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The Mission We All Must Fulfill
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Traveling for *Parnassah*—Only in Order to Influence

To Work the Land and to Guard It

When a person finds himself in a dire financial situation—he is choked with debt and loans that he has taken out—the *yetzer hara* tries to persuade him to pursue *parnassah* with all his might, because “I’m a bind, and, after all, we’re commanded to do *hishtadlus*!”

But let’s not forget what the *Chovos HaLevavos* teaches us. The source of the necessity of *hishtadlus* is from the *pasuk* *ולשמרה* *בגן עדן לעבדה* *ויניחהו*, *Hashem placed [Adam HaRishon] in Gan Eden to work the land and to guard it*. The simple understanding of this is that Hashem created a world, and He has commanded us to work there. If it’s a field, you must plant it; if it’s a building you must build it; and if it’s a need in the world, you must provide it.

But we mustn’t forget the *peshat* of the *Midrash* on these words. *לעבדה* refers to positive mitzvos, and *לשמרה* refers to negative commandments. The truth is that both *peshatim* are connected: By working to serve Hashem wherever a person has been assigned, by meditating upon how to properly execute that mission, **he is thus fulfilling the *לעבדה ולשמרה* according to both understandings**. He is fulfilling all the mitzvos unique to his situation.

When a person finds himself in a tight spot, he must reflect on one

thing alone: **How can I better execute the לעבדה ולשמרה as I go about doing my *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*?**

Hardship Pushes Us Harder

A person may say: I am pressed for *parnassah*... I must marry off my child, and I don't have a penny! I am working myself to the bone, morning, noon, and night, and I *still* don't have the money I need. What are you telling me? That I must have *emunah*? Let's talk when *you're* about to pay for a wedding! I've already worked on my *bitachon*, but there are bills to be paid. I tried borrowing, but I still don't have money to cover the big expenses.

This *Yid* must know that if he finds himself in such a situation, it is very possible that he must rectify the לעבדה ולשמרה—he can very likely do a better job at influencing the world around him for the better.

What influence can I have on the world? you will ask. This depends on every person's unique circumstances and placement. A person must know that **his very presence has influence. People see the way he walks and talks and comports himself, and these behaviors have an influence.**

Everyone Has His Unique Pathway

Sometimes it happens that one person makes lots of money through a certain *hishtadlus*, and those who imitate him fail miserably. The first person set out to be a משפיע in that place, and the second person set out only to take.... From the outside, it seems as if they both did the same thing. But on the inside, they couldn't be more different.

We must bear in mind that there's only one reason to travel distances for *parnassah*: **only to influence.** There is no other reason!

The Donor Is a Mailman

One of the great tzaddikim once found himself in dire straits, and he asked his uncle, Rav Noach of Lechovitz, whether he should travel to collect funds.

The Rebbe told him, “You may go, but only on one condition. If you petition a person for money and he refuses to give you a dime, you must not feel the slightest complaint against him. It should be as though you came to the post office to see whether a letter arrived. **It wouldn’t occur to you to be upset with the mailman if a letter hadn’t arrived.** Similarly, if you can commit to viewing the money that is sent to you in the same way, you may solicit money from others,” the Rebbe said.

We Never “Take”

This is such a deep understanding of the matter. **A person never goes to take; he only goes to give, to influence.** If he doesn’t feel this yet, he should begin working on feeling that **if the Ribbono shel Olam has sent me here, there is something I must accomplish.** What can I accomplish here?

But the rule remains true and relevant always, in every situation: **There is no such thing as going somewhere just to take; we go elsewhere only in order to give, to influence.** And if a person feels that he truly cannot influence in that place, then he indeed has no reason to go there—for to receive, he can receive right where he is. The *shefa* can come right to his door.

Being Joyful and Remembering That We’re on a Mission

Yaakov Didn’t Escape

There’s an incredible *vort* in the *sefer Sfas Emes* that is so deep and so true we can use it throughout our lives. It is brought in *Parashas Vayeitzei* (5661): The *Midrash* juxtaposes the words in *Mishlei* (3:23) או, תלך לבטח, *then will walk on your way securely*, saying, “This refers to Yaakov, as it says, ”ויצא יעקב.”

