

Part 4A Rocket Fuel for Torah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Justi Tregler

We've learned that the desire for money never ends and therefore our desire to work never ends. Yet we've also learned that Hashem wants us to work for a very different reason, to rebuild the relationship with us that was broken. It seems that these two motivations are mutually exclusive and impossible to bring together. But in fact, it is these worlds that the *Torah* aims to unify as it lays the framework and platform for us to engage with work as Jews.

The Ramban tells us in *Bereishit* that before the sin of *eitz hadaat* man gravitated naturally to what he was supposed to do. Just as the heavenly constellations never veer off their path, always doing the will of Hashem, so too before the sin, there was nothing personal about Adam's actions. His sole interest was to bond with Hashem. The sin of *eitz hadaat* caused a huge chasm. Suddenly it was about man's own desires and will to make money and sustain himself. And then there was what Hashem wanted, which now seemed worlds apart. Therefore, Hashem established the

framework of work as the place to remarry seemingly two opposite worlds -the self-centered drive for money and Hashem's desire for a relationship with us. The natural way that we engage with work for those unlearned in *Torah* is that my hard efforts will make me succeed. When you live with that voice in your head, it's impossible to see Hashem's hand.

I lived with that paradigm. For many years, I couldn't see Hashem's hand in my *parnasah* because the driving force in my life was the desire for money. One day all of that changed. I was called to my bosses' office and as I walked across past the secretary, the thought ran through me- She also works hard and she doesn't earn nearly as much as I do. Then I realized, it's the family I was born into, the education I was afforded, and the talents and business acumen I had, all of which she wasn't given. Those were the differentials in our earnings, not our hard work. And I was in control of none of those factors and neither was she. It was the byproduct of being blessed

by Hashem. Before that moment I was blind and Hashem opened my eyes to see Him in my life and see Him in earning my livelihood; and I realized my equation that hard work will make you succeed was so wrong. Hashem's blessing makes you succeed and that changes everything.

In order to be successful you still have to put in the hard work, but you've got to work equally hard to make sure that the work you do will be blessed by Hashem. And how you do that is what forges the relationship between you and the One Above. The smallest component of my income capacity, the hard work and effort, is in my hands. But the biggest component, the one that will make the most difference, is actually in Hashem's hands. In order to receive His blessings, I have to invest effort to form a relationship with Him. This will produce success. Then business will become the place where the chasm which seemed unbridgeable- the desire to make money and Hashem's desire for a relationship, is in fact bridged and reconnected.

Destruction and Exile- Reflected in Tehilim Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

The Navi Yishayahu was a preacher. He didn't only speak in the palace to the leaders. He went out to the people and spoke to them. According to the Ibn Ezra, the people who address Yeshayahu and the rest of the nation are the few remnants of the northern tribes that managed to escape and find refuge in Judea. They experienced the ravages of war and they took words of the prophet very seriously because they lived through it. They knew to be cautious and not become complacent, thinking everything will be fine and neglecting to repent. Therefore, they respond, "Were it not for Hashem who left us a small remnant almost like Sedom, we would have been similar to *Amorah*." A survivor is saying this. He hears what the prophet is describing and he says- We lived through this, we know it happened, take it seriously. As a result, says Ibn Ezra, the prophets turns to the people of Judea and says, "Do you think I'm satiated with all the blood you pour on my altars. I don't need those fat cows..." This is similar to what Shmuel Hanavi said to Shaul

Hamelech when he failed to kill Agag, the king of the Amalakites- "Do you think Hashem needs your offerings? He wanted you to obey him."

The mistaken belief that Hashem could somehow be appeased by offerings goes back to Kayin and Hevel. Hashem doesn't need our offerings if it's brought with the wrong intentions. He continues, "I cannot abide evil with holiday celebrations, corruption with religiosity...when you spread out your palms (as was once done when praying), I'll turn my face away from you, for your hands are filled with blood...cease doing evil and making others evil (by example or influence)." If the only way to get your case heard is by bribery or influence you've corrupted the system. The source of corruption lies in the elected officers. "Do good and teach others to do good." This is accomplished by example and asking for nothing in return, because that is what goodness is. It's a terrible sin when judges delay justice, which is really justice denied.

