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## A ROAD MAP TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGES

These *parshiyos* deal with the development of our *Avos*, and the common theme between all the challenges that Hashem put our *Avos* through is *Emunah*. Throughout our lifetime, challenges never cease. You should know that each one of us, in some form or fashion, endures the ten *nisyonos* of Avraham Avinu. And if we study these *nisyonos*, and how Avraham Avinu passed all of them, we can chart a course - for ourselves and in our own lives - to deal with our challenges.

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that Avraham Avinu was challenged with a *milchama*, a war. It was a world war, a massive battle. And at the end, Avraham encountered Melech Sedom in one of the pits. Avraham told him to come out (he couldn't come out naturally). When Avraham tells you that you are coming out, rest assured you are coming out! When Melech Sedom came out from that deep pit he told Avraham Avinu as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ סֹדֹם אֶל אַבְרָם תָּן לִי הַנְּפֹשׁ וְהַרְבֵּשׁ קַח לָךְ

"The king of Sodom said to Avraham, 'Give me back the people - the captives - and take all the assets for yourself'" (Bereishis 14:21-22). It's interesting that he didn't think to beg for his own life because usually when you are in a battle with somebody, you tell the guy who you defeated, "Ok, hand me your head now, I want to wear it around my belt." But *melech* Sedom didn't even think that Avraham was going to let him out. His only *sheila* was that he wanted to get back the people. The Torah continues:

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל מֶלֶךְ סֹדֹם הֲרִימְתִּי יָדִי אֶל ה' אֵל עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

"And Avram said to the king of Sodom, "I swear to Hashem, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth." Avraham said *הֲרִימְתִּי יָדִי* - which is a *lashon* of *shvuah* (oath), according to Rashi, as if to say, "I raise my hands to Hashem the *קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ* - the One Who acquires and owns the *shamaim* and *ha'aretz*." He was emphasizing to Melech Sedom that, "Don't think that Hakodosh

Boruch Hu created the earth and he granted it to the inhabitants of this earth. Hashem created this earth and He was קנה (acquired) *shamaim* and *ha'aretz*, so everything really belongs to Hashem, לה' הארץ ומלוואה (Tehillim 24:1). But what He did is that He only *shared* the ארץ with אדם and לבני אדם (Tehillim 115:16)."

### WHO IS THE REAL CHASSID?

You know, sometimes a father buys his child a car and he grants him the car, and sometimes the father lends him the car and says, "You can use my car." It's interesting that when Hashem said that כִּנְהָה שְׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ - "everything belongs to Me," Avraham took that quite literally, as he said that even a shoelace doesn't belong to him: אִם מְחוֹט וְעַד שׁוֹרֵף נֶעַל וְאִם אֶקַּח מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ - "I will not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap of what is yours" (Bereishis 14:23). "I won't take any financial benefit whatsoever, and if you want to give me money from your storehouses, I won't take it," as Rashi explains. So Avraham went out of his way to detail that he won't take anything from Melech Sedom, and he even said a *shvuah* that he won't take it! So the question is why not? Avraham Avinu was the winner of that war, and according to the rules of conquest, the winner owns everything he conquered. So why wouldn't Avraham take it?! So the next verse (23) says: וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הִעֲשֵׂרְתִי אֶת אַבְרָם - "So that you should not say you made me wealthy." What does that mean? What's the big deal if the Melech says that? Avraham said that Hashem had given him a *brachah* that he would become wealthy and Hashem would give him power to bless others, וְהִנֵּה בְרַכָּה, as Rashi says (Bereishis 12:3).<sup>1</sup> Hashem will grant him "*kol tuv*" (all good) and if he were to take it from Melech Sedom, it would diminish the *kavod* (honor) of Hashem, because he'd be able to say, "I gave him that money." Even though Avraham won the war by the *koach* of Hashem - nevertheless, וְלֹא תֹאמַר, "I don't want there to be any diminishing in *k'vod Shamayim*."

