

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS  
EIKEV

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
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## SIMPLY THE BEST

“**W**hat does Hashem ask of you, simply to fear Him...”<sup>1</sup> With these words, *Moshe Rabbeinu* challenged *Klal Yisrael* to raise their awe of Hashem. However, the Gemara<sup>2</sup> points out that this is not a simple task. Why did *Moshe Rabbeinu* say to ‘simply’ fear Him, as if it were an easy feat? The Gemara answers that indeed, for a man like *Moshe Rabbeinu*, this level of awe is something that is easy to achieve.

The Ran<sup>3</sup> (R’ Nissim ben Reuven, 1320–1376) is puzzled by the Gemara’s response. It’s almost as if Moshe was unaware with whom he was speaking! Yes, it may be easy for Moshe, but Moshe was addressing the Jewish nation, and they were not at the same heights as *Moshe Rabbeinu*. This is comparable to an abundantly wealthy man asking a pauper for ten thousand dollars. How ridiculous!

The answer to this lies in a deep understanding of how the human psyche works. The Ran explains that every one of us has an intense and powerful drive to be close to Hashem. The Ran compares this to gravity — an object will always be attracted back to the earth. However, adds the Ran, we have another force pulling us away from Hashem. This is the drive for the here and now, the wealth, honor, and desires of this world. And this drive clouds and confuses our natural longing for Hashem.

Even so, is Moshe not aware of the struggles of the average human? How can he describe this lofty level as something easily attained? The Ran clarifies that once we understand the value of *yiras shomayim*, and the trade-off we make in attaining this goal, everything falls into place.

Moshe had no doubts as to what it takes to reach the highest levels of fear of Heaven. But he understood that asking one to put everything on the line, reject the lure of this temporary world, and choose to give in to one’s deepest desire to be close to Hashem, is asking them to do something simple and easy. It is like asking someone to invest in a deal where one dollar spent nets ten thousand dollars gained. One who spends a million dollars on this deal doesn’t view it as a loss or privation, not at all, they view it as the greatest investment ever.

1 *Devarim* 10:12

2 *Berachos* 33b

3 *Drashos HaRan*, 10

**It is like asking someone to invest in a deal where one dollar spent nets ten thousand dollars gained.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

*Yiras shomayim* easily attained? Is that even possible? What sort of steps must one take to reach this lofty goal?

The Ran<sup>1</sup> explains that since we naturally want to be close to Hashem, but our base desires cloud our judgement, an excellent path to *avodas Hashem* is to realize how fleeting and temporal the temptations of this world truly are.

He points out that whenever one undergoes some sort of misfortune, one can turn that into a lesson. We all have many needs, and even more desires. But when challenges and difficulties arise, we can use those situations to realize what is truly important in our lives.

In fact, says the Ran, it doesn’t even have to be our own personal challenges. When we hear or see someone else faced with a loss, that too can inspire us to focus on the things in our life that has true value, our Torah, *mitzvos*, and acts of *chesed*.

1 *Drashos HaRan*, 10



***Mussar has the power to unmask negios (self interests) lurking in our subconscious. Once the negios are revealed and removed, we can clearly see what is true and good, and feel motivated to pursue it.*** - *Mirrer Rosh*

*Yeshiva, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt”l, Sichos R’ Nosson Tzvi, vol. 2, pg. 160*

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# GOLDEN HANDCUFFS

The taxi pulled up to the curb, right up to the spot where Yitzchak\* was standing. He opened the car door and gave the driver a hearty, "Good morning!" The driver flashed him a smile, returned his greeting, and then faced forward to see where he was going.

Yitzchak never felt comfortable making small talk, but he felt even less comfortable in the silence. "How are you this morning?"

"I am fine, sir, thank you for asking!"

Yitzchak led the way, chatting with the driver. They spoke about the weather (a requirement, it would seem), the latest sports scores, and then Yitzchak pulled out one of his best cards. He asked the driver how he got into the transportation business. People were always happy to share their life's story, and this driver was no different.

In the midst of this discussion, the driver paused. "You know, in my previous job, I was not allowed to speak to the clients. I used to work for a high-end limousine service. Our clients were the very rich and prestigious. We had to have three separate newspapers available in the back, and were given strict instructions to not speak unless spoken to."

"Wow! That's... demeaning. Did you ever speak to your clients, or would they pretend you weren't there?"

"We spoke. Some were better than others. But I remember one fellow who clearly wanted to talk. He worked for Goldman Sachs, and was pretty high up in the company. I pulled up to the office building, and when he sat down, I couldn't help but stare. He looked like he was homeless — his shirt was dirty, his tie was loose and he had two or three days worth of stubble on his face.

"He noticed me looking, and explained that Goldman Sachs was under some sort of investigation by the government. Because of this, he had to spend a lot of time at the office. Long story short, this is the first time he was going home in three days!

"But there's more. I pulled into his driveway — it was the sort that you still had to drive a while until you got to the house. And what a house! It had multiple stories, beautiful landscaping, everything! Since we were talking, I said to him that it must be worth it, after all, what a nice place to live! I'll never forget his response."

"I would trade places with you in a heartbeat," he said. "I never get to enjoy my house, or my family, or my kids. On my vacations I'm always working, and my relationship with my family is shot. This," he said, gesturing to the house, "is not a house. It's a prison."

"With that, I stopped the car, and he made his way out. I watched as he shambled into his enormous jail cell, thankful that soon, I'll be going to my home and family."

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- One can be well-mannered and courteous, but the only thing that truly keeps us from our base desires is *yiras shomayim*.<sup>1</sup>
- Though one should strive for excellence in both, if one must choose, it is better to be the ignoramus who has *yiras shomayim*, than the learned one who has no fear of Heaven!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Malbim on Bereishis 20:11

<sup>2</sup> Chayei Adam, 143