

Fascinating INSIGHTS

כה' אב תשפ"א
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Sole Role of a Soul

Just as everyone has a unique DNA, face and fingerprints so too we each have a unique mission. R’ Wolbe¹ writes: Each person is a one-time phenomenon, an occurrence that has never been before and will never be again. We each have a unique blend of character traits

and personality. We are each unique in our particular family constellation, born in a specific time in history and in a specific environment. This uniqueness gives each of us great importance. Only we can accomplish our unique life tasks.

When a piece is missing from a puzzle, the picture is incomplete. We can’t cut and shape a puzzle piece to fit it into an empty space in the puzzle. Likewise, each of us is different in our traits, abilities and potential for our unique mission.²

The Sifsei Chaim³ writes that Hashem endowed each of us with the attributes, talents and skills that speak directly to our individual mission. This is what Hillel meant in the words אם אני לי מי לי⁴, if I am not for me, then who is for me: If I don’t fulfill my mission, no one else can be the replacement.

Imagine a Prime Minister that tells a person he has a great mission for him but he can’t know until he arrives at a foreign country. He tells him that the boat he travels on will contain all that is required for his mission. On the boat, the man discovers a saw, tools, nails and the like and therefore concludes that he was meant to become a builder and not an accountant. Likewise, to know what we are meant to accomplish here on earth, we need to take inventory of the supplies with which Hashem sent us. We are given the task of revealing the soul’s purpose and when we get it right we feel fulfillment and contentment. This is the soul’s way of informing us that we are on the right path. We also have the power to develop new skills especially when they are essential to our success. This is a fundamental aspect of self-growth. The more we learn to do, the more we are able to accomplish. Our mission statement expands with our new skills and talents. Successful people often attest that they never could have envisioned the full extent of their potential when their journey initially began. They grew further by developing their latent talents.

Don’t Wait To Donate

Money belongs to Hashem, as it says, לי הכסף ולי הזהב, the silver and gold are Hashem’s, and כי ממך הכל, everything is from You.⁵ This can be compared to someone driving an armored truck, transporting money. No one would think that the driver of the truck is wealthy, since the money isn’t his. It is just under his

² We therefore also can’t be jealous of what others possess as that is needed for their mission in life.

³ Middos V’avodas Hashem, volume 2, Menuchas Hanefesh, Vaad Alef.

⁴ Avos 1:14. In Mussaf of Rosh Hashana we say that Hashem is aware of all our doings: מי לא נפקד כהיום הזה כי זכר כל היצור לפניך בא מעשה איש ופקדתו ועלילות מצעדי גבר, for who is not judged today? For the memory of all creation is brought before You; the deeds of man and his charge and the causes of a person’s steps. Another explanation of these words is that man is held accountable for his deeds in general as well as how effectively he has carried out his “charge”— the unique mission of his life.

⁵ Chagai 2:8. Divrei Hayamim 1, 29:14.

¹ Alai Shur, 1, p. 168.

authority temporarily. Likewise, this is how we should view our money and possessions.

Hashem is the one who makes one wealthy or poor, as it states, ה' מוריש ומעשיר, Hashem impoverishes and makes rich.⁶ One may mistakenly think that it was his own idea to amass wealth by acquiring some real estate or making a good investment. We must internalize the fact that Hashem is the one who gives us ideas. As Targum Onkolos⁷ writes, הוא יהב לך עצה למקני נכסין, Hashem is the one who gives advice to buy property! Just because one is smart, it doesn't mean he will become wealthy, as we are taught לא לחכמים לחם וגם לא לנבנים עשר, bread doesn't come to the wise or riches to the intelligent.⁸

Some people neglect their family in their pursuit of money. It has been said that the best way to make your spouse and children feel secure is not with big deposits in bank accounts, but with little deposits of thoughtfulness and affection⁹ in the "love account." Others neglect their health in their quest for wealth. Someone once commented, "People lose their health trying to store up money, and then they lose the money trying to restore their health."

A wise man remarked, "Money can buy you a house but not a home. It can buy you a companion but not a friend. It can buy you a bed, but not a good night's sleep."¹⁰ We must have the proper priorities.

What does Hashem want us to do with the money in our possession?

