

Elsewhere in the Torah . . .

Rabbi Yehuda said that [the Sage] Shmuel said: When King Shlomo established the requirement for an *Eruv* and the requirement of *Netilat Yadayim*, a *Bat Kol* / Heavenly voice proclaimed (in the words of *Mishlei* 23:15), "My son, when your heart becomes wise, then My heart, too, will rejoice," and (*Mishlei* 27:11), "Grow wise and gladden My heart, then I will have an answer for those who seek to humiliate me." (*Eruvin* 21b)

Rashi z"l explains: According to Torah law, one may carry directly from his private domain to his neighbor's private domain [for example, from one enclosed yard to another, through a passage between them]. However, King Shlomo prohibited such carrying without establishing an "*Eruv*" [see below]. Also, King Shlomo decreed that we "wash for bread" as a reminder of the need to purify oneself before eating sanctified foods.

R' Moshe Zuriel *shlita* (Bnei Brak, Israel; former *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Sha'alvim) writes: King Shlomo prohibited carrying between two private domains without an *Eruv*, *i.e.*, setting aside a portion of bread before *Shabbat* to be shared by the two households, effectively making them into one. This decree promotes love and unity between neighbors, and decreases division. For example, the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Eruvin* 7:9) relates that one family had its child deliver its contribution of bread for the *Eruv*, and the loving reception that he received from the woman next door caused a long feud to be ended. This is why the *Gemara* relates this decree to a verse that speaks of the heart being wise--because the decree promotes the heart, *i.e.*, feelings of love, over other aspects of man.

King Shlomo's other decree has a different effect: *Prishut* / distancing a person from physical pleasures by causing him to pause and think about his obligations before eating. Thus, as alluded to by the second quoted verse from *Mishlei*, King Shlomo showed that he was not overly attached to physical gratification, and he silenced his detractors, who misunderstood his motives for marrying many wives.

(*Lekket Me'Hegyonai Ha'Torah*)

(The foregoing is presented in honor of the *Daf Ha'yomi* program beginning Tractate *Eruvin* this coming Tuesday, August 11)

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Many verses in this week's *Parashah* list the praises of *Eretz Yisrael*. Among other things, our *Parashah* (11:12) describes *Eretz Yisrael* as "a Land that *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, seeks out; the eyes of *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end." R' David Cohen *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes, based on the writings of R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver *z"l* (1789-1852; rabbi of Suwalk, Lithuania), that this verse is explaining why *Eretz Yisrael* is the appropriate land for the Jewish People. He writes:

There is a fundamental difference between the seven commandments given to the Noachide nations and the 613 *Mitzvot* given to the Jewish People. The Noachide laws are meant to ensure that societies will be orderly and stable, but their observance or non-observance has no impact in the spiritual realms. Not so the 613 *Mitzvot*! Whether or not we observe the *Mitzvot* has profound spiritual effects, for it determines how *Hashem* will direct His *Hashgachah Pratit* / Divine Providence. *Hashgachah Pratit* means that *Hashem* responds to our actions, good or bad, and that Creation itself reacts positively or negatively to what we do, thus assisting us to perform *Mitzvot* in the future or hindering our efforts to do so. *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land which "the eyes of *Hashem* are always upon," a Land where the laws of nature hold less sway than in the rest of the world, is the place most suited to *Hashgachah Pratit*. (*Mizmor L'David* Vol. I p.159-160)

“And you may say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ Then you shall remember *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, for it is He Who gives you strength to make wealth . . .” (8:17-18)

R’ Yitzchak Arieli z”l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La’mishpat*) writes: Believing in one’s own strength and might is the essence of idolatry, the opposite of *Emunah* / faith. This is why Avraham Avinu, who fought his whole adult life against idolatry, refused to take the booty of his war against the Four Kings, saying (*Bereishit* 14:23), “So you shall not say, ‘It is I who made Avram rich.’” This is the meaning, also, of (*Devarim* 31:29), “if you do what is evil in the eyes of *Hashem*, angering Him through your work of your hands,” *i.e.*, by placing your faith in the work of your hands.

