

Chaim was a little slow. In fact, Chaim was just plain dumb in most people's opinion. Some of the boys would play a joke on Chaim. They'd show him a nickel and a dime and offer him a choice of the two coins. Chaim, being the slow kid that he was, would always pick the nickel.

One day a kindly lady who had heard about Chaim decided to see if he was really as dumb as everyone said he was. She took a dime and a nickel from her purse and offered them to him. Chaim picked up the nickel and said, "The nickel is bigger and shinier, which I think is really neat, so I'll take the nickel."

The kindly lady said, "Poor boy, don't you know that a dime is worth more than a nickel?"

"Well, of course I know that."

"Well then, why do you always choose the nickel?"

"Because," Chaim said, "if I ever chose the dime, people would stop giving me nickels."

Nickles and dimes! These days, many people wouldn't even bother to bend over to pick up a nickle or dime on the sidewalk. But they'd be making a mistake.

The coin counting machine at a Virginia bank recently got the biggest workout it has ever experienced.

George Shoemaker, 66, brought in all the coins he had been collecting for 22 years. Over more-than two decades of collecting, all George's pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters added up. When he brought the coins for deposit, it took over two hours to count them all in the coin counter; they totaled an astounding \$7,124.

Mr. Shoemaker said he decided to start collecting coins after being asked one day if he collected anything. "In 1990 I was asked by a flea market vendor if I collected anything. I thought about it for a few minutes and had to answer, 'No.' At that point I didn't actually collect anything at all," he said. So, as a result, Mr. Shoemaker said he began saving all his pocket change.

Many stories are told of people who saved their loose change, and found themselves surprised how quickly it added up.

One person told the story of how he filled an old-school five foot Coke bottle full of the change he accumulated over five years. When he cashed it in it had over \$2500. People have financed trips to Disney World, cruises and more by the pocket change that they've saved.

Ever gone through airport security in such a rush that you left something behind? Maybe a couple of cents that you really didn't miss? You wouldn't be the only one. In the latest fiscal year, travelers at U.S. airports left behind \$674,841.06 in spare change. JFK Airport racked up the most accidental donations with \$42,550 left on screening tables. Los Angeles International Airport was close behind with \$41,506.64 in spare change.

Little things can make a big difference -- as we see in this week's Torah portion.

This week's Torah portion is called Eikev, the first Hebrew word in the reading. Eikev has two meanings. First, it means "therefore," as in "Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws..." Eikev also means "heel," as in the heel of a foot. Based on this meaning, there's another layer of depth in this verse.

Our rabbis say the Torah is speaking specifically about doing things for G-d "that a person would normally tread on with his heel." In other words, this verse is imploring us to be careful with the small things when it comes to serving G-d.

It's the little things that count -- in so many areas of our lives.

What makes a good marriage? Clearly, a few small actions won't fix deep relationship problems. But one of the surprising secrets of great marriages are the little things that make big differences.

Surveys shows that a few small actions matter a lot to almost every man or woman -- what researchers call the *Fantastic Five*.

When individuals were asked if a particular action made them happy, the affirmative response numbers were astoundingly high for *five specific actions* for each gender, even among the struggling couples. Close to 100 percent of all husbands and wives said these actions mattered, with between 65 and 90 percent of all husbands and wives saying these actions would deeply please them.

In other words, *you are very likely to make your spouse feel deeply cared for if you make a habit of doing the same five little things consistently.*

The Fantastic Five for him

A wife will have a big impact on her husband's happiness when she does the following:

1. Notices his effort and sincerely thanks him for it. (For example, she says, "Thank you for mowing the lawn even though it was so hot outside" or, "Thanks for playing with the kids, even when you were so tired from work.") This deeply pleases 72 percent of all men.
2. Says "You did a great job at _____." This deeply pleases 69 percent of all men.
3. Mentions in front of others something he did well. This deeply pleases 72 percent of all men.
4. Shows that she finds him physically attractive. This deeply pleases 456% of men. But seriously -- 85 percent of all men said they were deeply pleased in this area. My question is: What's up with the men who are part of the other 15% !?!
5. Makes it clear to him that he makes her happy. (For example, she expresses appreciation for something he did for her with a smile, words, a big hug, etc.) This deeply pleases 88 percent of all men.

The Fantastic Five for her

On his side, a husband will have a big impact on his wife when he does the following:

1. Takes her hand. (For example, when walking through a parking lot or sitting together at the movies.) This deeply pleases 82 percent of all women.
2. Leaves her a message by voice mail, e-mail, or text during the day to say he loves and is thinking about her. This deeply pleases 75 percent of all women.
3. Puts his arm around her. This deeply pleases 74 percent of all women.
4. Tells her sincerely, "You are beautiful." This deeply pleases 76 percent of all women.
5. Pulls himself out of a funk when he's morose, grumpy, or upset about something, instead of withdrawing. (This doesn't mean he doesn't get angry or need space; it means he tries to pull himself out of it.) This deeply pleases 72 percent of all women.

Did you notice that *all* these happiness-inducing actions are small, simple, and doable by any wife or husband? And where appropriate, many of these items can have great value in other relationships. If you put these little things to work, they can enhance your relationships -- in some cases, radically.

So -- in relationship to our observances of Judaism -- why does G-d care about the little things?

In Eikev (again, 'the heel') the Torah is telling us to be equally diligent with *all* G d's commandments, no less with those that seem less significant and that might be easily ignored. We're warned against a mindset that says that "big" mitzvos must be kept diligently, while "little" mitzvos can be overlooked.

Little mitzvos such as: Attending a minyan, saying a blessing upon our food, placing a mezuzah on every required doorpost, sharing a simple kind word.

In our "marriage" relationship with G d, we might make time for the big, important occasions such as the High Holidays. But what about the seemingly minor, "heel" mitzvos, those relating to the everyday routine of our lives? Can these small things really have any significant effect?

The basis of our relationship with G d is that every mitzvah connects us with our supernal Spouse. The word 'mitzvah,' meaning "connection," refers to the hundreds of small connections that build intimacy. Every mitzvah unites us with G d, irrespective of any perceived difference between major, "head" mitzvot or minor, "heel" ones.

American author Bruce Barton said:

Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things. I am tempted to think there are no little things.

Warren Buffet said:

I don't look to jump over 7-foot bars: I look around for 1-foot bars that I can step over.

And Helen Keller once said:

I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.

The following story is apropos to the idea that 'little things make a big difference.'

Jake and Sara had been dating for a while. They were sitting on the sofa, sipping lemonade. Sara turned to Jake and asked, 'Jake, do you think my hair is soft and shiny?'

Jake answered, 'Yep.'

Then Sara asked, 'Jake, are my eyes bright and beautiful?'

Jake replied, 'Yep.'

After a few minutes, Sara continued, 'Jake, do you think my skin is smooth and white, like porcelain?'

Jake answered, 'Yep.'

At that, Sara smiled widely and said, 'Jake, you say the sweetest little things!'

George Shoemaker saved \$7,000 from spare change the moment he decided to focus on little things. He began saving all his pocket change, putting it into old pickle and mayonnaise jars. The CEO of George's bank, Gerrienne Burks, said

Some may see pocket change as a small or unimportant amount of money (but) George's experience illustrates how saving small quantities can really add up."

There's no such thing as an unimportant amount of money

There's no such thing as an unimportant gesture of love.

There's no such thing as an unimportant mitzvah.

Little things make a big difference.