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At the end of Va'etchanan it states, "Which I command you this day, to do them," upon which Rashi comments, "And tomorrow, in the World to Come, to receive their reward."

In principle, a Jew is rewarded for observing G-d's commandments. However, most mitzvot are rewarded not in this world, but in the World to Come. And the reason is simple:

As Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidism explained, the reward for doing mitzvot is so great that this limited, physical world cannot contain it; we must therefore wait until the less restrictive World to Come to receive our reward. The majority of the Torah's commandments fall into this category.

Nonetheless, there are certain mitzvot for which we are rewarded in this world as well. These are the good deeds we do to benefit others. Not only are they "good for heaven," but "good for the creations." Such mitzvot elicit a response from G-d that is measure for measure: Because we have helped our fellow Jew in this world, it is only fitting that our reward be in this world too.

The following illustrates the concept of delayed reward: There was once a king who ruled over the entire world. One day he left his palace and met a Jewish boy, Yisrael.

"Yisrael," the king said, "Find a beautiful diamond for my royal crown." At once Yisrael embarked on a search. When he found a diamond he thought was suitable he brought it to the palace, where the royal jewelers cut and polished the stone and set it in the king's crown. Everyone was stunned by the stone's brilliance. The king promised Yisrael a reward for his deed. Although now he was only a child, when he grew up the king would appoint him as his highest ranking minister.

The next day Yisrael sat down to eat, but his plate was empty. "It isn't fair!" he cried. "I did what the king wanted, yet still I go hungry! How can the king not care about me?" It was only years later that Yisrael realized that he had received his true reward. The king appointed Yisrael second in command over his entire kingdom.

The second category of mitzvot, for which we are rewarded in this world, is illustrated by the following parable: The same king once met Yisrael and asked him to do a different sort of favor: he wanted him to feed his children, the royal princes and princesses. Yisrael, of course, immediately stopped what he was doing and arranged a lavish meal for the king's children. This time the king did not allow Yisrael to go hungry. In addition to the reward he would get later, the boy was invited to sit at the table and eat.

So too is it when we help our fellow Jews. Not only are we rewarded later, but the King of the universe grants us our reward in the here and now. (Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 19, L'Chaim 5759 #578)

With a great voice which was not again (5:19) The Hebrew phrase *v'lo yasaf*, which we have translated "which was not again", can also mean "which did not cease". Thus there are various meanings to this verse. One meaning is that the revelation at Sinai was a one-time event, never to be repeated in history (Rashi; Ibn Ezra); other meanings are that it was an extremely powerful voice that spoke without interruption (unlike a human voice, which must pause for breath -- Targum; Rashi); that it did not cease in the sense that all subsequent prophets prophesied from that voice, or in the sense that it did not confine itself to the Holy Tongue but reverberated in mankind's seventy languages (Midrash Rabbah); that it did not "repeat" -- i.e., it had no echo (Midrash Rabbah).

The Lubavitcher Rebbe dwells on this last interpretation: what is the significance of the fact that the divine voice that spoke the Ten Commandment had no echo? But often, says the Rebbe, one may feel challenged by a something in our lives or in our world that seems unresponsive, or even resisting, to the mission entrusted to us at Sinai. It may appear that one or another of Torah's precepts does not "fit in" with the prevalent reality. So the Torah tells us that the voice which sounded G-d's message to man had no echo.

An echo is created when a sound meets with a substance which resists it: instead of absorbing its waves, the substance repels them, bouncing them back to the void. But the voice of the Ten Commandments permeated every object in the universe. So any "resistance" we may possibly meet in implementing the Torah is superficial and temporary. Ultimately, the essence of every created being is consistent with, and wholly receptive of, the goodness and perfection that its Creator desires of it. - chabadonline.com

SHABBOS NACHAMU

This Shabbat, known as "Shabbat Nachamu," is the first of the seven "Sabbaths of Consolation." A special Haftora beginning "Console, console yourselves, My people" is read. Our Sages explain the twofold use of the word "console": "[The Jewish people] committed a twofold sin...received a twofold punishment... and are likewise comforted twofold." Elsewhere our Sages comment, "Because its mitzvot are doubled, so too are its consolations doubled."

