



DON'T LET YOUR HISHTADLUS MESS YOU UP

YEHOSHUA'S HISHTADLUS TO PROLONG HIS LIFE

The Midyanim were a nation that got involved in a war with Klal Yisrael for no reason. They weren't threatened. They weren't challenged. Hashem told Moshe to take care of them. And ואחר תאסף אל עמיך, "afterward, you shall leave this world" (Bamidbar 31:2). So, there's an interesting *medrash* (Bamidbar Rabbah 22:6) in this week's *parshah*. It says in *sefer Yehoshua* **כאשר הייתי עם משה אהיה** (Yehoshua 1:5).¹ Now, when Hashem told him that, "I will be with you, like I was with Moshe," it meant, I will be with you for as long as I was with Moshe. But we know it's not like that. Yehoshua lived 110 years. Moshe Rabbeinu lived 120 years. So the *medrash* says that Yehoshua should have also lived 120 years. Why was his life shortened by ten years?

Listen to this interesting *medrash*. The *medrash* says: בשעה שאמר הקב"ה למשה, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe **נקום נקמת בני ישראל מאת המדינים**, take revenge from the Midyanim, and afterward you will die, **אף על פי**, even though that Moshe Rabeinu was told clearly that by him doing battle with the Midyanim his life as he knew it until that day would be terminated and he would have to move on, still in all, **לא איחר דבר**, he didn't delay anything. **אלא נזדרז**, he went with alacrity, with *zerizus*, as the *passuk* says, **וישלה אותם משה**, Moshe sent them to battle.

But Yehoshua, the *talmid*, did not emulate his *rebbe* when it came to this behavior. What happened to Yehoshua? When he came to do battle with the thirty-one kings in Eretz Canaan, he said, "If I rush into battle and I kill them immediately **מיד אני מת**. My mission is going to be complete, and I will die immediately, just like Moshe Rabeinu did." As soon as Moshe finished his mission of the battle with the Midyanim, it was over. **מה עשה**, so what did he do? What he did was **התחיל מעכב במלחמתם**, he started to delay going to battle. **עשה יהושע את כל המלכים האלה מלחמה**, as it says **רבים ימים**, the *passuk* says many days, **אמר ליה הקב"ה**, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to him, **כך עשית**, that's what you did to lengthen your days? **הריני מקצר שנותיך עשר שנים**, I'm going to shorten your years by ten years.² You hear that?

There's nothing more that a person wants than to prolong his life. A person will pay any amount of money to prolong his life. The most valuable thing to a person is his own life. Hashem held it against him that he tried to manipulate the situation. He was an *eved ne'eman*, a loyal *talmid* to Moshe Rabbeinu but he tried to take the war a little slowly so he could live a little longer. Would we have ever thought that was a problem? No. I wouldn't have thought it's a *ta'annah*. I would have thought that's a wise move. And Hashem says because of that move, I'm going to shorten your life by ten years. Isn't that frightening? Very frightening.

What do we learn from here? This is teaching us something. A person makes *hishtadlus*. There's nothing more that a person would be *meshtadel* for than to prolong his life. Moshe Rabbeinu knew that his life was going to be terminated after the *milchemes Midyan* took place. Hashem told him clearly. **אחר תאסף את עמך**, you're going back home. You're coming back. And still in all he hurried. He didn't walk. He hurried! To be *mekayem* the *tzivuy* of Hashem *yisbarach*. You want to know what happened? He didn't lose a thing. He was destined to live 120 years and that's what he lived. Yehoshua, on the other hand, tried to make his own personal *hishtadlus* to lengthen his days. He tried to lengthen his life. Who wouldn't do that? But he had a *rebbe* and his *rebbe* showed him that you don't lose by following the dictates of Hashem even *bezrizus*, even if you know your life is dependent on that. You won't be short-changed or receive any time less than what's coming to you. But he tried to make the extra *hishtadlus* to orchestrate that he should live a little longer. And what was the end? His life was shortened by ten years.

