

“Trampled” Mitzvot

And it will be because (E-K-V) you heed these judgments, and safeguard and do them, that the Eternal, your Almighty God, shall safeguard and uphold with you the covenant and the mercy, which he swore to your ancestors (Deuteronomy 7:12)

“Ekev,” the title of the parshah, is an odd way to introduce pasuk 12 that could have simply been introduced “if you ... then God shall.” How do the commentaries understand the meaning of this unusual word? What new meaning do we learn from an examination of Moses’ words?

1. **Rashi:** “And if will because you heed...”: If you heed the “light” commandments that people trample with their heels.
2. **Ramban:** *Mishpatim* (judgments) are normally associated with torts, laws that regulate monetary transactions and interactions between people. All too often, these laws are neglected or trampled on in the course of “business as usual.”
3. **Maharal:** These mitzvot are “trampled on” because they are perceived as bearing minimal reward.
4. **Netziv:** The literal meaning of the word mitzvah is “command.” It therefore stands to reason that a person who behaves in accordance with a Torah law but does not believe himself to be fulfilling a precise and specific command is not, in fact, performing a “mitzvah.” In other words, a mitzvah is only mitzvah if the person performing the act believes he has been commanded to do so.