

## IS LIFE FAIR?

We are all engaged in a diverse range of relationships. We interact with many different types of people at varying levels.

The most important tool required for creating successful relationships is to clearly recognise and understand what each specific relationship demands of us. For example, there are personal relationships and professional relationships. Each relationship has its own nuanced dynamic and one must not be confused what is appropriate behaviour in one type of relationship with another. One may require of us to be strong and one more flexible, one assertive, the other compassionate. Our interactions with one may be constructive while the same interaction with one another may be destructive. Indeed, it is clear that one of the main causes of problematic relationships is due to the lack of clarity as to its exact nature.

This brings us to the most complex and challenging type of relationship; between man & G-d. Most human beings struggle to navigate a successful relationship with G-d for many reasons, including the lack of feedback which in the case of a G-d / man relationship this is totally lacking.

It is at this point that I would like to share with you a perplexing statement quoted by *Rashi* in explaining a verse in this week's Torah portion. After the Jew brings the gift of the first fruits to the temple, he implores G-d to bless the Jewish people. *Rashi* comments as follows; "we have done what you decreed upon us, now, you do what is incumbent upon you". This statement seems both highly inappropriate and inconsistent with the conventional view that we should not perform the commandments for the sake of any reward. We should perform the mitzvot because we are good human beings and are obliged to do so, without having any ulterior motives. After all, who is man to question G-d's request of us to fulfil the commandments?

It is through this statement that we can attempt to unravel and try to discover the dynamics of this complex and very spiritual relationship which many find extremely challenging. We don't see G-d, nor do we hear him. We don't know if He is happy with us, or perhaps angry. As a result of the lack of feedback, we do not make any serious attempt to nurture any relationship with Him. The truth however is that we as His children are allowed and indeed even encouraged to engage with G-d even at a more basic level like humans relate to one another. True, G-d wants a relationship with each Jew that is both lofty and altruistic in nature. However, he also profoundly appreciates even a more basic level of relationship which is based on give and take.

On his regular visits to the market place the great Chassidic master *Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev*, would encourage hundreds of Jews including the most estranged and simple to build relationships with G-d that were both pure and simple. He explained that G-d was not looking for a lofty relationship with man, only a pure and honest one. In dealing with G-d, he said, the relationship is about digging deep inside so as to discover the pure and innocent child that exists in all of us. He explained that it is at this level that even a child can understand the concept of reward and punishment and can therefore make sense of the mitzvot even if he performs them purely for the sake of getting a reward. And it is through this sense of *pure unadulterated sense of fairness that we as human beings can connect with G-d.*

*May the coming weeks allow us to connect at both a simple and profound level as the energy of Rosh Hashanah continues to pump through the veins of the Jewish nation and we celebrate the amplified sense of G-d's presence around us.*

By Rabbi Yosef Vogel

Fri 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014

KI TAVO

Shabbat Begins: 7.08pm

Shabbat Ends: 8.07pm