

## Investing in Our Relationship

### Levit., Chapter 26

3. If you follow My statutes and keep My commandments and fulfill them,

4. I will provide your rains in their proper time, the earth will yield its produce, and the tree of the field will give forth its fruit...

11. And I will set My sanctuary among you, and My Spirit will not reject you;

12. I will walk among you and be your G-d, and you will be My people.

14. But if you do not listen to Me and you will not fulfill all these commandments,

15. And if you despise My statutes and reject My laws, so as not to fulfill all My commandments, thereby breaking My covenant

16. Then I will do the same to you...17. I will set My attention against you, and you will be smitten before your enemies. Your enemies will rule over you; you will flee, but no one will be pursuing you.

21. And if you treat Me as happenstance, and you do not wish to listen to Me, I will add seven punishments corresponding to your sins:

24. Then I too, will treat you as happenstance. I will again add seven punishments for your sins:

27. And if, despite this, you still do not listen to Me, still treating Me as happenstance,

28. I will treat you with a fury of happenstance, I will punish you, I too, adding again seven [chastisements] for your sins:

*If you follow My statutes (26:3)*

#### Talmud, Avodah Zarah 5a

The word "if" is to be understood as a plea on the part of G-d: "If only you would follow My statutes..."

#### Rashi

Perhaps this refers to the fulfillment of the commandments? However, when the verse says, "and keep My commandments," the fulfillment of the commandments is already stated. So what is the meaning of "If you follow My statutes"? It means that you must labor in the study of Torah

#### Gur Aryeh

The word for "follow" here, תִּלְכוּ, literally means "walk," which is a strenuous activity

*And keep My commandments*

#### Rashi

Labor in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill the commandments.

*I will walk among you (23:12)*

#### Rashi

I will stroll with you in the Garden of Eden, as one of you, and you will not be frightened of Me. Now, one might think that you will not fear Me [under such "familiar" circumstances]. The verse, therefore, says, "I will be your G-d."

פרק כו.

ג. אם בְּחֻקֵי תִלְכוּ וְאֵת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם: ד. וְנִתְּתִי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיָו:



יא. וְנִתְּתִי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם: יב. וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לְאֱלֹקִים וְאִתְּם תִּהְיוּ לִי לְעָם: יד. וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה: טו. וְאִם בְּחֻקֵי תִמְאָסוּ וְאִם אֶת מִשְׁפָּטֵי תִגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת בְּרִיתִי: טז. אֲף אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה זֹאת לָכֶם... יז. וְנִתְּתִי פְּנֵי בָכֶם וְנִגְפַתְּם לִפְנֵי אֲבִיכֶם וְרָדוּ בָכֶם שְׁנֵאֵיכֶם וְנִסַּתְּם וְאִין רִדְף אֶתְכֶם: כא. וְאִם תִּלְכוּ עִמִּי קָרִי וְלֹא תֵאָבוּ לְשַׁמֵּעַ לִי וְיִסְפַּתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִכָּה שְׁבַע כַּחֲטָאתֵיכֶם: כד. וְהִלַּכְתִּי אֲף אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם בְּקָרִי וְהִפִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם גַּם אֲנִי שְׁבַע עַל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם: כו. וְאִם בְּזֹאת לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְהִלַּכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְּקָרִי: כח. וְהִלַּכְתִּי עִמָּכֶם בְּחַמַּת קָרִי וְיִסַּרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֲף אֲנִי שְׁבַע עַל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם:

## Tzeidah Laderech

G-d promises a blessing of special spiritual quality, involving intimate knowledge of Him,

*But if you do not listen to Me (23:14)*

## Rashi

To toil in Torah in order to know the exposition of the Sages. I might think that this refers to fulfilling the commandments. When the verse says, "and you will not fulfill all these commandments," the fulfillment of commandments is stated. So what is the meaning of "if you do not listen to Me"? To toil in the study of Torah. And what is the meaning of "to Me"? This is speaking about someone who knows his Master, and yet willfully rebels against Him. Likewise, regarding Nimrod [whom the verses call], "a powerful hunter before G-d" (Gen. 10:9), it means that he recognized G-d but intentionally rebelled against Him...

*And if you treat Me as happenstance (23:21)*

## Rashi

Our Rabbis said that this word קָרַי means temporary, by chance (מְקַרָּה), something that happens only occasionally. Thus, our verse means: "If you treat the commandments as happenstance, a temporary concern." Menachem however, explains קָרַי as refraining, as "hold back your steps" (Prov. 25:17)... And this explanation [of קָרַי עִמִּי קָרַי] resembles Onkelos's translation, namely, denoting hardness, i.e., harden their hearts to refrain from coming close to Me.

## Midrash Rabbah, Gen. 11:6

All that G-d created in the six days of creation, He created in need of mending. As it says, 'G-d created, in order to do.' (Gen. 2:3) This teaches that the world was created imperfect."

## The Chassidic Masters

All sins derive from the sin of insignificance: when a person ceases to be sensitive to the paramount importance which G-d attaches to his life and deeds. "I don't really matter" is not humility--it is the ultimate arrogance. It really means: "I can do what I want." The most terrible of punishments is for G-d to indulge the sinner this vanity. For G-d to say: "All right, have it your way; what happens to you is of no significance"; for G-d to act toward him as if He really does not care what happens to him.

*I will punish you, I too (26:28)*

## Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov

When a father punishes his child, the suffering he inflicts on himself is greater than anything experienced by the child. So it is with G-d: His pain is greater than our pain.

## SUMMARY

- In a healthy relationship, the love must deepen and grow or the relationship is at risk of becoming static and stale. G-d chose us as His partners to perfect our incomplete world.
- Laboring in Torah, means to strain ourselves to the limit, going outside of the limitations of our ego, finding or creating room for something other than our selves, our wants and needs.
- Walking in G-d's statutes implies a constant progression to a new level, to a higher faith and commitment, to a greater awareness and understanding of what G-d desires from us.
- The greatest spiritual blessing is G-d's promise, "I will set My dwelling among you." We will dwell together with G-d in absolute unison and harmony, in deep love and devotion.
- The most terrible punishment is for G-d to say, "Have it your way. If you want an auto-pilot relationship that is effort-free and concern-free, I'll do the same. What happens to you is of no significance to Me." This is G-d acting "casually" toward us.