That's lesson number one - Avraham Avinu exemplifies a tremendous *misdas hachassidus*. He was a true chassid, a *chassid amiti*. What is the attribute of Chassidus? The Mesilas Yasharim explains - that to be a true *chassid*, you have to do *chessed*.<sup>2</sup> With whom do you have to do Chessed? Chessed with Hashem. How does a person do that? He seeks to increase *k'vod Shamayim* wherever he finds it possible, and he attributes everything to Hashem. So if Avraham Avinu wanted to do *chessed* with Hashem,

<sup>1</sup> הַבְּרָכָה נְתוּנָה בְיָדְךָ; עַד עֲכָשׁוּ הָיָה בְיָדִי, בְּרַכְתִּי לְאָדָם וְנָח, וּמֵעַכְשָׁו אַתָּה תִּבְרַךְ אֶת אֲשֶׁר תַּחְפֹּץ (בראשית רבה)  
<sup>2</sup> וְהַנֶּךְ רוֹאֵה שֶׁהַחֲסִידוּת מִמִּין הַפְּרִישׁוּת, אֲלֵא שֶׁהַפְּרִישׁוּת בְּלֹא מִן הַחֲסִידוּת בְּעֵשׂוֹן וּשְׂנִיָּהם עֵינָי אַחַד, שֶׁהוּא לְהוֹסִיף עַל הַמְּפֹרָשׁ מִזֶּה שֶׁנִּכְלָ לְדוֹן לְפִי הַמַּעֲוָה הַמְּפֹרָשׁת שִׁיחִיהָ נָחַת רוּחַ לִפְנֵי יִתְבָּרַךְ, זֶהוּ גֵדֵר הַחֲסִידוּת הָאֲמוּנִי (מסילת ישרים י"ח:ד)

he had to say to Melech Sedom that he wouldn't take a penny from him because if he would be able to say that he got his money from the Melech Sedom, that would diminish the *k'vod* of Hashem. If he got his wealth from the king's coffers, that would diminish *k'vod Shamayim*.

### ADVANCING THE KAVOD OF HASHEM

This is a very high and lofty thought, because most of us are totally preoccupied with our own *kavod* and doing what we want for ourselves, to advance our pleasure, our honor - from morning till night. But it would be good to be aware of the fact that it is a big *madreiga* to advance the *kavod* of Hashem. A lot of us think that Hashem doesn't need our *kavod*, and the truth is that He doesn't! Hashem's needing of our *kavod* would be like me needing *kavod* from a speck of dust that I see on the floor! Could you imagine someone picking up a piece of dust from the floor and studying it carefully, when someone says to him, "What are you doing?" and the guy responds, "You know, I am trying to figure out how this speck of dust can give me *kavod*." You should know that us giving Hashem *kavod* is even less than that! You know why? Because a speck of dust is a separate entity from myself. But I am not a separate entity from Hashem - I am just a figment of Hashem's imagination. So how can I even think that Hashem gets or needs *kavod* from me?! But we have to know Hashem did one of the greatest *chassadim* (kindnesses) by saying *טוב יצַר כְּבוֹד לְשֵׁמוֹ* (Bircas Krias Shema), which the Gr"א explains to mean that the ultimate *טוב* that Hashem exhibits is that He created (*יצַר*) honor (*כְּבוֹד*) for His name (*לְשֵׁמוֹ*). Meaning, that Hashem created a creation - me - which is less than a figment of His imagination, less than a piece of dust, and He gave me the ability to be *מכבד* Him!

There are some people who go through their entire lives without ever once being *machabed* Hashem! Ask yourself when was the last time you thought of doing something to honor Hashem. Has there been one action on your part, or has there been one *aveira* that you tried to avoid because of the *kavod* of Hashem? Has there been one act of *mitzva* that you have done just for the *kavod* of Hashem? You should know that this is part of the *avodah* of a *yid*. So, let's say you are doing mitzvos for your own "brownie points," for your own *Olam Haba*, or you avoid *aveiros* because you don't like to get "smacked" - that is also a level (because you are earning *sechar* and you accumulate *zechusim* and then you could then get benefits on the credit card). But you should also think that, "I am doing something for the *kavod* of Hashem!" So try to refrain from

doing something wrong not *only* because you are afraid of the consequences, but do it *also* because of Hashem's honor. This one tremendous lesson from this pasuk.

### THE MALBIM'S AMAZING PESHAT

The second lesson from this *passuk* is from the Malbim, who says when the Torah writes: וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשֵׂרְתִי אֶת אַבְרָם - it doesn't mean that you, Melech Sedom, shouldn't say that you made me rich; rather Avraham Avinu was to his own hands. Strong hands represent the *koach* of war, as we see from Eisav. And as we know, Chazal teach us that Avraham Avinu threw dirt at his enemy during the war, which miraculously turned into arrows. So he could have said: "I just won this battle and I acquired all these trophies of Sedom, and these hands brought this about. These hands had the amazing strength to kill my enemies. These were the hands that brought about my victory and made me rich." But Avraham Avinu knew that he was a *shliach* from Hashem and he didn't think for a second that it was him. So what he said was: "I raise my hands (הָרִימְתִי יָדַי) to Hashem, and I say, 'No, it wasn't my hands that made me wealthy. It was only Hashem who made me win the battle. It was only Him Who made me rich.'"<sup>3</sup>

### PROFESSION IS NOT WHAT BRINGS PARNASSA!

We see that this is the biggest challenge for a person when he goes to work. Everyone of us believes, foolishly, that "some people have it and some don't have it." A lady with a professional degree recently called me to ask about a couple with marital issues that she was working to help. The husband is sitting in learning, and his wife has a job. And this professional therapist called me and said, "Rabbi Brog, you know how it is in Lakewood. It's a major problem because most people don't have a profession and most of them therefore don't have *parnassa*. It's a big problem."