Explains the *Sfas Emes*: When Yaakov went to Charan, he suspected that Eisav would succeed in killing him. His own mother warned him to run for his life. But we don’t find any expression of “running.” We

find that ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה, he simply left one place and went elsewhere. **For one who truly trusts in Hashem understands that all man's ways are from Hashem, and he will not attribute events to happenstance.**

Going for a Mission

Says the Sfas Emes: Yaakov Avinu was an *Ish Tam* – as Rashi explains, it is derived from an expression of תמים תהיה, *to be complete with Hashem*, and to accept everything with completeness.

Yaakov Avinu understood that if the Ribbono shel Olam wanted him to go to Charan, he must surely have a mission to accomplish there. This is the *only* reason he went there. He didn't escape from Eisav – for escaping means that he believes he will be safer in the second place than he is at home. *Escaping* means that *only* there will he be able to shield himself from Eisav. Just as *parnassah* doesn't depend on the place you are, neither security nor safety are dependent on the place you are. **The only reason to go elsewhere is because the Ribbono shel Olam is sending you there to accomplish a mission.**

The perspective of Yaakov Avinu was as follows: You're telling me that Eisav wants to kill me? **If so, what does this tell me?** I must go elsewhere? **Okay, I will go to another place. But what's the rush?** ויצא יעקב, he went out... slowly and deliberately, to carry out his mission.

Executing the Mission with Joy

There is an incredible lesson in this: Sometimes, Hashem pushes us and squeezes us until we have no choice but to relocate. **But as you're going, there is no reason to do it while suffering angst. Do it with serenity and purpose!**

One may think that since he was forced to make this move, he must now complain and sigh about how he really would have preferred to be elsewhere, and he really doesn't like it here.... No, no! The fact that you were pushed and squeezed until you went happened *before* you left – **but the moment you're going, do so with joy! You're about to carry out a special mission from Above!**

How to Know If the Journey Is Part of the Mission

People tend to say, “One must do *hishtadlus* according to accepted norms.” That is, so long as the *hishtadlus* is within the bounds of what is normally accepted in the world, it comes under *hishtadlus* one must do.

To understand this a bit better: The Ribbono shel Olam designed a special mission on this world for each person, and **the way to measure whether this journey is indeed part of your mission is to check whether this measure falls under normal and accepted *hishtadlus*.** This is the way to measure what Hashem wants from us—when we see that Hashem has placed us into a situation where it is accepted to do this sort of *hishtadlus*.

If It’s the “Way of the World,” Then It’s Your Mission

For example, a person works in a specific place where it is accepted to travel periodically for work. He inquires whether is this the accepted norm, and he is told that in today’s world, this is a normal part of doing business, of earning *parnassah*. **This Yid now understands that this is the mission that the Ribbono shel Olam wants from him.** This is his cue from Above that it is his mission to travel since he has something to accomplish in that distant place.

Easier Roads to Influence

Indeed, we see that in our times, the Ribbono shel Olam has made travel so much easier than in past generations. Every day there are scores of *Yidden* who fly to all corners of the earth, because the Ribbono shel Olam wants them to fulfill their mission in that place.

In times gone by, it would have taken two weeks to get there by ship, and then two weeks to recover from the long trip, and **one would not even contemplate the journey**, preventing them from carrying out their mission in that place.

For this reason, the Ribbono shel Olam changed the entire travel industry, making it so much easier for us to get around—leading a person to much more easily surmise that he must travel to different destinations to fulfill Hashem’s mission.

Is it the Way of the World?

After a person has ascertained—following discussions with *ehrliche Yidden* who have studied *Sha'ar HaBitachon*—that this is the accepted norm of *hishtadlus*, **then he will go, because he knows that he is now a משפיע and not a מקבל**. If it is the “way of the world” to take this step, then it makes sense to do so—it is a sign from Above that you’re being led in that direction.

If, however, it is *not* the accepted way of the world to take this measure—says the *Chovos HaLevavos*—then it is likely that the Ribbono shel Olam does not want you to take such extravagant measures of *hishtadlus*.