HISHTADLUS COULD BACKFIRE

Many times, people take steps to manipulate a situation. They try to control a situation in order to achieve something. In their minds, it seems that if they do this and they do that, it will hurry something up. I see this in *shidduchim* very much. I see many people who are waiting for a *shidduch*. I see many people waiting for a child. The wait, for both of those people, is very unpleasant. It's not a fun game. But the question a person has to ask himself is: Do you really think that you can control when your *shidduch* is going to come? Do you think for one second that if you complain it will do something to help the situation?

A lot of people are *mesonenim*, they complain. "It's got to come already! I can't wait anymore. I just can't wait anymore. I can't wait anymore." Not only does that not help a *ki hu zeh klal*, but you know what it does? They have to think instead that every time they say that, Hashem just pushes the marker a little further down the road. "Okay, one more day. You complained twice today? Another two days. You complained again? Another three days." What if you call your mommy? People do that. Now, instead of talking to your mother, you can talk to a wall. You know why? If you talk to a wall, you know you're talking to Hashem. If you talk to your mother, you think your mother could help you. You tell your mother, "I can't! I just can't handle it anymore!" What does your mother say? "I'll try my best, my *zisse kind*. I'll make more phone calls for you. I'll put a sign up in Evergreen, 'My son is looking for a *shidduch*.' Maybe I'll put a sign on the back of my car, 'Seeking *shidduch* for my son who is desperate or my daughter who is desperate.'" But it's not going to help you. The only thing that's going to help you is if you train yourself to be *mevattel* your *ratzon* to Hashem.

¹ לא יתיצב איש לפניך כל ימי חייך כאשר הייתי עם משה אהיה עמך לא ארפך ולא אעזבך

² אמרו רבותינו כתיב ביהושע (יהושע א, ה): כאשר הייתי עם משה אהיה עמך, והיה צריך יהושע לחיות מאה ועשרים שנה, כמשה רבינו, ולמה נתקצרו שנותיו עשר שנים, בשעה שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: נקום נקמת בני ישראל מאת המדינים אחר תאסף אל עמך, ואף על פי שנתבשר בשורת מות לא אחר הדבר אלא נזדרז, וישלח אתם משה. אבל יהושע כיון שבא להלחם עם שלשים ואחד מלכים, אמר אם אני הורגם מיד, מיד אני מת כשם שעשה משה רבינו, מה עשה התחיל מעכב במלחמתם, שצאמר (יהושע יא, יח): ימים רבים עשה יהושע את כל המלכים האלה מלחמה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא וכך עשית, הריני מקצר שנותיך עשר שנים. אמר שלמה (משלי יט, כא): רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום.

Now everybody who is in that situation asks the same question. “Isn’t it normal?” Yeah, trying to do a *hishtadlus* is normal. People dig a bigger hole for themselves. Let’s say there’s a little hole in the ground, the stupidest thing you can do is to make it deeper. You should try to get some dirt to put in the hole and make it shallower, not make it bigger. You have to make sure that your *hishtadlus* will add some dirt, to make the hole smaller.

THE STORY WITH THE TRUCK DRIVER

Everybody understands the following scenario. Somebody waiting for a child has a very, very tough challenge, and there’s nothing in the world you can do to make that child come beforehand unless you connect with Hashem. I once met a person. I was in another state. I gave a class there. The next day, I’m taking a walk in that city, and I see this huge monster truck coming down the street making a lot of noise. I hear those squeaky brakes braking, and I look up. The guy goes like this to me (gesticulating). I looked up at him and kept on walking. He beeped. He said, “Yeah, I want to talk to you.” “What would you like?” He said, “Can you come in for a minute?” I had to climb up in that truck. “Who are you?” I didn’t know if he was Jewish or not. He didn’t look Jewish to me. He said to me, “I was at your speech last night. Do you think maybe you could help me?” I said, “What do you need help with?” He said, “We have no kids.” I said, “I feel bad for you.” He didn’t look like an old man. I said, “Well, what are you doing to make yourself have kids?” He said, “We’re going to spend the rest of our savings of \$200,000 on an attempt to have a kid.” I said, “Wow! That’s a lot of money! That’s a lot of treatments! That’s a lot of tries.” He said, “Yes. We’re getting ready for our next one.”

