

VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

By Rabbi Eli Meyer Smith Shlit"a
Rosh Hakollel of Bais Ulfana Lehoraa »
«Email rabbi@yeshivasrebchaimozer.com

In English

ערב שב"ק פרשת

Reeh

שנת תשפ"ו

בס"ד

The Great Challenge of Working for a Living But Still Recognizing that Parnassah is Solely From Hashem

» When Does Hishtadlus Cross the Line Into Kefirah?

The pasuk in this week's Parshah (15:10) states: "You shall surely give him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him; for because of this thing Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your work and in all your endeavors."

The Kobriner Rebbe zt"l explains as follows: When will Hashem bless you in all your work? When will He grant you success in all your endeavors? When you remember that your efforts are not the source of your success. One must do his *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*, but, at the same time, he must recognize that Hashem is the real provider of his livelihood.

Even when one is at work, he must constantly bear in mind that he is merely fulfilling the decree that one needs to do *hishtadlus*. In truth, however, Hashem is the one who gives him his sustenance. If one always remembers this, Hashem will grant him success in whatever he does.

The Mesilas Yesharim (Perek 21) writes: "A person would be able to sit idly and have the decree fulfilled if man had not been punished and told (Bereishis 3:19), 'By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread.' Therefore, one must put forth some effort for his livelihood, for this is the decree of the Heavenly King. It is akin to a tax that is levied against all men that cannot be avoided. But these efforts are not what really help. One must work to fulfill his obligation and make room for the blessings to rest upon him."

Rav Avrohom, the son of the Rambam (Sefer Hamaspik L'Ovdei Hashem, Shaar Habitachon) writes that anyone who places his trust in his *hishtadlus* and believes that it will be the source of his *parnassah* is guilty of "secret heresy". He says out loud that he trusts in Hashem to provide for him, but he secretly believes that he can create his own livelihood. It is to such people that Dovid Hamelech referred when he said (Tehillim 31:7): "I hate those who await worthless vanities, but I trusted in Hashem."

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"צ אלחנן
יוסף בן שמואל

The Gemara (Bava Basra 10) states that one who turns his eyes away from giving *tzedakah* is considered as if he worshipped idols. This is learned from the *pasuk* in this week's Parshah (15:9): "Beware, lest there be in your heart an unfaithful (*bli'ial*) thought." The word "*bli'ial*" is a reference to *avodah zara*.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman zt"l (Kovetz Shiurim, Bava Basra, Ois 51) explains that the root cause of idol worship is the belief that some force other than Hashem has the power to help or harm a person. The same idea applies to one who refuses to give *tzedakah*. Such a person can't bring himself to part with his money since he believes that money can help him, and lack of it can harm him. Therefore, one whose *bitachon* is so weak that he cannot give *tzedakah* is akin to one who serves idols.

This is further seen from the explanation of Rabenu Bechaya (introduction to Parshas Shelach) on the words of Shlomo Hamelech (Mishlei 21:31): "A horse is prepared for a day of battle, but the victory is the Hashem's." He asks why one needs to prepare a horse for the day of battle at all if Hashem is the one who will provide the victory.

Rabenu Bechaya answers that Shlomo Hamelech is teaching us that one is obligated to do whatever can be done in a natural way. Once one does this, he can hand the job over to Hashem and rely on Him completely.

Hashem created this world with its nature, and that nature is meant to stay in place. Therefore, one must take action in a natural way to prepare the way for Hashem's salvation. After this is done, Hashem steps in and takes care of the rest in a supernatural way.

For example, if the nation is going out to war, they must prepare horses and weapons. They cannot rely on a miracle without first doing their part.

Another example is a person suffering from an illness. He should first go to doctors and do all he can to improve his health in a natural way. He should not simply depend on Hashem to heal him without taking any steps of his own.

However, even though one is doing his

own *hishtadlus*, he still must realize that the true salvation can only come from Hashem. One must recognize that many armies made preparations for war and still lost, and many people took very good care of their health and still died young. Therefore, it should be clear that salvation is only in the hands of Hashem, and one's *hishtadlus* is not the real source of his success.