Why this emphasis on the number two? How can a sin be twofold, anyway? Moreover, what is meant by the statement that the Torah's commandments are "doubled"? The terms "twofold" and "double," refer to two different dimensions. Everything in a Jew's life -- the Torah and its commandments, the destruction of the Holy Temple and our consolation -- reflects this duality, for everything in the world is composed of both a physical and a spiritual component.

A Jew is a mixture of a corporeal body and spiritual soul, which together form a complete being. A Jew is considered whole when both aspects of his nature, body and soul, are working in tandem to serve G-d. Mitzvot, too, are composed of these two dimensions. Every mitzva contains a spiritual component -- the intentions behind it -- and a physical component -- the way the mitzva is performed.

This is what our Sages referred to when stating that the Torah's mitzvot are "doubled"; similarly, the "twofold sin" committed by the Jewish people refers to the physical and spiritual aspects of their transgression. Accordingly, the punishment which followed -- the destruction of the Holy Temple -- was both spiritual and physical. Had the destruction been limited to the physical stones of the Temple, the G-dly light and revelation it brought into the world would have continued as before. However, the Jewish people "received a twofold punishment," and were chastised with a concealment of G-dliness as well.

The Holy Temple itself reflected this duality. The Temple was a physical structure, possessing certain limited dimensions. Yet, the G-dly light with which it was illuminated was infinite in nature. Its destruction was therefore a double blow as it affected both of these aspects.

When the Holy Temple is rebuilt in the Messianic era our consolation will be doubled because it will encompass both dimensions: not only will the physical structure of the Temple be restored, but its G-dly revelation will also return. This double measure of completion will be brought about by King Moshiach, who possesses a perfect "composite soul" containing all the souls of the Jewish people, and is therefore able to bring perfection to all creation. (Adapted from Sefer HaSichot of the Rebbe, 5750, Vol. 2)

FROM MY FATHER'S NOTES: THE SUPERIOR QUALITY OF 15 AV OVER THE FIFTEENTH OF EVERY OTHER MONTH IS THIS: THE FIFTEENTH REPRESENTS THE VISIBLE COMPLETENESS (OF THE MOON), BUT (THE MOON) IS STILL ONLY A RECIPIENT (1) (OF LIGHT). HOWEVER, ON 15 AV THE LIGHT IS FIRMLY FIXED IN IT, FOR THE ASCENT IS IN REVERSE PROPORTION TO THE DRASTIC DESCENT OF TISHA B'AV... THIS THEN IS THE MEANING OF "THE SUN'S POWER IS WEAKENED" (ON 15 AV AFTER ITS SUMMER INTENSITY). THE IDOLATORS CALCULATE THEIR CALENDAR BY THE SUN OF EVIL, WHICH ON THE 15TH IS WEAKENED... IN THE DAYS OF THE SANCTUARY THEY (THE NATIONS) WERE SUBSERVIENT TO SHLOMO (KING SOLOMON); CERTAINLY IT SHALL BE SO IN THE TIME-TO-COME WHEN "(THE NATIONS) WILL FLOW TO HIM" (2) IN A STATE OF TOTAL BITUL (NULLIFICATION), AND "I WILL REMOVE THE SPIRIT OF IMPURITY ETC." A TOKEN OF THIS IS EXPRESSED ON THE 15TH OF AV WHEN THE SUN IS WEAKENED.... (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, AV 15)

I thought I would be forever alone, but behold! He was standing behind our wall, observing through the windows, peering through the lattices.

My Beloved called out and said to me: Arise My love, my fair one, and go forth. For the winter of bondage has passed, the deluge of suffering is over and gone. The righteous blossoms are seen in the land, the time of your song has arrived, and the voice of your guide is heard in the land.

The fig tree has formed its first small figs, ready for ascent to the Temple. The vines are in blossom, their fragrance declaring they are ready for libation. Arise My love, My fair one and go forth! - King Solomon, Shir hashirim