

DAILY CHESHBON HANEFESH #32

TOOL #22

Some salesmen were in a caravan traveling with many animals and goods. Each of the salesmen was burdened with too many animals and belongings. Loading and unloading one's own wares every day was an exhausting experience. The men had a choice: They could alleviate the collective load by concerning themselves with each other's welfare and assisting one other with the loading and unloading. However, if they did not get along with each other and were only concerned with their own affairs, they would continue to be overwhelmed with the individual load that was too difficult for one person to handle.

The Chovot Halevavot uses this analogy to explain why people find daily living such a burden and why so much labor and effort are needed to meet one's needs. People are only interested in taking care of themselves and want more than what they actually need. Since they want more than what Hashem has allocated for them, they are not able to access that which Hashem has allocated for them. That explains why there is so much stress and why everyone complains and cries.

Let us use a simple example to explain this phenomenon: Let us say that Hashem has allotted to a person enough wealth to live contently, and an abundant amount of peace and tranquility, as well. Hashem has blessed him with a pleasant wife and lovely children. Hashem has blessed him to live in a community with other people who share a similar good fortune. Will that allocation guarantee this person's happiness? Let us see.

If this person is happy with his lot and also follows the Torah's advice to "Love your neighbor as yourself," then he will access his full allocation. If he cares about everyone else's needs as much as he cares about his own, and always helps others, he will never be jealous of what others have. He will take pleasure in their success. He will not feel the need to acquire more wealth, and will be satisfied with all the blessings Hashem bestowed upon him. He never has to worry about that "rainy day" in his life, because he is surrounded by like-minded people who will come to his rescue should he ever need help.

However, if this person thinks only about himself, not only will he not help others, but also he will compete against others. He is obsessed with doing the job all by himself. He will always be jealous of others. He will always want more than he has. He will live a stress-riddled life, always worrying how to make the extra money he "needs." He may even succeed in accessing more wealth, but at what price? His health? His family? Himself? He will have given up far more than what he will have achieved.

Today's tool teaches you how to view yourself within the context of society. In Derech Hashem, Rabbi Luzzatto teaches that there are two agendas that you must always be conscious of:

Σ You must ensure that you have reached your spiritual potential, thus ensuring your entrance in The World to Come.

Σ Do what you can to make sure that all humanity has perfected itself to the point that the whole world is ready to make the change to The World to Come

In short, man has a basic responsibility to himself and to the world around him. He won't get to Olam Haba if the world does not make it. Hashem is interested in everyone's making it. The only way for that to happen is for all humanity to take that global responsibility. The Chovot Halevavot also applies this teaching to how we view our material needs, which are primarily given to us as a tool to advance our spiritual agenda.

We must realize that when you associate with others in order to grow in Torah and in your worldly pursuits, it is important to think not only of your own needs, but of theirs too, for the good of all.

The Chovot Halevavot recommends that you attempt to acquire trusted, loving friends who will help you grow in Torah and in your worldly pursuits. The obvious question is: How can you know if you have really found such friends? The answer is to be that kind of friend to others. This will cause a reciprocal feeling on their part. We are capable of having a true friend only if we are willing to be a true friend.

Today's tool is a followup from tool #21. Tool #21 taught us to make every effort possible to achieve our personal goals in life. Today we are learning not to forget the role that other people play in that process. We can not succeed alone. Perhaps that is where the aforementioned Divine assistance manifests itself; namely, in other people helping you achieve what you cannot achieve on your own.

Today's Exercise:

- 1) List all the friends you have who you are absolutely positive would put their interests aside in order to help you. Do you have a friend who would cancel his vacation plans and lend you \$10,000? Do you have a friend who would gently and lovingly tell you about your faults, because they care too much to see you not live up to your potential?
- 2) List all the people whom you would be such a friend to.
- 3) Try to find a correlation between the number of people you listed in #1 and 2 and how happy you are.
- 4) Ask yourself: How much longer do you want to continue carrying your load all by yourself?