



The Yoke of Donkeys & Eagles

*by HaRav Ariel bar Tzadok.
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Rabi N'hun'ya Ben HaKana says, One who receives upon himself the yoke of Torah has removed from him the yoke of government and the yoke of work and all who cast off from themselves the Torah have placed upon them the yoke of government and the yoke of work. Avot 3:5

Rabi N'hun'ya was one of the great master of the prophetic/Kabbalistic traditions. It should come as no surprise that his words quoted here contain within them sublime Kabbalistic secrets regarding the true nature of the universe, the innate powers latent within human consciousness and how the power concealed within the Torah can be used by the mind to harness the forces of nature, both in the world at large and within the individual minds of men.

Pay careful attention to what the Rav is saying and what he is not saying. Only with careful consideration of the words are their true meaning revealed.

The Rav speaks about yokes, which are burdens. The term is a metaphor for carrying a heavy weight. Included within this definition are all the negative applications of metaphorically carrying a heavy weight. These include stress, responsibilities, worries and concerns. One who carries a yoke does not do so with ease.

When one takes upon oneself the responsibility of walking the Torah Way one picks up a heavy burden. Yet, as with all burdens, the longer one carries it the easier the load becomes. Eventually even the heaviest of burdens after a while become unnoticed and one carries them with ease. When one carries the yoke of Torah its burden becomes easier and easier until eventually the Torah ends up carrying the individual instead of the individual carrying it.

More than this, one who bares the burden of Torah dwells securely under the Torah's wings. These self same wings raise up the individual's soul, enabling it to see far and wide with the vision of spirit. One blessed with this gift sees through the façade and illusions of this present world of limitations and deception. Therefore, the responsibilities of governmental obligations and the necessity to earn a living are viewed with very little importance. One who flies



with Torah's wings seeks to embrace the ways of Heaven. The ways and worries of the physical world are far below and left for those who cannot fly.

Of course, one who flies with Torah and is carried by its wings fulfills one's physical obligations. Yet, these obligations bare no burden. Political and economic involvements are not worrisome. They raise no stress and are no cause for concern. One who bares the Torah the Torah bares him, and as such one feels no weight from any other burden.

Alas, one who flies with the Torah and then makes the foolish choice to let go of the wings falls from a great height and lands with a terrible crash. One who casts off the yoke of Torah is worse than one who has never picked it up in the first place. One who knows not how to fly does not know what one is missing. One who knows not Torah does not know true freedom and therefore never misses it. One without Torah is an unwitting slave to selfish whims and as such falls subject to the pressures and burdens of politics and economics.

Like a donkey carrying his burden without complaints, objections or hope for a better future, such is the individual who lives without ever knowing Torah. Unlike he who embraces Torah and the Torah raises him up on eagle's wings. The donkey does not look up and envy the eagle. The donkey knows only his burden. He never dreams that there is a better way.

A donkey is what is he and knows nothing different. One who flies on eagle's wings however remembers what it was like to be earth-bound and now knows the rapture and freedom of flight. Would an eagle wish to lose its wings and take upon itself the burden of a donkey? Why would one wish to cast off the yoke of Torah and thereby throw away the eagle's wings? The fall of such a one is indeed great. This is what happened to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

We can each choose to soar like eagles as did our forefathers, or we can choose to bare the burdens of donkeys. A yoke is a yoke and this is no joke. Choose wisely which yoke you wish to bear. Do you wish to be a laden down beast of burden without Torah and without hope? Or will you take upon yourself the burden of Torah and carry it until such a time when you sprout wings and begin to soar like an eagle touching the sky with grace and majesty.