VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English

ערב שב"ק פרשת
Vayeitzei
שנת תשפ"ז

בס"ד

One is Obligated to do Hishtadlus While Still Believing that Only Hashem Can Provide the Yeshua!

›› *Why is an Army Needed?*

The *pasuk* in this week's Parshah (Bereishis 30:14) states: "And Reuven went out during the days of the harvesting of the wheat, and he found *duda'im* in the field. And he brought them to Leah, his mother. And Rochel said to Leah, 'Give me from the *duda'im* of your son.'"

The Sforno writes: "The intentions of the Imahos were desirable to Hashem when they did their *hishtadlus* by bringing in the co-wives and in the story of the *duda'im*. Therefore, their prayers were heard. This teaches us that it is appropriate for a *tzadik* to do natural *hishtadlus* to attain his desires. Together with this, one should pray to achieve his goals."

Rabenu Bechaya (introduction to Parshas Shelach) expounds on the concept of doing *hishtadlus* and writes as follows: "A horse is prepared for a day of battle, but the victory is Hashem's (Mishlei 21:31)." He asks why one needs to prepare a horse for the day of battle at all if Hashem is the one who will provide the victory.

Rabenu Bechaya answers that Shlomo Hamelech is teaching that one is obligated to put in the work to do whatever can be done in a natural way. Once one does this, he can hand the job over to Hashem and rely on Him.

Hashem created this world with its nature, and that nature is meant to stay in place. Therefore, one must take action in a natural way to prepare the way for Hashem's salvation. After this is done, Hashem steps in and takes care of the rest in a supernatural way. One example of this concept is that if the nation is going out to war, they must prepare horses and weapons. They cannot rely on a miracle without first doing their part.

However, even though one is doing his own *hishtadlus*, he still must realize that the true salvation can only come from Hashem. One must recognize that many armies made preparations for war and still lost. It should be clear that salvation is only in the hands of Hashem, and one's *hishtadlus* is not the real source of one's success. Therefore, one should never rely on it.

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"צ אלחנן
יוסף בן שמואל

For this reason, we find that before Klal Yisroel entered Eretz Yisroel, they were commanded to do *hishtadlus* by preparing an army and sending spies to scout the land. This was all done because one must do whatever is possible according to the laws of nature.

In truth, these efforts were not needed to conquer the land, as it was obvious that their victories were supernatural. Still and all, they were commanded to do their own work, and then to fully rely on Hashem to protect and save them.

Hashem does not want us to fully depend on miracles. We are always expected to do our *hishtadlus*. But even after we exert our efforts, we must have complete *emunah* that success comes from Hashem. This was Shlomo's intent when he said that a horse is prepared for the day of war, but victory comes from Hashem.

We also find that when Dovid Hamelech asked a question to the Urim V'Tumim about how to fight the Plishtim, Hashem told him (1 Shmuel 5:23): "Do not go up. Circle in back of them, and come upon them from against the mulberry trees." He was commanding him to fight in a strategic way, as one must perform normal *hishtadlus*.

We also find regarding the battle of Ay that Hashem told Yehoshua (Yehoshua 8:2): "Set for yourself an ambush for the city behind it." And this is also why Hashem told Moshe to send spies to Midbar Paran.

We see from all this that when one engages in warfare, he must follow the rules of war. He must prepare weapons and ammunition, and design strategies for victory. He should not sit back and wait for a miracle. Rather, one must do his part, while still bearing in mind that victory can only come from Hashem.

We also find that whenever Yehoshua battled against the kings of Canaan, he fought with swords and all kinds of weapons, and engaged in military strategies. For example, in the battle of Ay, he had the army fake a retreat so that the enemy would chase them. After the enemy army left the city to pursue them, the soldiers

waiting in ambush burned down the city. They then surrounded the enemy army to wage war against them. Even though Hashem had promised them victory, they still engaged in strategies like this.

After all of his victories, Yehoshua gathered the Shivtei Yisroel and told them (Yehoshua 24:12): "It was not through your sword and not through your bows and arrows." The Radak explains that he was saying that if not for Hashem's help, they could not have won at all.

