניך, מה שאמה מוציא מפיך

meaning: that you should greatly intend in your speech that comes from your mouth—that it should be with intention,

דהינו שתכוון בדיבורך מאד היוצא מפיך שיהיה בכוונה

that your ears should hear this speech, and not like a person who speaks with a tongue that is habituated to speak while his ears are blocked,

ששמעו האזנים הדיבור הזה, ולא כאדם המדבר שהרגלה לשונו לדבר ואזניו אטומות לשמע מה שמוציא מפיו

for he is thinking about other things, and it turns out that his words are vain and have no effect at all.

שהוא מחשב בדברים אחרים, ונמצאו דבריו בטלים שאינם פועלים כלל

And Rashi of blessed memory explained: “If you listen to the old, you will listen to the new,”

ורש"י זכרוננו לברכה פירש "אם שמע בישן תשמע", בקדוש

and we can say that Rashi also hinted to what we said above.

ונוכל לומר שרש"י זכרוננו לברכה גם כן מרמז, לדברינו הנ"ל

That “old” refers to the Torah given to us in the wilderness on Mount Sinai—when you listen to it,

ד"ישן" הינו התורה הנתונה לנו במדבר על הר סיני, כאשר תשמע בה

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meaning: that you study it *lishmah*, for its own sake, with pure thought—"you will hear in the new,"

דהיננו שתלמד לשמה במחשבה טהורה, "תשמע", "בתחדש",

meaning: through this you will hear something new.

ר"ל על ידי זה תשמע דבר חדש

And what is this new thing? Scripture says: "And I will give the rain of your land... and you will gather your grain."

ומה הוא הדבר החדש? אמר הכתוב "ונתתי מטר", "ארצכם כו' ואספת דגנך

At first glance, why does the verse shift—saying "your land" in plural form, but "your grain" in singular?

לקאורה למה שינה הכתוב באמרו "ארצכם" לשון רבים – ואספת "דגנך" לשון יחיד

We may say: because this righteous person who wishes to draw down blessings into the world

יש לומר משום שהצדיק הנה הרוצה להמשיך, השפעות לעולם,

must hide his speech within some Torah before the accusing force,

צריך להסתיר את דיבורו באיזה תורה בפני, המקטרג,

and such a tzaddik—would that there be even one in a city!

וצדיק כזה הלוי ימצא ימצא אחד בעיר

Therefore it says in singular: "and you shall gather..."—as in "and you shall bring it into your house,"

לכן אמר בלשון יחיד ואספת כו', שהוא מלשון, "ואספתו אל תוך ביתך

that is: that the tzaddik must hide his speech that he needs in order to effect influence, so that the accuser does not detect it.

דהיננו שהצדיק יסתיר את דיבורו הצריך לו לפעל, לבלתי יבחין המקטרג

And through this he will bring about good influence for all of Israel.

ועל ידי זה יפעל השפעות טובות לכל ישראל

And this is: "And I will give the rain of your land"—to all—through a unique tzaddik,

ונהו "ונתתי מטר ארצכם" לכל – על ידי צדיק, המיוחד

and Scripture instructs him: "And you shall gather your grain"—meaning, as above. And this is clear and understood.

והכתוב מלמדו "ואספת דגנך" ר"ל בפ"ל. וקל והבן

### [NOTE Summary:

Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk explains the verse "והיה אם שמוע תשמעו" ("And it shall be, if you will surely listen...") through the lens of inner intention and spiritual refinement. The Torah doesn't merely command external obedience—it asks for a heightened *kavanah*, a focus where one's **ears listen to the very words spoken by the mouth**, avoiding mechanical or distracted prayer. This mindfulness isn't only about prayer—it is the soul of all learning and mitzvah performance. Rashi's comment, "If you listen to the old, you will listen to the new," becomes a mystical equation: study Torah *lishmah* (for its own sake), and it will yield new channels of divine blessing. But these blessings are not simple. The tzaddik, in order to draw shefa (spiritual influence) into the world, must disguise his words—hiding them within Torah teachings so as to bypass prosecuting forces (mekatregim). This explains the shift from plural "your land" to singular "your grain"—the rain blesses all, but the tzaddik, singular in his inner work, must "gather in his grain," spiritually sheltering and refining his words for them to effect the world. The second half of the teaching further develops this theme, emphasizing that **every word of Torah and tefillah must be sanctified**, with full awareness and connection to



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higher worlds. A word without consciousness is “barren” and fails to “give birth” to blessing. But a word imbued with holiness can ascend and draw down abundance to its precise spiritual realm.

### Practical Takeaway:

The Rebbe urges us to **elevate the way we speak and learn**. Don't rush through davening or study without heart. Instead, let your ears hear what your mouth says—**train yourself to stay present, aware, and intentional** in speech. Know that every word, when spoken with sanctity, builds something in the upper worlds and can draw blessing. Even if you're not a tzaddik, your words are not neutral—they either bind or disconnect. Choose to make them vessels of connection.

### Chassidic Story:

Once, a student of Reb Elimelech was praying with deep fervor, and yet tears welled in his eyes. After the prayers, the Rebbe asked him, “Why do you cry if your kavannah was strong?” The talmid replied, “Rebbe, I remembered that once I prayed these same words without focus, and it hurt me that I allowed them to leave my lips empty.” Reb Elimelech gently smiled and said, “Those very tears have lifted your past words back to Heaven. No word is ever lost—if only we return to it with truth.”

(Source: *Noam Elimelech*, oral traditions from Lizhensk) **END NOTE]**

### "All the commandment that I command you today," etc.

According to the Gemara: "Said Rabbi Chanina: Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven," as it says, "And now... only to fear,"

and the Gemara asks: "Is fear a small matter?" The answer: "Yes—for Moshe," etc.