This decision—whether or not to journey to a distant place—is not always an easy one. But one thing is certain: **Once a person has made his way to a new place, he must do everything to remember that he has come there to influence, not to take**. Sometimes he’s a משפיע by not becoming upset with others, and sometimes he influences his surroundings through overcoming *nisyonos* large and small.

One must always remember this in wherever he finds himself—not only when he travels to a distant land. It applies even when you’re sitting in your very own office, working to sell a product. The rule of מה' גבר מצעדי גבר, *man's footsteps are ordained by Hashem*, doesn't apply only when we're traveling overseas. It's relevant even when we walk into a store to sell something. **If you conduct yourself properly in that place, then you have influenced the place**. And *that* is the *real* reason you have gone there.

Every Journey Is Planned from Above for the Fulfillment of Your Mission

The Rebbe Who Traveled for the *Gabbai*

The Kretchnifer Rebbe once said that sometimes, a Rebbe will need to journey from Eretz Yisrael to Australia to raise funds for his institutions—but in reality, his entire journey is so that one of his attendants

will arrive there and there accomplish what he must accomplish. **The entire journey was all worthwhile so that someone from the entourage would arrive there.**

The same *yesod* is stated in the *sefer Ohr HaMeir*¹ (*Parashas Tzav*) in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov. **There are many people who travel great distances with the intention of accumulating gold and silver, and they are therefore willing to work mighty hard,** the Rebbe writes.

But their thoughts are not the Ribbono shel Olam's thoughts. The *Aibishter* can provide your wealth far better than you can provide for yourself. The real reason you must go to that place is because sometimes **there's a piece of bread in that place that belongs to your neshamah,** and you must rectify the sparks by eating the bread **or you must drink a glass of water** in that place, at that time.

Adds the *Ohr HaMeir*, **sometimes, the purpose of the journey is not for you at all, but for one of your attendants!** The person joining you on the trip couldn't have made the journey himself—he can't afford it, or he has no reason to go there on his own—but he must eat or drink something there... for his *sheleimus hanefesh*, the completeness of his soul.

Why the *Chassid* Thanked His Host

In Yerushalayim lived a lofty *chassid* by the name of Rav Aharon Yosef Brizel, *zt"l*. When he visited people in their homes and they offered him food so he could make a *berachah*, he would first say that **the ratzon of the Ribbono shel Olam is now being fulfilled—as the Ba'al Shem Tov says that people may need to undertake an entire journey in order to make a *berachah* in that place.**

Rav Brizel felt a strong sense of gratitude to his host for enabling him to make a *berachah* in their home, which was the true reason for his journey from Eretz Yisrael to America.

1. Authored by Rabbi Meir of Apta (1767–1831), a talmid of the Chozeh of Lublin.

The Rule of the *Chovos HaLevavos*

To recapitulate the main points of this deep and important *sugya*:

The *Chovos HaLevavos* taught that someone who journeys to distant places for his *parnassah* is lacking in the basics of *emunah*—for the *shefa* that the Ribbono shel Olam sends to each person isn't dependent on the place where he is located. **Everything comes from the Ribbono shel Olam, and He can send you the *shefa* right to your door.**

If you find yourself rushing to the other side of the world—literally or figuratively— in pursuit of your *parnassah*, stop and pause! This may be bordering on heresy in the basics of *emunah*. **Do not believe the *yetzer hara* who tries to persuade you that this is a normal part of *hishtadlus*. It is most likely not a part of *hishtadlus*.** There is no such thing as *shefa* being dependent on a specific place; it can come to you wherever you are.

In Order to *Influence*, We Must Move

At the same time, we learned the principle of the *talmidei Ba'al Shem Tov*—and this is supported by the halachic ruling of the Rema—a person *must* sometimes move around. He may even compel his wife to come with him to another place. This is **because in that case, to be משפיע, there is no other way but to journey elsewhere** (so it really depends on the intention and the purpose of going).

How does one know whether it is his mission to be משפיע in another place? Simple. If his financial situation pushes him to take on employment or business in another place, it is a clear sign that this is his mission. The same applies to changing workplaces: **If one isn't earning what he needs in one company, it is a sign that he must be משפיע in a different company.**

Doing *Hishtadlus* with the Intention to Influence

We hear people use words such as “You're not doing enough *hishtadlus*... you need to do more *hishtadlus*....” This is erroneous—for *doing more hishtadlus* means investing in the לעבדה ולשמרה as the *Midrash* ex-

plains it (positive and negative mitzvos). What does this have to do with running after money?! If we will fulfill לעבדה ולשמרה with the proper intention—to be משפיע on the world around us—we will surely attain all the *shefa* that we need!