I told him, “My dear friend, don’t waste your money anymore. It’s not going to help you. You’ve got to first align yourself with Hashem. Do something to make Hashem want to give you a child.” The person said, “What’s that?” I said, “I would suggest that you keep the laws of family purity very strongly.” He said, “Oh, we do keep those laws.” I said, “If you do, you don’t keep them very strongly. You don’t look like a very knowledgeable person and I’m going to assume your wife doesn’t have much more knowledge than you.” I said, “How old are you?” He told me he was 37, I think. I said, “Tell your wife to go to a *rebbetzin*, a good *rebbetzin*, immediately and to have her teach her the laws about family purity and she should *mekabel* to do it. That will be the biggest *zechus* from the Torah - from Hashem’s perspective - for you to have a kid.” He said, “Okay. I hear you.”

I got out of the truck, and before I closed the door, I looked up at the guy and I said, “By the way, how old is your wife?” He said, “Forty-three.” I said, “Oh no. Forty-three is a little old. Most people don’t have kids at 43 anymore. But you know what? The Torah doesn’t say an age, so you do the *halachos*. And tell your wife to connect to someone to learn with.”

I stayed in that city for about two weeks. The day before I left, there was a knock on the door in the house where I was staying. I went to open the door, and the host said, “Somebody is here to see you.” I came, and it was that guy. He came into the house. He said, “I would like you to be my rabbi.” “Okay, I’m your rabbi. What do you want now?” I said, “Are you going to listen to me? You’ve got to follow the rabbi’s directives.” He said, “We did, and my wife is pregnant.” I said, “Without any doctors?!” “Without any doctors.” The guy had a son. It was a major *bris*. I went to that *bris*. There were a lot of doctors there. A guy who goes through \$200,000 worth of treatments, he’s a known entity in the halls of medicine by the doctors and the nurses, etc. And he had a few more kids after that. You have to align yourself with Hashem, rabbosai.

RELAX, HASHEM HAS GOT IT PLANNED

I tell people all the time, “You want a *shidduch* from Hashem? Do you think Hashem doesn’t want you to get a *shidduch*? Who do you think wants to give you a *shidduch* more? Do you think Hashem wants you to get a *shidduch* more, or do you think you want a *shidduch* more?” A *shidduch* is not like wealth. About wealth, it doesn’t say that Hashem wants to make everybody wealthy. If you want to be wealthy, you need to implore Hashem. The *gemara* gives *eitzos* how to implore Hashem, but it doesn’t say Hashem wants to give everybody wealth. However Hashem wants to give everybody children. Not only that, a *shidduch*. He gave everybody a *mitzvah* to get married. And if He created you with functioning internal organs and ‘plumbing,’ so that’s what Hashem planned. If that’s what Hashem planned, you’re good to go.

I remember I had a *bachur* who came many years ago. He told me he can’t have kids. I said, “How do you know that?” Because he had surgery. “Who said you can’t have kids? Did the doctor tell you you can’t have kids?” He said, “No, but they said it’s one of the risks.” I said, “So what? Who cares what they said? Go get the medical records.” He got the medical records and we sent them to Rav Dovid Feinstein *zichrono levrachah*. He got back to us. He said the *bachur* could have children. He can get married. I told the guy, “You’re getting married, and you’re going to have a boatload of kids. That’s what Hashem wants from you.” He got married. He was petrified when he got married because he had to tell his wife before he got married about the surgery that he had. He was afraid that was going to nix it. I said, “No, have no fear. I’m telling you this is your *shidduch*.” I could see how it was going. It was the right *shidduch*. And then he told her what his experience was. Do you know what she said? “I have to tell you something also. I also had a surgery.” I said, “*Min bemino*.” I said, “*Im yertzeh Hashem*, you’re going to have a lot of kids.” I think they have five kids now. Five for sure, maybe six.

You can’t ‘make yourself get married’ beforehand. You have to be *mevatel* yourself to the *ratzon* of Hashem. You have to kind of figure out how to align yourself with Hashem’s *ratzon*. Hashem has the *shidduch* for you. Hashem wants the *shidduch* for you. I don’t care what your issue is. I don’t care if you look funny. I don’t care if you act funny. I don’t care if your screws are loose or some of your screws fell out. If you’re a human being, you could get married. Hashem has a mate for you and Hashem will send you an appropriate mate. You have to accept it. Accept it.