I regret that I got into it with her. I should have just hung up the phone right then and there, but because she was asking to save that couple's marriage, I heard her out. This professional was a very frum person, but she was making me nauseous. She truly believed that the reason she had *parnassa* is because she is one of the professionals and she believed that most people in Lakewood who don't have a *parnassa* is because they are not professionals. Believing that a profession is what gives a person *parnassa* is

<sup>3</sup> וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשֵׂרְתִי אֶת אַבְרָם, פֶּעַל תֹּאמַר הוּא נִסְתַּר לְנִקְבָּה, וּמוֹסֵב עַל הַיָּד שֶׁאִמְרוּ הַרִימוּתֵי יָדַי [כִּי יָד בֹּא בְלִשׁוֹן נִקְבָּה תְּמִיד], אִמְרוּ אִם אִקַּח מִהַשְּׁלָל דְּבַר כְּאֵלֹהֵי יָדִי נִצַּחַה וְעִשְׂתָּה חַיִּל, אִזּוּ תֹאמַר יָדִי אֵלַי לֵאמֹר אֲנִי הֶעֱשֵׂרְתִי אֶת אַבְרָם כִּמְ"שׁ וְאִמְרַת בְּלִבְךָ כְּחֵי וְעוֹצֵם יָדִי עֲשֵׂה לִי אֶת הַחַיִּל, וְאִיךְ תֹּאמַר דֵּי שְׁהִיא הֶעֱשִׂירָה אוֹתִי אִם ה' פֶּעַל כָּל זֶאת וְלֹא יָדִי כְּהָהּ.

an absolute *narishkeit* and *kefira!* And Avraham Avinu said to Hashem, "I am picking up my hands to You. I am not going to say, 'Ah, Baruch Hashem, these hands brought me the *parnassa!*'" You can't even say, "This hand brought me this *parnassa!*" The hand doesn't bring *parnassa*, Hashem brings you *parnassa!* So you may ask yourself a question, "Ay, but everyone knows you need a profession to make *parnassa?*" No, the way it works, is that every Rosh Hashanah, Hakodosh Boruch Hu decides how much money you will have, whether it comes through your wife or you - it makes no difference, Hashem has many ways of getting people *parnassa*, and professions do not bring *parnassa!* I know it's a difficult thing for people to swallow, because they've been educated, over and over, with this notion that profession brings *parnassa* and not Hashem. They say, "Look, but this guy has a good profession, and he has a nice *parnassa!*" But their mistake is that they are reading this incorrectly. Hakodosh Boruch Hu decided that this person is going to have a good *parnassa* so therefore He guided this person to a good profession. But even if the wife wouldn't work in her great profession, for whatever reason, they would still make ends meet. I get these calls all the time. People ask me, "Is it okay if I work less because I am overworked and I have a family to raise, but we need a *parnassa?*" And I tell them every time, "There's no *sheila* about it. You can work less because it's not your *parnassa* that brings you money!" Then they start making these *cheshbonos*, "Yeah, but I am an hourly employee." I say, "I am talking to a wall.. You are foolish - that's not how the system works. I know you were brought up thinking that way, but it's not how it works. A person has *parnassa* only because Hashem decides. So if you work less, it's fine, but it's only fine if you believe that this *parnassa* comes from Hashem. If you believe that it comes from your 'hands,' and you work less, you won't make more money! You will shut the 'faucet' off!"

