

Parasha Meditation Eikev

Devarim 7:12-11:25

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Listening to the Voice of Hashem with Our Heels

Introduction

Strengthening our Sense of Hearing in the Month of Av

Every Jewish month according to *Sefer Yetzira* is associated with one specific sense. During the month of Av we are connected to the sense of hearing.¹ That means we have a greater ability during this time to open our ears to hear Hashem's voice calling us back. In the month of Av we start reading the *Book of Devarim*, which is all about listening to Moshe Rabbeinu's thirty-six day long monologue. Like last week's *parasha* when we learned about the *Shema Yisrael*, (Hear oh Israel), this week's *parasha* opens by charging us to listen: "It shall come to pass, because (*eikev*) you listen to these ordinances, and keep, and do them, that Hashem your G-d shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto your fathers."²

Allowing the Torah to Penetrate into the Lowest Part of our Being

This week's *parasha* is called *Eikev*, which is translated in the context of the Torah verse "because" or "in exchange for." However, it really refers to the heel of the foot. *Netivat Shalom* explains that there is the listening of the mind, the listening of the heart and the listening of the body – all the way down to its lowest and densest part, the heel. All our opinions and outlooks are connected to our mind; our desires and will are dependent on the heart, while our lower instincts and cravings are part of our lower body, with the heel representing our lowest point. While it is nice to be able to study Torah with our head, the greatest accomplishment is to make the Torah penetrate into both our heart, stomach, legs, feet and even the very lowest part of our being – the heel. Therefore, our *parasha* opens with the Hebrew וְהָיָה – *v'haya*. – This way of saying "It shall come to pass" is the language of *simcha* – happiness.³ There is no greater *simcha* than when not only our ears will hear, but also our heart and even our heel will be able to listen, so that we can make our Judaism penetrate into the very lowest physical fiber of our being – the heel.⁴

¹ *Sefer Yetzira* 5:8.

² *Devarim* 7:12.

³ See *Ohr HaChayim, Bereishit* 27:40. This form וְהָיָה with the *conversive vav* turns past into future. As if through the happiness we want the past to spill over into the future.

⁴ *Netivat Shalom, Parashat Eikev*, p. 49.



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Listening With Our Heel – “*Mesirut Nefesh*” – Total Devotion

Although our mind is intellectual, and our heel is at the very bottom of our body, listening with the heel is greater than listening with our mind. This is because the heel represents total devotion; whereas the mind always is questioning, and needs to be convinced into serving Hashem. When entering a hot tub, with which part of the body do we enter first, the head or the heel? The heel has “*mesirut nefesh*” by giving it itself over in total *emunah* (faith). So too, in order to bring down Hashem's promises and blessings we must totally devote ourselves to Hashem and His mitzvot.⁵

Why don't We Hear the Heavenly Voice?

Unfortunately most of us are very far from listening to Hashem with our heels. At best, we are struggling to bring the Torah into our hearts. “Every single day a *Bat Kol* (heavenly voice) goes out from Mt. Chorev and declares, “Woe to you people because of the embarrassment of the Torah...”⁶ If this heavenly voice emerges daily how come we don't hear it? The reason is that our heart is blocked. This week's *parasha* is about opening our heart, so we can learn to really hear.

Circumcising the Foreskin of Our Hearts

“You shall circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, and no longer be stiff-necked.”⁷ What kind of foreskin is on the heart? Rashi explains that this refers to that which blocks and covers the heart.⁸ Every time a person sins, he creates a blockage on his heart, which makes it difficult to hear the voice of Hashem. *Netivat Shalom* comment on the double language of Rashi – (blocks and covers), explaining that in addition to this spiritual blockage, the *yetzer hara* (negative impulse) also causes us to cover up our heart. When the heart is covered it is unable to hear and accept the words spoken to it. Appointing the *yetzer hara* king makes it impossible to know and hear the words of Hashem. For the *yetzer hara* is standing at the opening of the heart, preventing the words of Torah from entering the soul.

The Wicked Gatekeeper of our Heart

This can be compared to a king whose gatekeepers are thieves. If someone wants to come before the king to complain about these wicked servants, the gatekeepers would surely not let him in, as this would cause them to lose their job. In the same way the *yetzer hara*, guarding the opening of our heart, prevents the voice of the Torah from entering, so that he won't be thrown out from his job as gatekeeper.