And the commentators ask: Why is the Gemara's question dependent on Rabbi Chanina and not on the verse itself?

And it seems the question is certainly on the verse. However, on the verse alone one could say the question is not so strong, because one is given heavenly assistance to come to fear, and therefore it is a small matter, since it is in Heaven's hands to help each person.

But Rabbi Chanina says it is not in the hands of Heaven. That is: a person must awaken himself to fear, without any assistance.

And then the question is well-placed: is fear a small matter?

The conclusion from this is: a person must always hasten toward fear of Heaven and not forget, because he has no help.

### 'כל המצוה אשר אנכי מצוה היום כו

על פי הגמרא "אמר ר' חה הכל בידי שמים חוץ  
"מיראת שמים שנאמר ועתה כו' כי אם ליראה",

ומקשה הגמרא "אטו יראה מילתא זוטרתא? אין  
"לגבי משה כו

ומקשים המפרשים איך תלוי קושית הגמרא בר"ח  
ולמה לא על הפסוק גופא

ונראה בודאי הקשה היא על הפסוק, אלא שעל  
הכתוב עצמו הייתי אומר שאין הקשה גדולה כ"כ  
כי נותנין לו סיוע דשמא לבוא אל היראה, וא"כ  
היא מילתא זוטרתא כיון שהיא בידי שמים לסייע  
לכל אדם

אלא שר"ח אומר שאין זה בידי שמים, פירוש  
שצריך האדם להתעורר בעצמו לבוא אל היראה בלי  
שום סיוע

ואז מקשה שפיר אטו יראה כו

היוצא לנו מזה שצריך האדם להגדיל אל היראה תמיד  
שלא ישכח כי אין לו סיוע

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And this is also the meaning of the verse: "And now... what does Hashem your God ask of you?"

"וְנֹחֵהוּ גַם כֵּן פִּירוּשׁ הַפְּסוּק 'וְעַתָּה כו' שׁוֹאֵל מֵעַמּוֹ,

That is, you have become a borrower with regard to fear—like one who borrows and is liable even in cases of duress.

פִּירוּשׁ נֶעֱשִׂית׃ שׁוֹאֵל עַל הִירָאָה, כְּמוֹ הַשׁוֹאֵל הַחַיִּיב בְּאֻנְסִין,

So too, you must always watch that fear should never be lost from you—not even in a case of duress.

כֵּן אַתָּה צָרִיךְ לְהִשְׁגִּיחַ תָּמִיד שֶׁלֹּא תִאָּבֵד מִמֶּךָ הִירָאָה בְּשׁוּם פְּנִים אֶף בְּאֻנְסִים.

And this is the meaning of: "All the commandment that I command you today..."

"וְנֹחֵהוּ 'כָּל הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ כו

That is, the essence of the commandment is that it should dwell within it the fear, which is called "Anochi"—"from Me"—meaning that you should see that My Presence dwells in that commandment through the fear.

פִּירוּשׁ עֶקֶר הַמִּצְוָה הִיא שֶׁתִּשְׁרָה בְּתוֹכָהּ הִירָאָה הַנִּקְרֵאת "אֲנֹכִי", פִּירוּשׁ מְמַנֵּי שֶׁתִּרָאֶה שֶׁתִּהְיֶה שְׂכִינָתִי שׁוֹרָה בְּמִצְוָה הַהִיא ע"י הִירָאָה.

### [NOTE Summary

In this commentary, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk analyzes the verse “כל המצוה אשר אנכי מצוך היום” (“All the commandment that I command you today”), focusing on the nature of *yiras Shamayim*—fear of Heaven. Drawing from the Gemara that states “everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven,” he addresses a well-known Talmudic question: is fear of Heaven truly such a “small thing”? The resolution, he explains, hinges on whether one receives *siyata d’Shmaya* (Heavenly assistance). If one does, it might seem like a minor demand. But Rebbe Chanina holds that even fear of Heaven is *not* aided by Heaven—thus, it is the individual’s sole responsibility. From this perspective, fear of Heaven is not a small matter at all, and therefore the verse “what does Hashem ask of you, but to fear...” becomes a serious call to action. Rebbe Elimelech deepens this reading by interpreting the word “שואל” (asks) as “a borrower” who is held responsible even in cases of unavoidable loss. So too, a person must always guard their fear of Heaven, even in times of distress. He concludes by interpreting “כל המצוה” to mean that *every mitzvah must be permeated with yirah*, which is represented by the word “אנכי”—the Divine Presence itself. Fear of Heaven isn’t just a gateway to mitzvos—it is the atmosphere in which every mitzvah must live.

### Practical Takeaway

Fear of Heaven (*yiras Shamayim*) is not something we can passively wait to feel—it is our personal responsibility to awaken it, guard it, and embed it into every mitzvah we do. Just like a borrower is responsible even when things go wrong beyond their control, we must never allow *yirah* to be lost, no matter the external pressures. Every mitzvah we perform should be an act of hosting the Divine Presence, and this happens only when we infuse our actions with awe, presence, and awareness of Hashem.

### Chassidic Story

Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk once saw a simple Jew weeping after davening. He asked him why he cried. The man responded, “I’m just a wagon driver, and I don’t understand all the Torah. But I fear that maybe my heart is too coarse to feel true *yiras Shamayim*.” Reb Elimelech looked at him and said, “My dear Yid, the very fact

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that you fear not having fear—that is already *yiras Shamayim*. Hold onto that trembling and serve Hashem with it.” He later remarked to his students, “Sometimes a broken wagon driver holds more holiness in his trembling than a scholar holds in his books.”

**Source:** *Toldos Adam*, stories of Rebbe Elimelech, Warsaw ed. p. 21 **END NOTE]**