But there are some people who like to know upfront how it is going to work out. You are not going to know. That's what a person has to understand. There are *rishonim* who say that if a person wouldn't go to work, he would have *parnassa*. *Parnassa* and going to work have absolutely no relationship to one another, according to all opinions! No *shaychus*. And if a person knew that, he would not spend so much effort on his work. He would spend more time on his Avodas Hashem. The *velt* has it all mixed up. So, if you ask the world, "Why are you so busy and overworked?" They say, "I have to make *parnassa.*" Nu. The Gemora (Berachos 33b) says: חוץ מן מְרָצָת שְׁמִים, הפל בידֵי שְׁמִים, and the Chidushei HaRim (R' Yitzhak Meir

Alter, 1799-1866) says, that the *velt* makes a mistake in these two ideas of *שְׂמִים* and *הִפְלֵל בְּיַדֵי שְׂמִים*; they mix them up and are *machapech* them.<sup>4</sup>

Every Rosh Hashana your *parnassa* is decreed for the whole year: *מְזוֹנְנֹתָיו שֶׁל אָדָם קְצוּבִין לוֹ מֵר"ה וְעַד ר"ה* (Beitzah 16a), and if a person would be wise, he would spend his whole Elul preparing for Rosh Hashanah to get his *parnassa* raised - because that's when it's being raised. You know that many businesses give out end-of-the-year bonuses, and before the end of the year, everybody is trying to figure out and tussle how big their bonuses are going to be. "How can I get a bigger bonus?" But you should know that this end-of-the-year bonus was already decided on prior Rosh Hashanah, so what are you doing all this tussle for?

### THE-END-OF-THE YEAR BONUS

An employer once told me that he wasn't going to give an end-of-the-year bonus to one of his employees - a fellow whom I knew. The boss told me that this employee was a lazy guy, and that he wasn't "into it." So I called up the guy and told him, "I want you to know. Are you looking for a bonus? It's not coming, but the reason why it's not coming is not the reason that they will give you. They are saying that the reason why it's not coming is that you are not committed enough to your company, but the *emes* is that it's not like that. Hashem decided you are not getting a bonus this year, and He "took some air out your tires," and that's why you are not committed! Now, they will give you the whole shmooze of how lazy you are, and they will point out all your faults, and they will say, 'You should know that had you been committed, you could have gotten \$25,000-\$30,000 more in bonus like the guy next to you got.' And you will be disappointed." I told him, "Don't be disappointed. That's the story of your life. You are always Johnny-come-lately, but it's because Hashem doesn't want you to have this *parnassa*, that's why you end up lazy!"

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למשמרת לדרכתכם למען יראו את הלחם אשר האכלתי וגו' (שמות טז לב) יש שני דברים מה שהעולם עושים בהיפך ממה 4 שצריך להיות. הנה פרנסה הוא ביד השי"ת, וכל אחד ואחד רודף אחר פרנסתו ומחשב עצות לעשות כך או כך. ואינו משליך על ה' יהבו, רק עוסק בפרנסתו בכל כחו יומם ולילה. ועבודת השי"ת אשר תלוי ביד בשר ודם כמ"ש (דברים י יב) מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה וגו' והכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים (ברכות לג:), משליך הכל על השי"ת ורק מזכיר בפה בתפלה ותן בלבנו בינה, אבל אינו עוסק כלל בזה. (ס' אמרי הרי"ם) [ועוד כתוב דבר נפלא על נושא דומה בליקוטי בהרי"מ ז"ל: וקשה הא אנהנו מבקשים תמיר על יראת שמים, ותן בלבנו בינה להבין ולהשכיל כו' (ברכת אהבה). הוא יתח לבנו בתורתו וישם בלבנו אהבתו ויראתו וכו' (ובא לציון) וכדומה. אך הפירוש הוא כך הכל בידי שמים, והיינו שכאדם מבקש מאת הקב"ה איזה מבוקש בני חיי ומזוני, הוא בידי שמים, אם השי"ת רוצה יתן לו משאלותיו ואם לאו לאו, חוץ מיראת שמים, שאם אדם מבקש מאת השי"ת בכל לב ונפש שיתן לבנו יראת שמים אז בטח לא ישיב תפלתו ויתן לו תיכף יראת שמים]



## YOUR WIFE'S MERITS BRING YOU PARNASSA!

Someone came to the Brisker Rav and said, "I know a guy who's lazy and doesn't want to work." The Brisker Rav said, "No, Hashem decided on Rosh Hashanah that this guy shouldn't make money, and they 'zey gisn blay in der oder' - they spilled some lead into his veins to make him sluggish and lazy." So the wife blames the husband, but the *emes* is, and this is what I tell many wives: "You should blame yourself, because the Gemora says that the *parnassa* comes to a man *b'zechus* his wife (Bava Metzia 59a),<sup>5</sup> so maybe if you had more *zechusim*, your husband would have more *parnassa*. But you rag on him instead of ragging on yourself. Look in the mirror, that's one of the sources of a person not having *parnassa*." This is a very important *yesod* that a person has to know.

