

DAILY CHESHBON HANEFESH # 22

TOOL # 13

There once was a story of a master who ordered his servant to take a huge bag of seeds and plant one of his large fields that was on his estate. The servant was negligent and only planted 1/3 of the seeds over 1/3 of the field. He took the rest of the seeds and used them for his own private needs. After some time, the master returned to find that only part of the field was sown. Upon making some calculations, he understood that only 1/3 of the seeds were used to plant only 1/3 of the field, and that the servant made off with the rest! The master confronted the servant with the facts and said that, "You must repay me \$5,200." "Whatever for!", cried out the servant. "The whole bag of seeds could not have been worth more than \$300. I only stole \$200 worth. Why should I pay more?" The master responded, "That may be true. But had you planted the entire field, it would have yielded \$5,000 worth of crops, which was lost due to your negligence. You must pay for that too."

The Chovos Halvovos tells us how analogous this story is of our lives. On the one hand, a person should calculate to what degree Hashem has assisted him with an intelligence to understand Him and His Torah, AND to what degree Hashem has given him the strength and the capability to fulfil his obligations to Him. On the other hand, he should calculate how much of these gifts did he actually use in a way that Hashem intended him to. How great is the gap? You can be sure that Hashem will make a claim against you for what you have not fulfilled. He will calculate how much He gave you in relation to how much of it you used and produced. How much of it have you squandered? Hashem will not only lay claim against the wasted talent, but also for what production that was lost because of it.

This leads us to understand today's tool. A person should give thought to repay his debt to Hashem to the best of his ability, by:

Acting in a way that is commensurate to the wisdom you have been given

Making effort commensurate to your level of understanding

Investing all your toiling in service of Hashem commensurate to your wisdom.

Most importantly, Don't squander your strength on excesses of materialistic pleasures, lest you won't have enough strength left over to fulfil your obligations that the Torah has placed on you.

Hashem gives each person the exact amount of strength necessary to fulfil the Torah's and the world's requirements. If a person squanders even a little bit of his strength on unnecessary excesses, he will be lacking that strength when it comes time to do the necessary requirements. You can not burn both the spiritual and materialistic ends of the candle and succeed.

This tool is teaching us the realization that people often weary themselves with worldly pursuits, and then use that weariness as an excuse for their negligence in repaying Hashem for his Ongoing kindness.

What traps should we be concerned with here? Quite often it is the "If only" trap. "If I only had lots of money and/or wisdom, then I could fulfil all my obligations to Hashem!" "If I will only work 20 hrs. a day for the next 5 years and make a lot of money, then I can spend my the rest of my life studying Torah in Kollel and helping the Jewish people." What happens? We just spend the rest of our life as a workaholic, never getting around to the spiritual goals. "If only I first study in University and then graduate school, and then post - graduate school for a total of 8 years, and then get a great job, THEN I will make it all up to you Hashem!" Somehow, it never works out that way.

How often do people sincerely want to incorporate service to Hashem on a daily basis, and fail because they run out of strength? There are people who even set aside time to learn Torah at night, but by the time they get home from work, eat supper, take care of the kids, and finally sit down to open a Sefer, they fall asleep shortly after starting. Even if they do not, their concentration level is much less than it was during the day when they were dealing with making their Parnasa.

People who are not willing to give their lives over for the service of Hashem until their livelihoods are first guaranteed for the rest of their lives, are acting no differently than a creditor who takes collateral from someone before the money is even borrowed. The reason is the same - there is a lack of trust. That may be acceptable when lending money to a person, but it is not acceptable when dealing with our obligations to Hashem.

Today's Activity: List off all the activities you did today in order. See which ones are higher on the list - are they activities involved in the service of G-d and/or necessities of life or not. Do you study Torah or say Tehillim first thing in the morning, when your mind is freshest, before you go to work? Are you using your high energy moments for your service to Hashem, or are you davening Maariv after midnight when your eyes are half closed. Do you come home from work with so much stress and anxiety that you have no patience to help your children with their homework or no time to ever play with them?

Critically analyse if you are wasting your most productive time on non-essentials. Reallocate your time in the day, so that you are expending your best energy in your service to Hashem - leave the rest of your strength for the less important things in life.