The pasuk states, לי הכסף ולי הזהב. This can be interpreted as giving the money to Me, Hashem, through tzedaka and the like.¹¹

When one gives his money to the poor, Hashem gives him wealth, as in עשר בשביל שנתעשר,¹² give maaser so that you become wealthy. This idea is hinted to in the following: if we take the letters prior to those that comprise the word כסף, money, we get the word עני, pauper. That is, י comes before כ, נ before ס and ע before פ. What does this allude to? That when one gives money to the poor, Hashem will give him wealth.

⁶ Shmuel 1, 2:7. See Iggeres Hakodesh. During the Holocaust an elderly Jew told R' Chaim Kreisworth, "I am going to the gas chambers. Here is the account number for the money I have in a Swiss bank. If you survive the war, seek out my children and give them the account number so that they will inherit my money." Although R' Kreisworth survived, he was unable to track anyone down. Fast forward 20 years, when R' Kreisworth was speaking with a poor person in a beis midrash in Yerushalayim. During the conversation he discovered that this man was the son of the elderly man who perished in the Holocaust! He gave him the account number, telling him to travel to Switzerland to get possession of the money. Because he was so destitute, he had to borrow money for the flight. When he arrived at the bank, he was informed that the account contained \$30 million. Thus *he went from rags to riches, an impoverished person to a millionaire.*

⁷ Devarim 8:18.

⁸ Koheles 9:11.

⁹ Remember, you can always earn more money, but when time is spent, it is gone forever.

¹⁰ When one gets that which money can't buy, it can lead to getting what money can buy!

¹¹ Just as one asks Hashem to listen to his cries, likewise, he should listen to the cries of the poor (Yoreh Deah 247:3).

¹² Taanis 9a.

To what can this be compared? If one is appointed to guard a vault containing money and does a good job, he may be promoted to watch over a treasury containing even more money.¹³ Likewise, if one gives maaser, Hashem gives him more money (עשר בשביל שנתעשר).¹⁴

In 1977, a young man from Eretz Yisrael married his cousin from Los Angeles, California. Because he married the daughter of a rav (his uncle), he received a nice sum of money—\$10,000—at his wedding. Although a family relative who was also a rav told him that he was exempt from maaser, the chosson nevertheless decided to ask R' Elyashiv. His answer: give maaser. It is a great way to begin your marriage. Following this, the young man gave \$1,000 to maaser. Now listen to what ensued! The brother-in-law of someone from California, now living in Switzerland, once had a meal at the home of this chosson's in-laws. A check for \$1,000 from this person arrived on the day the chosson designated the \$1,000 for maaser!¹⁵ He never again heard from this man from Switzerland although he sent him letters on Chanuka and Yomim Tovim. Hashem pays back in kind!¹⁶

The Midrash¹⁷ says that the poor person does more for the baal habayis than the baal habayis does for the poor person. One explanation given is based on the Chazal that the sustenance of a person is fixed from Rosh Hashana.¹⁸ If one is set to lose \$50, for example, a poor person can bring him merit. This is because he will lose the \$50 regardless—whether it is lost in business or he gives it to the poor. However, if he gives it to the poor, he gets an eternal mitzva with all its benefits (צדקה תציל ממות, tzedaka saves one from death,¹⁹ etc.).²⁰ In summary, *the decree of the loss of money can be fulfilled through a mitzva—through tzedaka!* One would surely prefer this to losing the money without any benefit.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, *Fascinating Insights* and *Incredible Insights* in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹³ If your wealth increases, increase the amount of tzedaka you give. This is hinted to in את העני עמך, to the poor person who is with you (Shemos 22:24), as you should give to the poor in accordance with what you have (in the name of R' Shmelki of Nikolsburg).

¹⁴ See Hakdama to Shaarei Yosher, end of s.v. אמנם. The Rambam (Hilchos Matnas Aniyim 10:7) writes that the greatest tzedaka is making one independent from others. Similarly, there is an expression, "Give me a fish and I can eat for a day. TEACH me to fish and I can eat for a lifetime."

¹⁵ In those days, an \$18 check was normal for a wedding gift. One who was very wealthy gave \$100.

¹⁶ No harm is caused by giving tzedaka, as it states that one doesn't become poor from tzedaka nor does anything harmful come from it (Yoreh Deah 247:2).

¹⁷ Vayikra Rabba, end of 34:8.

¹⁸ Beitzta 16a.

¹⁹ Mishlei 10:2, 11:4.

²⁰ Hashem has many ways for an עני to get money. Therefore, the one who benefits from the money the עני receives is the giver.