I hear people often tell me, "I can't learn these days, I am busy with *parnassa*." This is very disheartening. Says the Chidushei HaRim (ibid), that when it comes to Yiras Shamayim, it says (Devarim 10:12), מה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ שָׁאֵל מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אִם לִירָאָה, - what does Hashem want from you? כִּי אִם לִירָאָה, to only fear Him. But when it comes to *parnassa*, it says, הִפְלֵל בְּיַדֵּי שָׁמַיִם. It doesn't depend on your effort - it was already predetermined in Shamayim. But what does the whole world do? Just the opposite! When it comes to Yiras Shamayim, people say, "הִפְלֵל בְּיַדֵּי שָׁמַיִם. Oh, Hashem will take care of it. I am *boteach* that Hashem is going to take care of it. I am *boteach* on Hashem that it's going to work out." But when it comes to *parnassa*, people say they have to exert themselves.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* (Introduction to *Sha'ar HaBitachon*) writes:

כי הסבה לא תוסיף לו בחקו ולא תחסרהו ממנו מאומה אלא בגזרת האלקים יתברך כמו שנאמר (תהלים עה ז-ח) לא ממוצא וממערב ולא ממדבר הרים כי אלקים שופט זה ישפיל וזה ירים, ואמר (תהלים כג ב) בנאות דשא ירביצני על מי מנוחות ינהלני

*Because the choice of occupation will neither increase nor decrease the income he will earn unless G-d decreed so, as it says "For it is not from the east or from the west, neither from the desert does elevation come. But G-d judges; He lowers this one and elevates that one." (Tehillim 75:7), and "He causes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters" (Tehillim 23:2).*

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<sup>5</sup> וא"ר חלבו לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו שאין ברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא בשביל אשתו שנאמר (בראשית יב, טז) ולאברם הטיב בעבורה והיינו דאמר להו רבא לבני מחוזא אוקירו לנשייכו כי היכי דתתעתרו.

So when I hear people tell me that they want to take a second job, I tell them, "Are you out of your mind?! לא תוסיף לו בחקו - the second job that you want to take is not going to add anything to your bottom line! אלא בגזרת האלקים. There is no reason and no logic to where *parnassa* comes from - not from the *mizrach*, not from the *maariv*, not from the *midbar*, כי אלקים שופט זה ישפיל וזה ירים - but only from Hashem's decree!" Now, most people like to learn Chovos Halevavos many times, but they don't learn this introduction very well. They stop at that line. If they learned it 500 times, they would get this into their *kishkes*, and they wouldn't need the rest of *Shaar Habitachon*. In *perek gimmel*, Chovos Halevavos writes that if a person finds that he has certain natural talents and abilities for certain jobs, and he can handle the *tircha*, he should try to utilize that to bring his *parnassa*; however, he should not become disheartened or upset when it seems that, even after being in this line of work, he does not make enough money:

ועל הדמיון הזה תמצא מדות בני אדם וגופותם מוכנות לסחורות ולמלאכות, ומי שמוצא במדותיו וטבעו כסף אל מלאכה מהמלאכות ויהיה גופו ראוי לה ויוכל לסבל את טרחה יחזר עליה וישים אותה סבה להבאת מזונו ויסבל מתקה ומרירותה ואל יקוץ כשימנע ממנו הטרף בקצת העתים אך יבטח באלקים שיספיק לו טרפו כל ימי חייו

*Similarly you will find among human beings character traits and body structures suited for certain businesses or activity. One who finds his nature and personality attracted to a certain occupation, and his body is suited for it, and that he will be able to bear its demands - he should pursue it, and make it his means of earning a livelihood, and he should bear its pleasures and pains, and not be upset when sometimes his income is withheld, rather let him trust in G-d that He will support him all of his days.*

What you have to do is trust Hashem and He will provide you with your *parnassa* all the days of your life.

### **THE WORDS OF WISDOM FROM THE STEIPLER GAON**

Now, let's huddle around and go for a little visit to the Steipler Rov, a gaon, a gadol, a tzaddik, an *oved* Hashem from Bnei Brak, the father of Rav Chaim Kanievsky. Imagine we are invited for a little sit down around his table, where he's going to give us some words of *chizuk*. I am going to share with you those words of *chuzuk* now. Says the Steipler, zt"l, "...all the actions (*hishtadlus*) of a man and his strategies, will not help him, even in the slightest, whether to increase (his *parnassa*) or detract from what was decreed for him

I have known a certain fellow for twenty years. This fellow is absolutely brilliant, *b'emes*. He understands business, he has a good degree. And he comes up with great business ideas. In the beginning, he used to run his ideas by me. I am telling you, most people who run their business ideas by me, their ideas belong in the suggestion box that they put in the *beis hakiseh*. But this guy had brilliant ideas, I am telling you, and for every one of them, I told him, "This is gold! This is the money maker!" He did thorough research, he always lined up his ducks in a row. He always studied and presented his ideas in this way. And a lot of times, he took other people into his business. And whoever went into business with him, made a fortune. And this fellow made nothing, year after year! I told him, "I've been watching you for many years, and your ideas are wonderful, but Hashem is not giving you *parnassa* from them."