THE GOOD-LOOKING BACHUR WITH A MEDICAL PROBLEM

I know a fellow who once came here depressed out of his *kishkes*. He was so depressed because he had a surgery. The guy looked like Mr. Superman. The guy looked amazing. The guy looked like the picture of health. He *mamash* had a very good *tzurah*. But he had gone out with a number of people, and when he told them about his surgery, they dumped him. I told him, “First of all, you’ve got to stop being depressed.” He said, “Who is going to marry me?” I said, “There’s a girl. I promise you there’s a girl out there because you could have kids. If you could have kids, you’re going to get married. Let me tell you what the problem is. You’re a good-looking guy. You’re like that *nazir* from the *gemara* in *Nedarim* - you saw yourself in the mirror a few times and you thought to yourself pshhh! That’s a specimen. And I’m sure your mother told you or your friends told you wow! Am I jealous of you! You’re

a very good-looking guy. That *tzurah* that you have. But you know you have a problem. The girl you're going to marry will also have a problem, and you would never marry her if you didn't have a problem. But because you have a problem, I'm telling you when you find out the problem, say yes. Don't say no."

He changed his life. He got out of his deep depression. I told him to get a job in a *yeshivah*. He should go to a *yeshivah* and be a *shoel umeishiv*. He did that. He got out of his doldrums. He was an older guy already. And then he met somebody, and the person had an issue. She couldn't drive. She couldn't drive because of some medical problem she had. There wasn't any defect. She had a job that was a dream job, in a very successful field. I told the guy, "*Parnasah*, you have. You're good to go. She looks normal. She has some kind of problem. Big deal. What does it affect you? She can't drive a car? She could afford a chauffeur with her job. Get her a private driver." I told the guy, "Grab the *shidduch*!" "No, I can't. I don't know." He was making me crazy. I told the guy, "I told you this is going to happen, and it happened exactly like I told you it's going to happen. I gave you an *eitzah tovah*. Hashem put the thought in my mind, and I passed it on to you, and here it is." Finally, after a lot of convincing - and his parents calling me up, "Rabbi Brog, do you think it's a good idea." I said, "What do you mean?" "It's a great idea! It's not a good idea. This is it! Do you want your son married or not married?" He's now married with kids, *baruch Hashem*. You have to push them sometimes to see what Hashem wants.

A person has to know that when you make *hishtadlus*, you have to make sure it's *hishtadlus* according to the the *ratzon* of Hashem. To make a *shidduch* come quicker, it's not going to come quicker. To make a child come quicker, it's not going to come quicker even if you go through many treatments. You must align yourself with the *ratzon* of Hashem. Yehoshua, the great Yehoshua, *pashut* lost ten years from his life because he tried to slow down his demise (which was not according to the *ratzon Hashem*).

HISHTADLUS THAT COULD TURN OUT TO BE BAD

The Beis Halevi talks about this in his *Kuntres Habitachon*. He says anybody who studies the field can see clearly that not only does his *hishtadlus* never help at all - but *adarabah*, a person could see that his *hishtadlus* is actually bad. His *hishtadlus* is actually *l'ra*! It's bad for him. If a person studies it, he sees he did himself an evil through his own personal toil. He toiled to mess himself up. He quotes a *passuk* that *hishtadlus* that is not the *ratzon Hashem* is like a guy who collects eggs, and he thinks they're chicken eggs. He takes them into his house and he keeps them under warm lights and he warms them up and he's waiting for the chicks to be hatched. After all his toil and all his care, do you know what comes out? A snake. A poisonous snake. It's a *passuk* in *Yeshaya*. Nu? And what happened? The snake came out, and it bit him. "What kind of chickens are these," he thought. These are no chickens, my friend. Don't count your chickens before they hatch.³

The Beis Halevi says you have to know that's what it's about. People try with their *chachmos* to avoid a certain situation that they think they can avoid. They can't.