Hanging on to His Position by Blocking our Heart

Every single Jew, even when leaving Torah and Mitzvot, is still a part of G-d Above. Therefore, if only the word of Hashem, with the potential to set him straight, would enter his heart, he would immediately return in complete repentance. This is why, the *yetzer hara* is specifically concerned with preventing the holy words of the Torah from entering our hearts and move us to action. He is not interested in becoming un-employed.

⁵ Rabbi Shelomo Carlebach, *Parashas Eikev*, Issue #25, 19-20 menachem Av 5767.

⁶ *Shemot Rabbah* 41:7.

⁷ *Devarim* 10:16.

⁸ Rashi *ibid*.

Opening our Heart to Hear

The foreskin on our heart covers our Jewish spark, and makes us feel disconnected from Hashem. As long as our heart is blocked and the heavenly voice cannot penetrate and move us to repent, our heart is like the heart of a non-Jew, where Hashem's word doesn't enter. Therefore, Hashem requires us to circumcise our heart and remove both the blockage and the covering. It is not enough to remove the blockage which causes us to sin, it is even more important to remove the covering that doesn't allow the Torah to penetrate our hearts, so we can become open to hear the words of truth with our entire being.⁹ It is interesting to note that this two stage spiritual circumcision parallels the Jewish circumcision of the male organ where also two foreskins are removed – the outer *milah* and the inner *periah*.

Meditation

Close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax. Tell yourself mentally to relax. Relax your forehead, relax your eyebrows, relax your eyes, relax your ears. Relax your entire head, neck and shoulders. Move your mind's eye to your chest and heart, relax, relax, relax! Continue to relax all the parts of your body all the way down to your heels.

1. Get in touch with your heart behind the ribcage a little to the left of the middle. Can you feel your heart beating? Place both of your hands together on top of your heart and press, until you really feel your own pulse there.
2. Breathe rhythmically and slowly to the beat of your heart. Make sure to empty out all the air on the outbreath.
3. Remove your hands and relax them at your side, imagine a seed trying to sprout inside of your heart.
4. Visualize a rocky terrain inside of your heart preventing the seed from growing. Imagine the size of the rock formation, is it many scattered rocks? Are they big like boulders or small like pebbles? Do they form a solid wall around your heart, or are there just a few rows of rocks with holes of light in the middle?
5. Imagine the power of the seed within your heart expanding, sprouting forth and beginning to grow, pushing away the blocking of the rock formation.
6. Visualize the rocks gradually crumbling down, breaking into smaller and smaller pieces all around the seed of your heart. Imagining how the big rocks become smaller and smaller, falling away, how the holes in the wall become greater letting in more and more light. Continue this visualization until all of the rocks are gone. Finally, the gate of your heart is opened, and the wicked gatekeeper falls into the sea.

⁹ *Netivat Shalom, Parashat Eikev*, pp. 70-71.



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7. Water the sprout of your heart with waters of Torah and Mitzvot. Watch it grow, its branches becoming one with your arteries and veins, while it turns into a beautiful green plant of your choice, filling your heart with love.

8. Think about a person that you love very much and feel how your heart is opened even more towards him or her. Decide one act of love you will do for this person at your very first opportunity. Then open your eyes, excited to fulfill your resolve.

Notes

In a sense “hearing” is deeper than “seeing.” We can “see” something awesome, but “seeing” it, does not guarantee that we will make any changes in our way of life. However, when we “hear” the mitzvot – the words of the Torah are planted into our hearts. They take root there, and help us grow with the Torah.¹⁰

¹⁰ Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, *Parashas Eikev*, Issue #25, 19-20 menachem AV 5767.



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About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin – Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land of Israel

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

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Beginner and advanced levels are offered for women of all ages and religious backgrounds. Whether your interest in Judaism has recently been ignited, or you are seeking a wider perspective, Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin offers the opportunity to improve your learning skills while strengthening your commitment to Judaism within the parameters of Halachah – all while engaging your inner creative spirituality, working the Land, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Support Our School!

You have the unique opportunity to help us continue to build and amplify the light of Torah on the Land of Israel. With your help we can increase our ability to provide women an extraordinary Torah environment where they can build a solid Jewish foundation which will have an impact for generations to come.



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