מבואר ב"ק דסוטה דף י"ב שגזרת כל הבן הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו שגזר פרעה ה' שבביל שאיצטנגנינו אמרו לו שמושיען של ישראל במים הוא לוקה ומתוך הפחד הגדול מאיש זה שעתיד להציל את ישראל גזר על כל הבנים להטביען ביאור ואף על עמו גזר ע"ש בגמרא, והכל כדי להפטר מאיש הזה דהיינו ממשוה, ולבסוף ה' שבת פרעה עצמו הצילתו ופרעה עצמו גידלו בביתו. ואותה גזרה שגזר היאורה תשליכוהו היא היא היתה הסבה שע"י זה מצאתוהו בת פרעה ותביאנהו לביתה לגדלוהו כבן, וכ"ל למדנו שכל מעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו לא יועילו להזיז אפילו זיז כל שהוא ממה שגזרו בשמים ולא עוד אלא שאותן פעולות שעושה למען השגת רצונו הם הן סבה לשיח' כמו שנגזר עליו באמת וכן אחז"ל רגלוהי דב"נ אינון ערבין לוי' באתר דמתבעי תמן מובילין יתי'. וכן מציינו בהמן הרשע שכל פעולותיו שעשה למען חזק מעמדו המה היו בעוכריו להפילו דלמד"א ממוכן זה המן הנה הוא יעץ לדחות את ושתי, וע"י זה נעשית אסתר למלכה והיא היא שעל ידה היתה מפלתו כמבואר במגילה, והנה מה שיעץ ממוכן לדחות את ושתי מבואר במדרש ג' אמוראי ע"ש, ח"א מפני כי ושתי לא הזמינה את אשתו אל המשתה, ורצה לנקום בה ולחד מוד"א רצה שיתחוקק חוק להיות כל אשה שורר בביתו לפי שהיתה לו אשה רעה השולטת עליו ע"ש, ולחד מוד"א רצה שהמלך ישא את בתו [ומבואר בתרגום שני שגם בתו הובאה אל הגי ונעשה ריח רע יוצא מפיה וכו' ויגרשוהו ע"ש], וכ"ז היתה כוונת ממוכן אבל במציאות זה היתה הכנה למלכות אסתר ושעל ידה נעקר המן מן העולם. וכן במה שבא בבוקר לאמר למלך לתלות את מרדכי כך ה' כוונתו שלו בזריותו, אבל באמת זה ה' סבה שהמלך ישאלנו מה לעשות יקר והוא יעץ לעשות כבוד גדול מאוד בתושבו למי יחפץ כו' יתור ממני] והמלך יצוהו לעשות כן למרדכי, גם עיקר עשיית העץ גבוה חמשים אמה הוא ה' סבה לתלייתו כי כנראה שע"פ חוקי פרס ומדי לא ה' יכול אחשוורוש להרוג את המן דמה שגזר על היהודים לאבדם הלא ה' זה בהסכמת אחשוורוש ומה שהוא נופל על המטה ה' יכול לטעון שגפול באונס, ואנו רואין כי גמר החלטת אחשוורוש לתלות את המן היתה ע"פ דברי הרבונא שאמר גם הנה העץ אשר עשה המן לתלות את מרדכי אשר דיבר טוב על המלך עומד בבית המן, ומתוך התעוררות הכעס על הכל אמר אחשוורוש בהחילות תלהו עליו ונתלה מיד, הרי שהכנת העץ שהי' חושב המן שבביל מרדכי היא היתה הסבה לתלייתו והוה שכתוב על העץ אשר הכין לו" ואחז"ל בגמרא דט"ו ובמדרש דלעצמו הכין ומכש"ב ולו הכין כלי מות חצוי דלוקים יפעל בור כרה ויחפרהו ויפול בשחת יפעל.