The rule is that every person—no matter his intellect or brainpower—is a major משפיע in spirituality. Because when he carries out a mitzvah, even the smallest mitzvah, he brings holiness to his entire surroundings and everyone in it. Therefore, we are best off investing in thinking about how and where we can influence. This is the best *hishtadlus*!

Leaving the Box

Sometimes, a person feels locked into a certain place of work. He says, “I can’t leave the place that I work—even though I am earning less money there—because, if I go elsewhere, I will have even less!”

This is a great mistake! **Why do you tell yourself that the Ribbono shel Olam is only capable of giving you this amount of money and no more?** The second job may provide a far higher salary! Everything depends on how you will carry out your mission! You must only open your mind and *daven*: **Ribbono shel Olam! Help me fulfill Your mission.** Why should you need to bang on Heaven’s door with *tefillos* for *parnassah*? **Daven that you should be able to complete your mission.**

Look around and see what is being suggested for you... where you can potentially fulfill your mission of לעבדה ולשמרה, with positive and negative mitzvos, and surely Hashem will help you and guide you.

Instead of asking for a few dollars or for a larger loan, daven that the Ribbono shel Olam should help you execute your mission to perfection. Then, surely you will be blessed from Above and the conduits of *shefa* will be open wide before you wherever you may find yourself.



The Source—and the Purpose— of Excessive Wealth

Mountains of Money

The *pasuk* in *Parashas Mishpatim* tells us, *אם כסף תלוה את עמי, when you lend money to my people (Shemos 22:24)*. Explain the *mefarshim* that while the expression of *אם, if*, is used—here it means *when*; that is, we’re obligated to lend money to our brethren. It’s not optional.

Asks the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Why would the Torah mislead us with an expression of optionality if it’s really an obligation to lend money?

Perhaps, suggests the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, it is because one may ask: **What is Hashem’s purpose in providing a person with so many unnecessary treasures of wealth?** Why didn’t Hashem simply provide the person with the necessary sustenance—just as Yaakov Avinu asked for “bread to eat and clothing to wear”? While Hashem may sometimes *diminish* and give *less than* a person needs in order to cause him *yis-surim*—**what reason can there be for excessive and unnecessary wealth?**

This is indeed a burning question. We know that the Ribbono shel Olam sustains every one of us and provides for all our needs. But **why would He give a person far more than he needs?**

A Revolving Wheel

Answers the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Hashem, in His great kindness, provides sustenance in ample measure to all creations. But some-

times, due to a person's deeds, the Ribbono shel Olam withholds his needs—but He doesn't take it back entirely—rather, He gathers it into one place, and bequeaths it to another person.

This other person isn't necessarily a greater tzaddik than the original intended recipient, but he will sometimes be given the *shefa* that his neighbor needs to live. The recipient didn't get this money because he's brilliant at investing and earning money. The Ohr HaChaim reveals to us that every penny in a person's possession is perfectly calculated—and **if he has more than he needs, it is because he was given someone else's *shefa* as a deposit.**

Even if a person has two billion dollars, and then earns another fifty dollars, this is *also* perfectly calculated according to this *cheshbon*! **For the sum of money in This World is in accordance with how many people there are in it and how much they need to live generously,** and the money is distributed according to the aforementioned *cheshbon*; some people's money is in the possession of other people.

An Imperfect World

If the world were perfect and complete, no one would have *extra* money, and no one would have *less* than they need—for why would a person have something he doesn't need? It's simply out of place.

But we don't live in a perfect world—and so, **some people need to stretch out their hands to their neighbor who has their money on deposit.** And so, the wealthy person who feels great about his largesse and generosity isn't giving *his* money to another person. It was never actually *his*: It was always the poor man's. The rich man was only a messenger to give it to him.