Dovid Hamelech says similarly (Tehillim 44:3-4): "You inflicted harm on kingdoms and sent them away. For not by their sword did they inherit the land, neither did their arm save them, but Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your countenance." Rashi explains: "You inflicted harm on the seven great nations, You sent them out from before us, and with Your hand and Your strength You drove them out of their land and planted our forefathers in its midst." Dovid was speaking about all of Yehoshua's victories and saying that they were not the result of his sword. Rather, they were Hashem's doing.

We must do our *hishtadlus*, and then we must feel no fear because, as the *posuk* says (Devarim 20:1): "If you see horses and riders who are more than you, do not fear them because Hashem your G-d is with you." It further states (ibid:4): "For Hashem your G-d goes with you to save you." Even if our enemies are bigger and stronger than us, we should not be afraid because Hashem is on our side.

›› *Do Not Trust in the Strength or Weakness of the Enemy!*

So too, if our enemy is weaker than us, we should not feel confident that we can win because we are stronger than them.

We can learn this from Yehoshua. After he killed Achan for illicitly taking some of the spoils of battle, Hashem told him (Yehoshua 8:1): "Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise. Go up to Ay. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ay, and his people, and his city, and his land." It then says that Yehoshua took 30,000 warriors and sent them at night to battle with Ay.

The spies had told Yehoshua that there were only 3,000 or 4,000 people in Ay. If so, we may ask why he needed to take 30,000 warriors to fight them.

The answer is that Hashem told him to prepare for a real battle, and not to depend on the enemy's weakness. Just like one may not fear an enemy when it is larger and stronger, one may not discount an enemy when it is smaller and weaker. One must prepare for battle by doing his full *hishtadlus*, while still trusting fully that the victory will come from Hashem, and not from the army.

This is a difficult challenge for any person. On the one hand, one must do his *hishtadlus* and work through natural means. On the other hand, he must remember that his success will not come about as a result of his *hishtadlus*. Rather, whether he succeeds or not is completely in the hands of Hashem, and the *hishtadlus* is only necessary to fulfill the Divine decree that one is obligated to put forth his own efforts before Hashem can help him.

"...The purpose of tefillah is to call out to Hashem and recognize that all good comes from Him... Therefore, it is very understandable that in a time when we have no bikkurim to bring out our hakaras hatov we do so through prayer..."

›› *One Must do Hishtadlus, But Salvation Comes From Hashem!*

The Medrash (quoted in Rashi on Bereishis 29:11) states that when Yaakov was on his way to Charan, Elifaz, the son of Esav, accosted him and took all of his money. Yaakov then said (Tehillim 121:1), "I lift up my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come?" He said, "When Eliezer went to bring Rivkah, he had ten camels (24:10) ... but I don't have even one nose ring or one bracelet." He then said, "Have I lost my faith in Hashem? *Chas V'Shalom*! I have not lost my *bitachon*. 'My help is from Hashem, creator of Heaven and earth.'"

The Kesav Sofer *zt"l* explains that Yaakov originally thought that perhaps he was obligated to do some *hishtadlus* to obtain money and jewelry for his wife, just like Eliezer took along ten camels when he went to find a wife for Yitzchok.

Subsequently, he rejected this idea and concluded that he didn't need to do any *hishtadlus* because Hashem would help him and provide him with whatever he needed. He recognized that one must do *hishtadlus* if there is something he can do according to the rules of nature, but now that there was no natural course that he could take, he could rely completely on Hashem, without doing any *hishtadlus*.

The Yerushalmi states (Terumos 8:3) that Rav Yanai was afraid of snakes. He would place the four legs of his bed in buckets full of water so snakes could not climb up. He once went to sleep at night, and when he awoke, he found a snake in his bed. He then removed the buckets of water and said, "I will just rely on Hashem to protect me."

Of course, he had always trusted in Hashem. However, he originally thought that he needed to do some form of

hishtadlus to protect himself. Once he saw that his *hishtadlus* couldn't stop a snake from reaching his bed, he realized that all he had to do was rely on Hashem.

›› *Whatever One Has Comes From Hashem!*

This concept applies to all areas of life. One must do his part, but he also must have strong *emunah* that he can't accomplish anything on his own.

The *pasuk* says (Bereishis 26:12): "And Yitzchok planted in that land, and… he found 100 gates. And Hashem blessed him." The *pasuk* first says that he "planted", meaning that he worked the land, and then it says that he "found", which indicates that he found something without any effort. This seems to be a contradiction.