Chazal explain that in a case of capital murder where the verdict might be death, it's better for the judges to wait and investigate rather than kill an innocent person. But in cases of damages, it is forbidden to delay judgment, especially those involving defenseless orphans and widows. It's incumbent on each of us to do what we can. Otherwise, we become the source of corruption, expecting others to act instead of us.

On Yom Kippur we read- "If your sins are as red as scarlet, they'll turn as white as the snow." A king needs followers to support him. Corruption that might start at the top, will eventually seep down to the lowest level of society. In some respects, Yeshayahu is asking the people to act, to fight the battle of the widow and demand justice for the orphan. Beginning at the bottom will eventually reach all segments of society and influence even those at the top to meet the expectations of the people.



The Three Weeks

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The three weeks are upon us. Hashem wired us to be in a constant state of *simcha*. Why is there a seeming lack of joy placed upon us during this period? In order to understand this, let's look at a verse in Eicha, "*Kol radfeha hisiguah ben hamitzraim* -All of those who sought her, pursued her between the sieges." All of those who wanted to find Hashem's presence found it when they felt crushed or overwhelmed. When it's *ben hamitzarim*, between two kinds of contractions.

To understand how to relate to this, we have to go back to the creation narrative. On the fourth day of creation Hashem made two great luminaries and then suddenly the moon became smaller and would now only reflect the sun's light. Everything we observe physically, has a spiritual purpose. If you could a picture a puzzle with millions of pieces that fit together to form a picture, the pieces fitting together is what we call the system of ecology or nature which makes the world work. The picture is the form and beauty and the kavod of Hashem that emerges from the world. But there's also its spiritual message and that isn't visible easily. Everything in the world reveals something. Everything has a message and in order to fit the pieces together we have instructions. However, the instructions are sometimes very difficult to understand unless you know the picture that

will be formed. For instance, it says not to wear *shatnez* -wool and linen together. At times the puzzle pieces seem confusing, but the message is what is important here. You can't see what's wrong with the puzzle pieces, you can only see how it distorts the message. This is true with many *mitzvot*. But in addition to having *mitzvot* which instruct us how to put the picture together, there's one other piece of information one must have.

In Daat Tevunot, the Ramchal discusses two different ways in which Hashem simultaneously rules the world. You could divide the way He rules the world in two segments. Segment one is like a huge ball and all of reality contained inside. Everything that's real, that has physical presence and spiritual purpose is in this great ball. What is this ball analogous to? Hashem has what we call *ohr makif*- surrounding light. He surrounds us with providence, but this isn't reactive. It's like the ball within the ball. The light from the outer ball strikes every part of the inner ball without the inner ball doing anything. Hashem has some rules that he put into being without being connected in any way to human behavior, it just is. This is what the puzzle will look like. At the end you can make efforts to put the pieces in the right place, but you can't change the picture, its predetermined. The sun shines on the wicked and righteous and all of the laws of nature are there for everyone.

This is also true on a spiritual level. Everything has purpose and all the possibilities are inherently there. Time is the measured progression of change. Physically, time has to do with rotations and revolutions and that's how we measure it. There are changes taking place constantly. But it also has a spiritual reality. The holidays and *Shabbat* contain unique energies different than on an ordinary day. The Ramchal teaches that morning is different than evening. You can achieve more in the morning, not just in putting the pieces together, but in drawing in spiritual forces. That is why many *halachot* have to be fulfilled in the morning.

Mazal means the pieces of the puzzle in terms of how the picture will be formed. Everyone has *mazal* and it has nothing to do with your deeds, you're born with it. The pieces of the puzzle is your specific shape at conception. It's all the givens and the components given to you at birth to do what you're meant to do in life. There's also *ohr penimi*- Hashem responding and giving you light in accordance with your deeds. This can happen simultaneously, not instead of, but together with you your deeds. There's always going to be a response to your actions as it says, "*Hashem tzilcha al yad yeminicha*- Hashem is the shadow of your right hand."