THE TRAGEDY OF KEREM NAVOS - HISHTADLUS L'RA

There was a famous story in history in *Melachim Alef* (21:1-29). There was a fellow who had a beautiful vineyard. Maybe it was one of those vineyards that make these fancy French or Israeli wines. The man's name was Navos Hayizraeli. He came from a place called Yizrael. The problem was he was a neighbor of King Achav, and Achav was not a nice man. He was the king in Shomron. One day, Achav comes to his friend Navos, and he says to him, "You've got the most beautiful vineyard my eyes have ever seen. I would like to have it. Give it to me."

Now, when Achav tells you he wants something of yours, you try to distance yourself from that object as fast as you can. It's like with Putin. The same thing. But you know who this Achav is? His neighbor. So Navos opens his mouth and he says, "*Chalilah li*, heaven forbid! I'm not giving you my vineyard for nothing. Not for sale! *MeiHashem*, Hashem gave it to me as a present," he said. "This is *nachalas avosai*, a family plot. You want me to give you the *nachalah* of my fathers to you? Nothing doing." Nu?

It says Achav came home to his palace, and he was cooking. He was upset. "The chutzpah! This little runt, my neighbor, turned me down! He didn't ask me, 'How much do you want to pay?' *Gornisht!*" So what happened? What do people do when they get into angry, bad moods? They go into bed and they turn to the wall and they get depressed. So his wife, Izevel - another famous *marsha'as*, wicked evil woman - comes to him and says, "My dear sweet husband, what's making you sad?" And he tells her the story. She said, "Come out of bed. Go have a meal. קום אכול לחם, eat some fresh bread, ויטב עמך, you will feel better about yourself. Put a little cream cheese on. Maybe a little something else on, butter, whatever it is. אני אתן לך את כרם נבות יזרעלי, I'm going to arrange it. I'm going to get you that vineyard." You hear that?

And she arranged a setup for Navos. You know what the setup was? She got some false witnesses. Putin *mamash* learned from this guy. They testified about Navos that he was a criminal and they took him out and they gave him *sekilah* and he died. They sent a message to Izevel saying, "Your problem is solved. Your problem has been eliminated."

Now *Chazal* tell us an interesting thing. This Navos had a *ma'alah*. You know what his *ma'alah* was? He had a voice 'to die for.' And he would come to Yerushalayim on the *regalim* and *pashut kol Yisrael*, whoever could, would come to hear him sing. He was *meorer* Am Yisrael in Yerushalayim.⁴

One Yom Tov he didn't come. When he didn't come up, that's when the *eidim* testified against him, and he was killed. *Chazal* posed a question: what caused him to die? Why did he deserve to die? And they said: שלא עלה לירושלים בראיה לכבוד את ה'. Hashem gave him a tremendous *brachah*, his voice, and it was his *minhag* to be *mechabed* Hashem with that *brachah* in Yerushalayim. He didn't come up and he diminished the *kavod* of Hashem by not coming up.

³ לא רק שהשתדלות אינה מועילה, אלא לפעמים תגרום ההפוך וכל אדם רואה בחוש אשר כמה פעמים לא די שהשתדלותו לא תועיל לו מאומה רק אדרבה עוד היה לו לרעה ונמצא לעצמו ביגיעתו, וכמאמר הכתוב (ישעיה נמן, ה), 'ביצי צפעוני בקעו וקורי עקביש יארגו האכל מביצייהם; מות והוורה תבקע אפעה', דמה השתדלותם למאכלו ומחמם אותו כדי שיצאו מהם תרנגולים למאכלו, ואחר כל יגיעתו נמצאו הביצים שהיו של נחש ואפעה יוצא מהם נחש להזיקו. וכן אמר הכתוב (איוב ה, ג) 'למד חכמים בערמם', דבהתחכמותם שלהם בה בעצמה לוודאותם, וכמעשה דעבד' שלמה מבאר במסכת סכה פרק החליל (נג ע"א) שנגזר עליהם שימותו על שיערי לוז והוא בעצמם שלהם לשם (בית הלוי, מאמר הבטחון)
⁴ כבד את ה' מהונך [משלי ג:ט]. שאם היית נאה שלא תהא פרוץ בעריות שלא יהו הבריות אומרים איש פלוני נאה ואינו גדור מן הערוה. ד"א שאם קולך ערב פרוס על שמע ועבור לפני התבה על שם כבד את ה' מהונך ממה שחננת, וכו'. נבות היה קולו נאה והיה עולה לירושלים והיו כל ישראל מתכנסין לשמוע קולו, פעם אחת לא עלה והעידו עליו בני בליעל ונאבד מן העולם מי גרם לו על ידי שלא עלה לירושלים בראיה לכבוד את ה' ממה שחננו, למה שכבד אמרה תורה ולא יחמוד איש את ארצו אימתי בעלותך, וכו'. (ילקוט שמעוני על נ"ך תתקל"ב)