הכלל כי כל מעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו לא יועילו אפילו כל שהוא להוסיף או לגרוע ממה שגזר עליו בראש השנה [זולת ע"י תפלה וע"י זכויות ותשובה יכול הגז"ד להשתנות] ומה שהאדם תחבולותיו ובהשתדלותו מציח כמה פעמים לפעול כרצונו זה יבוא בדבר שכבר נגזר שמים שיהי' כן שגם לולי השתדלותו ה' נגמר הדבר בכי טוב לטובתו בצורה זו או כיו"ב, ויש שלא נגזר עליו דבר זה וגם כן הרבה פעמים מניחים אותו להצליח רק שלעומתן פסיד כמה הניאו זו ממש במקום אחר ממה שיהי' ראו לו, כי לא יועיל שום השתדלות לשנות משהו מכפי מה שנגזר עליו, וכן אחז"ל ביומא דל"ה אין אדם נוגע במה שמוכן לחבירו אפילו כמלא נימא

ולפעמים מניחים את האדם על בחירתו הרעה להיות מקל חובלים לאחרים כפי מה שראוי להם צער כזה, והרבה שלוחים למקום ב"ה אלא שבתור נסיון מניחים לאדם רע שיהא הוא המזיק באחרים בבחירתו לא שנגזר שזה המזיק יעשה כן רק נגזר שזה הניזק יקבל צער כזה ואין מעכבים משמים את זה שבבחירתו חתר לעשות פורענות זו שמנגלגלין חובה ע"י חייב והוא עתיד ליתן את הדין ולבא לידי אבדון רח"ל עבור בחירתו הרעה, כי אין זה שייך לו כלל מה שהניזק חייב דיניי שמים בעונש שכוה כי הוא המזיק מוחר בלא תגנוב ולא תגזול ולא תונג וכל האזהרות שבוחרוהו על ענינים שבין אדם להבין, וכן אפילו חז"ל בתענית ד"ח ע"ב בהרוגי לוד שאמרו לטוריינוס שחיק טמיא אנחנו נתחייבנו מיתה לשמים ואם אין אתה הורגנו הרבה שלוחים למקום ב"ה אלא שלא מסרנו הקב"ה בידך אלא שעתיד ליפרע דמינו מידך ע"ש. ואפילו גזרת כי גר יהי' זרעך בארץ לא להם שכבר נגזרה גזרה שיהא איזו עשול עליהם ועבדום וענו אותם, מ"מ כתיב וגם את הגוי וכו' דן אנכי ובזה פלפלו הראשונים ז"ל למה נתחייבו המצרים עונש מאזה שכבר נגזר שאלה מהם עושה כן ע"י הרמב"ן, וכן אפ"ל דף לך בפסוק וגם את הגוי אשר יעבודו וכו', אבל כל שבשמים נגזר על הניזק להיות ניזק פשיטא שאין בזה אמתלא כלל לפטור את (המזיק (ברכת פרץ, פי' שמות

## “IT’S ALL MY WIFE’S FAULT”

Eventually, he decided that the reason he was not making *parnassa* was his wife’s fault! I told him, “Are you joking?! Of all the brilliant things I heard from you, this is the stupidest thing I’ve heard from a human being! What are you talking about?!” He explained that his wife makes all the *parnassa* designated for them, and she didn’t care that he didn’t go to work - this never bothered her at all! She was a *tzadeikes* in this area. And she “pours” the money on this guy. He got so eaten up by it that he thought it was all her fault that he didn’t have a *parnassa*. He said, “If I would leave her, then I would *mamish* be *matzliach*, because now Hashem would have to filter some money for me.” I said to him, “Maybe you are living off your wife?! Maybe Hashem gives your wife *parnassa* for her, and you just happen to be lucky because you are in her shadow, and maybe your entire source of *parnassa* is from being in her shadow?” No. He decided to test it. And one fine day, the guy picked himself up and disappeared! So first he went out of the city, then, when the city wasn’t cutting it for him, he left the state. He must have sent me hundreds of texts. Then, unbeknownst to me, he came to the conclusion that living out of state wasn’t good enough, so he decided to leave the country. His wife was such a *tzadeikes*, that she was supporting him unbeknownst to him. She told me one time to send him a message that money came in from the government, but it was really all her - just to create this *bubba maise* to give him some base support.

So the guy had this little base support, but the real bucks came from her. I asked him, “Are you making money now?” He told me, “Now, I am going to be *matzliach* - you are going to see.” The project bombed on its face, and it went from bad to worse. I wanted to take the guy and bang his head against a brick wall! Fighting Hashem, struggling and wrestling Him! I am telling you the guy is super-talented in so many different areas, it’s just amazing. He’s extremely intellectual! But like the Steipler says, לא יועיל, “it’s not going to help.” I told him, “You’ve got to beseech Hashem on *erev Rosh Hashana* that somehow Hashem should change his decree of *parnassa*. But after knowing you well for so many years, I don’t expect it to change. This may be your lot in life.”