This is a difficult challenge for a person. On the one hand, one must do his *hishtadlus* through natural means. On the other hand, he must remember that his success will not come about as a result of his *hishtadlus*. Rather, whether he succeeds or not is completely in the hands of Hashem, and the *hishtadlus* is only necessary to fulfill the Divine decree that one is obligated to put forth his own efforts before Hashem can help him.

>> When is it Permitted to Engage in Hishtadlus Even According to Rav Shimon bar Yochai?

The Gemara in Brachos (35B) says: "The Rabanan learned: 'And you shall gather your grain' (Devarim 11:14), A person must lead himself according to the ways of the land. A person must work, as is the nature of this world. That is the view of Rav Yishmoel.

"**Rav** Shimon bar Yochai says: Could it be that a man will plow during the plowing season and plant during the planting season, etc.? What will be with the Torah? Rather, when Jews do Hashem's will, their work shall be done for them by others, as the verse states 'And strangers shall stand and graze your sheep'. However, when Jews do not do the will of Hashem, then we must do our work by ourselves, as it states 'And you shall gather your grain.'"

The Gemara concludes by quoting Abaya who says that many people have tried to follow the way of Rav Yishmoel and they succeeded, and many have tried to follow the way of Rav Shimon bar Yochai and they did not succeed.

We know that Hashem cursed Odom Harishon and decreed that "by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" – meaning that man must work for a living. If so, how can Rav Shimon bar Yochai say that one's work shall be done by others? Furthermore, what is the meaning of Abaya's statement that many tried Rav Shimon's way but did not succeed? Is he, Heaven forbid, saying that Rav Shimon was wrong?

We can begin to answer by quoting an incredible story that is related in a Medrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis 28):

A woman was married for 10 years and had borne no children. She and her husband came before Rav Shimon bar Yochai and said they wanted to divorce. Rav Shimon told them: "Just like you started your joined life with a festive meal, so too you should separate with a festive meal."

They did as he said and made a large feast. The husband became intoxicated. He told his wife she could choose any valuable item she wished from their home and take it to her father's house.

What did she do? When he fell asleep, she asked her servants to carry her sleeping husband in his bed to her parents' house. In the middle of the night, the effect of the alcohol wore off, the husband awoke and, to his surprise, found himself at his in-laws' home. When he questioned his wife, she gave him the following explanation: "Didn't you tell me to take any valuables I wanted from our home with me? There is nothing more precious to me than you."

The two returned to Rav Shimon bar Yochai, who prayed for them to have children, and his prayer was answered.

The Medrash says that this teaches us that just as Hashem gives children to the barren, so too do the prayers of the righteous give children to the barren. If a person who says to another person that she desires nothing more than him merits being answered and bearing a child, it is certain that when Yisroel waits for the salvation every day and tells Hashem, "We want nothing in the world besides You", He will certainly answer them.

According to this Medrash, we can answer all of these questions: When one turns to Hashem in prayer and says, "I desire nothing besides You," he will always be answered. Therefore, Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai stated that one need not fear that he will be forced to depend on others for sustenance. Since his entire will is to draw close to Hashem and His

Torah, he can be certain that Hashem will provide for him.

This is also the reason why many tried to follow the way of Rebbe Shimon but were unsuccessful. This only works if one is 100% genuine and truly means it. However, if one still has some desire for worldly goods and thinks that he can acquire them through his own efforts, he cannot claim to be on the level of following the way of Rebbe Shimon, and he will not be successful in following his way.

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» The Disagreement Between the Chovos Halevavos and Ramban

In Sefer Even Yisroel (Drush 3), Rav Yisroel Salanter zt”l describes two types of *bitachon*, which he labels as “the *bitachon* of the Chovos Halevavos and the *bitachon* of the Ramban.” He explains that the Chovos Halevavos’s opinion (Shaar Habitachon, Perek 4) is that one must trust in Hashem but also do his own *hishtadlus* to earn a livelihood- as it is forbidden to rely on miracles. Although one must believe that Hashem can do anything and can help him without his *hishtadlus*, he still must do what is incumbent upon him to do.