R’ Arieli continues: The antidote to such a belief is *Shabbat*, the day when “the work of our hands” is completely absent, when we glorify the work of *Hashem’s* hands. This is why *Shabbat* is referred to as the source of *Emunah*.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha’geulah* p.17)

“For if you observe this entire commandment that I command you, to perform it, to love *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, to walk in all His ways, and to cling to Him.” (11:22)

R’ Yehuda Ashlag z”l (1885-1954; Poland and *Eretz Yisrael*; known as the “*Ba’al Ha’sulam*”) writes: It is well known that the ultimate goal of studying Torah and performing *Mitzvot* is *D’veikut* / clinging to *Hashem*. But, what exactly does this mean? After all, we cannot even imagine *Hashem*! Our Sages themselves asked this question, saying [see *Midrash Sifrei* and *Sotah* 14a]: “Is it then possible to cling to Him? Is He not ‘a consuming fire’ (in the words of *Devarim* 4:24)?” And they answered: “It means: ‘Cling to His attributes: As He is merciful, so you shall be merciful; As He bestows loving-kindness, so you shall bestow loving-kindness.’”

However, writes R’ Ashlag, this requires explanation. Why did our Sages give our verse a non-literal interpretation? If the Torah had meant, “Cling to His attributes,” it could have said that. But, it did not; rather, it said, “Cling to Him”!

The correct understanding, R’ Ashlag explains, is as follows: Physical objects take up space. Therefore, when we speak of physical objects “clinging” to each other, we mean that they are close to each other physically. But, spiritual things do not take up space, so *D’veikut* cannot refer to physical proximity. Rather, it indicates that there is some commonality between the two things that we describe as “clinging” to each other. When they lose that commonality, we say they are “distant” or “separated” from each other—no differently than if they were two pieces of a physical log that have been separated from each other by an ax. In this vein, when two people hate each other, we say they are “distant” even when they are standing next to each other. And, when two people love each other, they are “close,” no matter how distant they may be physically.

In light of this, R’ Ashlag concludes, we understand the words of our Sages: Our verse cannot be understood literally, because *Hashem* is not a physical being. How then can one achieve *D’veikut* with *Hashem*? By imitating His attributes, thus developing a commonality with *Hashem* that causes a person to be “close” to Him.

(*Matan Torah: Ma’amar Le’siyum Ha’Zohar*)

“This will be the reward when you listen to these *Mishpatim* / ordinances . . .” (7:12)

R’ Yechezkel Michel Ha’Levi Epstein z”l (1829-1908; rabbi of Novardok, Belarus) writes: Even in the realm of *Mishpatim* / laws that seem logical to us and which we would have thought of on our own if G-d had not commanded us to observe them (also known as “*Mitzvot Sichliyot*” / “commandments of the intellect”), a Jew should have in mind that he is listening to (*i.e.*, obeying) *Hashem*, not that he is doing what is logical or reasonable. Nevertheless, R’ Epstein continues, it is undeniable that the Jewish People’s holiness is highlighted more by our observance of those *Mitzvot* that we would not have thought of on our own (known as “*Mitzvot Shim’iyot*” / “commandments that we heard”).

For this reason, R’ Epstein explains, we do not recite *Berachot* before performing *Mitzvot Sichliyot*. Since gentiles perform such logical deeds as well—for example, eating a feast on the Sabbath or a festival—these *Mitzvot* do not demonstrate that “He has sanctified us with His commandments,” as the formula for *Berachot* on *Mitzvot* says.

(*Aruch Ha’shulchan: Choshen Mishpat* 427:10)



“Not by bread alone does *Adam* / man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of *Hashem* does man live.” (8:3)

R’ David Tevel Rubin z”l (1792-1861; rabbi of Minsk, Belarus) explains: The word “*Adam*” refers to the soul, not to the body, which is called “*B’sar Adam*” / “the flesh of man” (see *Shmot* 30:32). Our verse is teaching that the soul, which is spiritual, is not sustained by physical bread, but rather by the spiritual “nutrients” that emanate from the mouth of *Hashem* and are implanted into the bread (and other food). How, then, does one extract food’s spiritual nutrients? By reciting *Berachot* on, and performing other *Mitzvot* using, the food.

(*Derashot Bet David* 3:13)

R’ Chaim of Volozhin z”l (Belarus; 1749-1821; teacher of the above-mentioned R’ Rubin) explains: What “emanates from the mouth of *Hashem*” refers to the utterances with which *Hashem* created the world and with which He constantly wills it to exist. Without His constant Will, even the physical bread would not continue to exist. This is the idea conveyed, as well, by the *Midrash* that teaches: “There is no blade of grass on earth that does not have a force in Heaven commanding it to grow.”

Before *Adam’s* sin, continues R’ Chaim, he was sustained solely by the spirituality in his food. This is the meaning of the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 59b) that says, “Angels would roast meat for *Adam*.” Ideally, man would not be sustained by physical bread at all, only by the “word of *Hashem*.” After *Adam’s* sin, however, we need both.

(*Ruach Chaim* 3:3)