I am just reading you from this Steipler. And then the Steipler adds, “It’s possible that if a person sees that he doesn’t have a good *parnassa*, he can change that through *tefillah* or acquiring

*zechuyos* (merits), then he can change his decree. And if you ever see a person who's successful from the business that he opened, and he made it, you have to know it was only because it was already decreed from Heaven, before he went into that business, that it should be that way. And you should know that even if he would not have gone into that business, it would have come to him regardless, in some form or another."

But then he adds another piece. Someone might say, "But I know a certain person for whom it wasn't decreed for good, but he got a job and he made money." So the Steipler says, that there is a concept of a person for whom it was not decreed from Heaven to make money, and the person "struggled with Hashem" and he made money. They allowed him from Heaven to be successful. You hear this? This is an amazing Steipler! However, he says, the guy will not end up winning because these are ill-gotten gains, and he's going to lose the exact amount of pleasure (corresponding to his gain) in some other place, more than he deserved. Let's say, for example, if it was decreed from Heaven that a person was supposed to have *nachas* from his children, and this person decided to make *parnassa*. He read Forbes magazine, he read other books on how to become a millionaire, and now he made money. All of a sudden, Hashem says, "This money was not decreed for you, so now you will lose out by having *tzar gidul banim*." Hashem will take the exact amount of *hanoah* that he had because השתדלות שום יועיל כי לא יועיל שום השתדלות, "because no amount of *hishtadlus* will help him to change anything that was already decreed upon him."

### SPECIAL WASHING MACHINES OF BNEI BRAK

I heard the following from Rav Schach, zt"l. He said that he tells the *yungerleit* not to get side jobs because "*dos helft nisht*," it doesn't help. And then he noticed that the *yungerleit* who take side jobs, their fridges and washing machines break more often! I was once reading an article published by an electric company in Eretz Yisrael, which was talking about how it's a miracle that given the size of families in Bnei Brak and the usage of washing machines - they don't break down every day! These are not commercial washing machines. These are regular washing machines made for families with 1 ½ kids in Eretz Yisrael, where they make a wash once a week, and that's all. But these Bnei Brak machines are going 24 hours a day, and they don't break! So they brought this up to Rav Aron Leib Shteinman, zt"l, and he said, "*Avade*, of course!" But if you look in the other cities where there are not many yeshiva-lite, these machines break much more often. The

lesson is that Hashem finds where to collect from you. These are just a few short words from the Steipler, but they are extremely powerful and potent. Try to get this into your kishkes and try to absorb this. At least try to become aware of this and understand how the system works.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

When Avraham Avinu said to Melech Sedom, וְלֹא אֶבְרָם, תֹּאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲבָרָם, he meant that since everything in the world belongs to Hashem, he wouldn't even take his rightful war spoils - because that would diminish *kavod Shamayim*, being that Hashem had promised to make him wealthy. This was the *midda* of *chassidus* of Avraham Avinu - to attribute everything to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. This is called "doing *chessed*" with Hashem. Another message in the words of וְלֹא תֹאמַר אֲנִי הֶעֱשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲבָרָם, is that it wasn't Avraham's *hishtadlus* that brought about his wealth, but only Hashem's decree. Attributing our success in business to our professional degrees, education, work experiences, or various networks or connections, is one of the biggest struggles we face when we go out to work. But as the Torah teaches us in this *pasuk*, our profession is not what brings us *parnassa*, rather it is Hashem who decides on *Rosh Hashanah* how our *parnassa* will come about and then guides us to a particular profession, project, assignment, or opportunity, etc. *Parnassa* is truly in the category of הַכֹּל בְּיַדֵי שָׁמַיִם - in the hands of Heaven, as the Steipler Gaon explains, while our spiritual endeavors - or our pursuit of *yiras shamayim* - is in the category of הוֹיֵז מִיְרֵאֵת שָׁמַיִם, as its attainment is mainly rooted in our own efforts. No amount of *hishtadlus*, no matter how innovative and ingenious, will help us in the slightest degree to increase the *parnassa* that was decreed on *Rosh Hashana*. And even when Heaven allows us to make some "ill-gotten gains" through our extra *hishtadlus*, we could eventually lose an equal amount of pleasure, corresponding to that gain, in some other area of our life. This week, as we read Parshas Lech Lecha, I will contemplate (*bli neder*) on Hashem being the true source of my *parnassa*, and try to focus on Hashem as the source of my successes, several times during my work week.

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