He says that the Ramban’s opinion (see Ramban on Shemos 21:19) is that one may rely completely on Hashem and no *hishtadlus* is required of one who is on this level of *bitachon*. In the same vein, the Ramban says that one who is on a lofty level of *bitachon* does not need to go to doctors and can rely on Hashem to heal him. He also does not have to work for a living and can trust in Hashem to support him.

He adds that even according to the Chovos Halevavos, one should not engage in excessive *hishtadlus*. He should only do a normal amount of work – just enough to support himself in a “natural” way, and he should trust in Hashem to provide for him after he fulfills his minimal obligation of *hishtadlus*.

From his words, it seems that the argument between the Chovos Halevavos and Ramban is the same as the disagreement between Rav Yishmoel and Rav Shimon bar Yochai.

However, we can say that, in truth, there is no disagreement between them, and it all depends on the level of the person in the area of *bitachon*. The Alter of Novardhok zt”l (Madregas Ha’adom Darchei Habitachon) cites the words of the Gr”a on the verse (Tehilim 55:23): “Cast upon Hashem your burden, and He will sustain you.” The Gr”a explains that a man of *bitachon* does not really need to exert any effort. If it is destined from Above that something be given to someone, it will ultimately get to him with no effort on his part.

However, this is only true for people who possess a high level of *bitachon*. The obligation to work is in accordance with one’s level of *bitachon*. If one is not on a high enough level of *bitachon*, his faith will not help him if he doesn’t exert his own efforts.

» The Solution for Abundant Parnassah

This, in fact, is how the Rambam rules on this matter (Shemittah V’Yovel 13:13). He says: “Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously motivates him and he understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before Hashem to serve Him and minister to Him and to know Hashem, proceeding justly as Hashem made him, removing from

his neck the yoke of the many reckonings which people seek, he is sanctified as holy of holies.

“Hashem will be His portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the Kohanim and the Leviim. And thus Dovid said (Tehilim 16:5): “Hashem is the lot of my portion; You are my cup, You support my lot.”

We see from his words that a person who is on the lofty level of giving himself over completely to obey the word of Hashem and removes all worldly concerns from his heart does not need to exert any efforts to earn a livelihood. He can be assured that Hashem will take care of him and provide him with all of his needs in the same way that He supported the kohanim.

The Yismach Moshe zt”l explains that the simple meaning of the words of the verse “by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread” refer to physical bread. However, he explains that it also refers to Torah, which is called “bread”, as Chazal say (Sukkah 52A) “If your enemy is hungry, feed him bread”. This means that if your enemy, the evil inclination, is hungry, you should feed him bread. Rashi explains that “giving him bread” means that we should conquer him in the war of Torah.

Chazal say in Chagigah (14A) “Everyone depends on bread (Mishlei 9:5).” This is the learners of Talmud.

Rashi explains that we can depend upon their rulings as we depend on bread. Again, we see that Torah is called “bread”. Regarding this bread, the verse says “by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread” - we must exert ourselves exceedingly to understand Torah.

We also find this idea in Brachos (63B). On the verse, “This is the Torah, a person who dies in a tent.” Chazal say, “Torah only lasts for one who kills himself over it.”

This was all only established after the sin of Odom Harishon. Before Odom’s sin, it wasn’t necessary to “kill oneself” in order to understand Torah. After the sin, man’s body became weakened, and people could no longer understand Torah without extreme exertion. At that point, it was decreed that man would have to “eat bread by the sweat of his brow” – the bread of Torah would need perspiration and toil to acquire. The decree of toil was issued upon all men. However, those who toil in Torah are able to fulfill the decree through their Torah study. Therefore, they have already fulfilled the decree and need not exert any more toil for their livelihood.

For this reason, the Mishnah in Avos says, “Whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah has the yoke of government and livelihood taken off of him.” The same is true conversely. Those who remove the yoke of Torah from themselves are forced to accept upon themselves the yoke of livelihood in order to fulfill the decree. Everyone can choose which toil they wish to accept upon themselves – that of Torah or that of livelihood.