



A Lively Livelihood

People may wonder how much time should they devote to working? We see some who spend every waking hour working trying to make every penny they can while others work as little as possible? Does more work mean more money?

The more Emuna one has in Hashem, the less Hishtadlus, effort, is necessary for Parnassa, livelihood. The Noam Elimelech (1717-1787) comments on Hinini Mamtir Lachem Lechem Min Hashamayim (Shemos 16:4), I shall rain down food for you from heaven, that one who trusts with a Lev Ne'eman his livelihood is prepared for him without toil and pain rather like rain that falls from the heaven. Indeed, the Gemara (Yoma 75a) says that the Munn for the Tzadikim fell at the entrance of their homes whereas for the average people they went out of the camp and collected it. As for the wicked, they had to go even further to collect theirs. In fact, **מן הוא** (Shemos 16:15) are the letters **אמונה**.

The Baal Shem Tov- before he was known- once, when he didn't have anything for Shabbos, knocked on the door of a certain wealthy man and left. The wealthy man pursued the Baal Shem Tov until he reached him and said if you knocked on the door you probably needed something. So why didn't you wait until I opened the door. He answered that Hashem sets for a person whatever he needs and this really should come to the person's house. However, if one sins then he has to do Hishtadlus. This idea is corroborated by the Pasuk, "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread" (Breishis 3:19), meaning it is because of sin (Adam's) that we must work for a living. For some it is enough to knock on a door for his sustenance while for others they need to wait for the person should come. The Baal Shem Tov said as for himself, he just needed to knock on the door (Nesivos Shalom Miketz, Ashrei).

Still, no matter how much we work, we must realise that it is all predetermined, as Chazal say one's income is fixed from Rosh Hashana (Beitza

16a, Bach). This can be likened to a steering wheel that is not connected to the engine as we control the steering wheel. That is to say, we may work but the outcome is determined by Hashem not by how long or hard we work. Just because one works harder doesn't mean that he will earn more money. This is just as it says "You have sown much but bring in little" (Chagai 1:6). Livelihood is all in the hands of Hashem. This is demonstrated in the Yerushalmi (Bikurim 3:3) that relates that Simon Bar Va was an expert in pearls in all respects (highly lucrative profession) yet didn't have a loaf of bread to eat. We need to internalise the words of the Ramban (Breishis 37:15): The decree of Hashem is truth and the effort is falsehood.

A man once complained to his Rebbe that his competitor is taking over his business. The Rebbe's reply: that is Kefira, denial of Hashem, since only Hashem can do that as livelihood is fixed from Rosh Hashana.

Since people tend to dislike another in their own profession (a tailor is more likely to dislike another tailor than a carpenter), the Torah says V'ahavta L'raocha Kamocha (Vayikra 19:18) love your fellow man as yourself as Kamocha refers to someone in the same profession, says the Sefer Habris. We should overcome negative feelings and fulfill our obligation to love him.

An owner of a store once came to R' Meir of Premishlan (1783-1850) and complained someone opened a store near him, causing his livelihood to be in danger. The Rebbe responded that when a horse attempts to drink water from a pond he stomps his hoof in the water. When he lowers his head to drink, he sees his shadow which he imagines is another horse also drinking. Fearing there will not be sufficient water for him, he tries to chase away the other horse. In reality he is afraid of his own shadow. Likewise, you are afraid of an imaginary foe. Hashem will supply you with livelihood and there is no need to worry about what others earn (Shivchei Meir p. 38).

A student of the Chazon Ish owned a printing

press in Bnei Brak. When someone opened a similar store nearby, he was upset. But then he caught himself and said, "Hashem won't take any Parnassa away from me just because of this store as I will get whatever money is destined for me." This is just as Chazal say that one can't encroach upon what is set for his friend (Yoma 38b). He then went to this new competitor and advised him in his new business. He told him where he can buy the products he needs at a cheap price, how to advertise and with other important information for him to be successful in the business. When he returned home, his children asked him why he was so happy if a competitor opened up a store in such close proximity. He answered, "Until now, I had to work so hard. But now, half the customers will go to him. So he will have the headaches and the Parnassa will remain the same. I won't lose any money and it will be half the work."

R' Moshe Kassofer (Amud Havoda, Drush Habitachon, 9-13) says that no one will ever gain or lose money- from the beginning of the world's existence until its end. Whatever money one has, cannot be taken from him by anyone. Whatever he is supposed to earn, he will. What about if one steals from him? The truth is that the stealer in essence stole from himself because he will lose that money some other way. Similarly, the Shulchan Aruch (251:1) writes that one who does Melacha from Mincha onward on Erev Shabbos won't see Bracha from it. The Mishna Brura (2) explains that even if he gains profit from it he will lose it elsewhere. To this we can apply "Whoever earns money earns it for a purse with a hole" (Chagai 1:6). If one steals \$1000 from another, he will lose the money elsewhere (Likewise, if one gives for example \$5, the recipient didn't gain because he would have received that money from elsewhere if that person didn't give it to him). This is the meaning in Lo Signovu and Lo Sigzol (Vayikra 19:11,13) as it is written in future tense. This makes it a statement not a commandment meaning there will never be a situation of stealing ever since everyone gets what they are supposed to.

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