

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Reflections on Eikev - How to work with our inner two year old to accept 'no' for an answer

Moshe addresses the Jewish people, warning them of the consequences of going across the Jordan, the requirement to maintain Torah and the consequences for forgetting. Rashi explains that Eikev means a heel. Moshe was saying, "If you will observe the mitzvos that many people step on and disregard as insignificant, then Hashem will grant you enormous blessing."

Because of the way our brain develops, first with an animalistic brain formed in utero at six months, then with emotional centers that are formed around three or four years old, and ultimately with a higher cortex that takes until the age of twenty to fully form, it is important to understand the goals of the Jewish people.

We have all seen the temper tantrums of two year olds. Something that they desire is frustrated to them and they begin to cry, angry sometimes too. The goals to help the baby develop well are that the baby learn that sometimes the answer is no.

Let's bring Parshas Miketz into this matter, where Yosef HaTzaddik runs out of Potiphar's house. Yosef HaTzaddik had to say no to himself in the profoundest of ways. There were many justifications for him to have just given into what seemed to be something that was 'meant to be.' What Yosef HaTzaddik saw when he saw the face of his father Yaakov, who is Emes and Tiferes, is that in no way can anything good come from doing something that would hurt Potiphar, the man who he worked for, who had been good to him. Yosef did not step on this "small matter" overlooking it as insignificant, deluding himself that he could be doing something holy with Potiphar's wife.

And that is the word. Holy. We, the Jewish people are the first born child of Hashem and we are to strive to be holy. Such striving requires us to observe from a perspective of emes the mitzvahs that we do.

In today's paper, MIT scientists have discovered a way to inject memory cells into mice to change their memories. The Jewish people understand that when we inject emunah into our consciousness, we can change our emotions and our actions. All it takes is trust in Hashem.

Thus we go back to our two year olds. How can we best help them, as well as the two year old inside of us, accept "no" for an answer and keep ourselves from taking through trampling upon mitzvahs? The environment has to be one that we totally trust Hashem and love serving Him in this way. When we live in a Torah frame of mind where we have 100% clarity that all there is in the world is Hashem and that we are here to unify His Name when challenges arise, our inner two year old accepts "no" for the greater spiritual pleasure and confidence in the Divine promise of enormous blessing.

May we all deepen our emunah and build our homes with love for Hashem and a desire for the the pleasure of unifying

and sanctifying Hashem's name, and may we exalt and magnify His Name in every moment.