Now, why didn't he come up? You know why he didn't come up? Because he was afraid that if he would go up, this King Achav, his neighbor, would put up a big wall around his *kerem*, no trespassing, and a big sign on the top with a name change. "Achav's ranch. Achav's vineyards." And he would lose it. But the Torah says that if you go up to Yerushalayim ולא יחמד איש את ארצו, "nobody will be jealous of your land" (Shemos 34:24). Had he gone up, they would have never had anything negative to say about him. Hashem would have protected his life and his fields. But he thought he was a smart man. He's going to stay home and protect his field himself. It's called *hishtadlus*. You hear that? He tried. He saw a threat. He knew this guy wasn't going to take no for an answer. He figured if he's going to leave for a couple of days, it's not going to be good for him. And the *metzius* was *punkt fakhert*. *Adarabah*, the Beis Halevi says, if he would have gone up, he wouldn't have lost a thing. He wouldn't have lost his vineyard. He wouldn't have lost his life. Hashem would have protected him.

So every time you make a *hishtadlus* when you're feeling some kind of threat, understand this and make sure that that *hishtadlus* is 100% the *ratzon* of Hashem. If your *hishtadlus* is not the *ratzon* of Hashem, you can be jeopardizing yourself and putting yourself in a very bad environment, and that's the *eitzah* of the *yetzer hara* for a person. What you want to gain, you're going to gain the opposite.

Rav Shmuel Hominer, in his famous *sefer Eved Hamelech* on *Melachim*, points out this lesson. The only *hishtadlus* that's kosher *hishtadlus* is *hishtadlus* that's according to the *ratzon* of the Torah. The *hishtadlus* that Hashem wants you to make is that Hashem wants you to *daven*. Hashem wants you to be *mechazek* your *bitachon* and get *menuchas hanefesh*. Hashem wants you to strengthen your awareness of Hashem. Even though it seems like nothing is happening and nothing is moving, things are moving. Hashem is moving behind the scenes, and the only thing that's going to continue on forever is the *ratzon* of Hashem.

IN CONCLUSION

Many times in life, especially when people are faced with a challenge, they try to find a way to circumvent the issue by doing different types of *hishtadlus*. Unlike Moshe Rabbeinu, who fought his last decreed war with alacrity, Yehoshua attempted to lengthen his life by delaying going to the war that Hashem commanded him to join. Hashem decided that when we do *hishtadlus* that is not aligned with *ratzon Hashem*, the results not only do not bring us closer to our goals, but could take us further away from them. When making *hishtadlus*, the best *hishtadlus* to make is that which is clearly in accordance with the Torah and with what Hashem wants us to do. We should understand that age or a medical condition is not a barrier to Hashem sending a *shidduch* or children! On the contrary, doing *ratzon Hashem* positively brings a person closer to his *yeshuah*. The episode with King Achav taking Navos' life and then his vineyard is an example of *hishtadlus* that backfired. The correct *hishtadlus* for Navos would have been to trust in Hashem's promise in the Torah that people would not desire his land if he went up to Yerushalayim for *aliyas haregel*. This week, I will (bli neder) try to make a correct *hishtadlus* to resolve a challenge in at least one area: I will *daven* and I will *mechazek* my *bitachon* in that area. The main goal is to strengthen our awareness of Hashem.

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