The Kedushas Yomtov (Parshas Toldos) explains that he did exert efforts to plant, but when he saw that his planting had yielded a lot of crops, he didn't think that the crops were the result of his efforts. Rather, he knew that it was all a blessing from Hashem.

The Gemara (Chulin 91B) relates that when Yaakov took stones and placed them around his head (Bereishis 28:11), the stones began to argue with each other, with each one wanting the *tzadik* to lay his head on it. Hashem then performed a miracle and combined them into one stone.

The Kedushas Yomtov explains that when Yaakov stopped for the night, he was afraid of the wild animals and robbers that were in the area. Therefore, he placed his trust in Hashem. However, he also did his *hishtadlus* by placing stones around him as a means of protection.

This led to an argument between the stones, so to speak, as these two fundamental concepts – *bitachon* and *hishtadlus* - seemed like a contradiction. When Hashem combined the stones into one, He was demonstrating that there is no contradiction. *Hishtadlus* and *bitachon* are one, as even the success of one's personal efforts is dependent upon Hashem.

›› *Bikkurim Represent Emunah!*

The concept of *emunah* is symbolized by the mitzvah of *bikkurim*. The *pasuk* states (Devarim 26:3): "And you shall come to the kohen who will be in those days, and say to him, 'I declare this day to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the land which Hashem promised to our forefathers to give us…" Rashi says that we say these verses so as not to be an ingrate.

The Chinuch says (Mitzvah 91) that the purpose of the mitzvah of *bikkurim* is to include Hashem in our times of happiness. We must remember that all the blessings in this world come from Him. Therefore, He commanded us to bring the first sprouted fruits from the trees to the kohen. Through this act, we will remember Him and accept His kingship. We will come to love Him through this because we will recognize that all the fruits and everything good in this world is given to us from Him. Through this, we will become deserving of His blessings, and our crops will be blessed.

This concept can be explained as follows: A man sows and plows his field all season long. He anticipates the crop and hopes it is successful and grows well. Chazal (quoted in Tosafos on Brachos 31A) say that people who plant have faith in Hashem because they trust in Him that He will make the plants of their fields grow from the ground.

When the fruits grow, he might forget that Hashem caused them to grow and think that it was his strength and the power of his handiwork that performed this act and caused this success, which would make him unworthy of receiving Hashem's blessings, as Chazal say (see Ramban on Devarim 23:5 and Sefer Chasidim, Siman 1026). In order that no one fall prey to this type of thinking, Hashem commanded that the first fruit should be given away to the kohen. Through this act, the farmer displays that everything was given to him from Hashem, and is therefore worthy of receiving His blessings.

It isn't enough to feel gratitude in one's heart. One must verbalize it with his mouth – as Rashi says, "And he answers – in a loud voice." Chazal decreed that we should make a great to-do out of the whole process of bringing *bikkurim* in order to ingrain this lesson of *hakaras hatov* so that it becomes an integral part of our lives.

Chazal state that this world was created in the merit of *bikkurim*. The meaning of this that the entire purpose of the world is for people to come to recognize that everything comes from Hashem, and the mitzvah of bikkurim leads to this realization.

We can also answer why the Parshah of *bikkurim* is next to the story of Amalek. The Mechilta (Beshalach 17) states that the negative trait of ingratitude is what defined Amalek. Thus, the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, which is based on being grateful to Hashem for everything He gives us, is placed next to the story of Amaleik, from which we learn the depravity of ingratitude.

This also explains the Medrash (Tanchuma) that says: "Moshe Rabenu saw with *ruach hakodesh* that the Bais Hamikdosh will ultimately be destroyed and we will be unable to offer *bikkurim*. He arose and decreed that Jews should daven three times a day."

The purpose of *tefillah* is to call out to Hashem and recognize that all good comes from Him. By praying to Him, we assert that He is the source of everything, and we must turn to Him for all our needs. Therefore, it is very understandable that in a time when we have no *bikkurim* to bring out our *hakaras hatov* we do so through prayer.

From all this, we see that one is obligated to do whatever he can according to the rules of nature. Once he does his part, he should not be worried at all, as he should recognize that the outcome depends solely on Hashem's will.