A Brilliant World

There are two benevolent reasons Hashem has designed the world in this way, explains the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The first is that **a person who experiences pain in This World as a result of not having enough money will arrive in the Next World purified**—and this is a

great favor to him (we see from Chazal in many places that a person is much better off experiencing pain in This World so he doesn't have to be punished in the Next World). The second is **a favor to the wealthy man, who merits great reward for sharing his wealth with the needy.**

The Pauper with You

With this, the Ohr HaChaim explains the *pasuk*: אם כסף תלוה את עמי, *if you see that you were given enough money to lend to others, know that את העני עמך, it is the portion of the pauper who resides with you.* It is not your portion at all! And the *pasuk* continues: לא תהיה לו כנושה, *do not act towards him as a creditor* (i.e., don't pursue him for the money). נושה can also be an expression of נשיאות, acting in a way of hubris towards the pauper. Don't feel haughty and better than he is, because the money was his all along; it was never yours.

To the contrary: **For you this money might be considered a loan, but it belonged to the pauper all along**—and if so, you must give him generously and without haughtiness.

A Proper Outlook

With these words, the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh intends to straighten our perspective and attitude—we should all know that there is no such a thing as “extra money” in the world, and **if a person sees that he has more than he needs, he must know that it is for a purpose.** It belongs to someone—and it is incumbent upon us to ascertain the proper purpose of this money.

This is why the *nisayon* of wealth is so great. **A wealthy person must constantly remind himself that his money is only a deposit in his possession,** and he must *daven* for the *siyata diShmaya* to know what to do with it.

Seeing the Future

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh gave us one very important purpose for excess wealth, and that is to give others what is rightfully theirs—but there are other *cheshbonos* as well. Sometimes, the Ribbono shel Olam

gives a person extra money because He knows that he will soon incur large expenses, and he will need the money to cover them. If he squanders the money on luxuries now, he won't have the money when he needs it later for necessities.

And so, if a person sees that he was given an infusion of money—before he begins scheming how to spend it—he should pause and think: *Perhaps in a month from now I will need the money for necessities, and it will turn out that Hashem was arranging everything perfectly so I will have the money when I need it.* Or, a certain usual stream of income will dry up, and this was Hashem's way of "providing the remedy before the ailment"—arranging for a new conduit of *shefa* before the first one dries up.

Don't Hoard Your Wealth

The golden rule is that there is no such thing as *extra*. It doesn't work to say, "I grabbed extra for myself..." A person is provided with his needs. Anything above that has a very specific *cheshbon*, as we have discussed.

Sometimes, a person already has enough *parnassah* for his needs, but he nevertheless takes another job. He says that he needs it to marry off his children. Sometimes people will *say* that they need it for the children, but it's really because of the timeless rule of *יש לו מנה רוצה מאתיים*, *one who has one hundred wants two hundred*. **Whose money do you want to take? The Ribbono shel Olam has provided you with your needs! Anything above that won't be yours anyway!**

Surely a person must engage in earning a livelihood along normal and accepted lines. But hoarding wealth, accumulating money, is wrong—for this is what the Ohr HaChaim has revealed to us: **It is impossible for *shefa* to come to the world more than what is needed for the inhabitants of the world!**

A Difficult *Nisayon*

And so, if you see that you already have what you need, know that there are other needs in the world. Torah institutions must be built,

talmidei chachamim must be supported, medical organizations won't survive on their own, and so forth. You want these funds to come through you? That's fine. But remember that they belong to *someone* and that they have a purpose.

And so, we must know that we have two choices: One is to *daven* with *kavannah* the *pasuk* of פותח את ידך ומשביע לכל חי רצון, to *daven* for our basic sustenance. And the second is to ask for more and more, and to make efforts to this end, but **then you will need to constantly remind yourself that the money has a purpose...** and this is not an easy *nisayon*.

Answering the Burning Question

So, when we see money before us, we must know that **there's a large, looming question mark here**. In most cases, it is very easy to know the answer to the question: What is the purpose of this money?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh is teaching us that it is very clear. There is no more *shefa* in the world than is needed to sustain its inhabitants. Sometimes we must reflect more and *daven* more so we will be guided from Above on the purpose of the money. But there is no such thing as extra money. All money has a source and purpose.

