



TORAS JR AVIGDOR

Parshas Bereishis WORK, WORK, WORK

It was the hottest day of the summer. As Menachem Kugelbaum walked out of his house he saw gas company workers everywhere. There was a giant hole in the street and two men were down in the hole shoveling dirt. Another was operating a machine that went BRRRRRR-R-R-R-R-R! so loudly that Menachem was pretty sure one of his fillings had come loose. Three more workers were carrying a huge pipe.

Across the street, men in orange vests were holding STOP and SLOW signs and making Boro Park traffic even worse than usual.

“Look at those guys,” Menachem said to his neighbor Mr. Schwartz, who was also watching the commotion. “They’re sweating like crazy.”

And they were. The diggers were sweating. The pipe-carriers were sweating. The sign-holders were sweating. Even the supervisor sitting in an air-conditioned truck looked like he was sweating.

Mr. Schwartz, who had an interesting habit of teaching people Rav Miller lessons whenever he could, turned to Menachem, “Can you guess why they’re all sweating, Menachem?”

“Because it’s so hot! The weather says it’s 102 degrees but it feels like 115!”

“That’s a good *psbat*, Menachem, but I think I have a better one. It’s because Adam Harishon ate from the Eitz Hadaas.”

Menachem stared. “I definitely wasn’t going to guess that. The gas company guys are digging up our street because of Adam Harishon?”

“Absolutely. An *aveirah* is not just a mistake; it has repercussions forever. Rav Avigdor Miller once said that an *aveirah* is like an earthquake. It can happen in a few seconds, but the effects are forever. That’s why after Adam did that first *aveirah*, Hashem said, *בזעת אפיק תאכל לחם* — from now on, forever and ever, people will make a living by hard work, with the sweat of their brow.

“Well, it won’t be *mamish* forever,” Menachem said. “My friend told me that soon AI robots will do all the work. They’ll drive trucks, teach classes, fix gas pipes and clean houses. We’ll just sit around learning Torah.”

“Who will manufacture the robots?”

“Robots.”

“Who will repair them?”



“More robots.”

“And when the repair robot breaks?”

Menachem thought. “A robot–repair–repair–robot.”

“Technology can change how people work,” Mr. Schwartz said. “Once people pushed plows; today they drive tractors. Once they sat on stools making pottery dishes, and now they work in factories with the pottery machines. So someday work will look completely different than today. But technology can’t cancel the decree of Hashem. He says that earning a living will always require effort as a punishment for Adam’s *aveirah*. Wherever you turn – at all times – you’re reminded that there’s punishment for an *aveirah*.”

Just then, one of the workers pulled off his hard hat and wiped his soaking forehead with a dirty shmatteh.

Mr. Schwartz pointed. “Look! There’s a *possuk* in Chumash live on 16th Avenue!”

Menachem laughed, but now he looked at the workers differently. They were acting out the *possuk* in Chumash.

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A few months later, Menachem was walking to yeshivah on a freezing winter morning when he saw Fred the mailman dragging his mail cart over a frozen mountain left by the snowplow.

Fred stopped and wiped his forehead. “I can’t believe it! I’m sweating in zero-degree weather!”

Menachem smiled. He remembered the *possuk* בועת אפיך תאכל לחם. The gas workers were gone and there was no 102-degree heat, but Hashem’s reminder was still there.

“All because of one *aveirah*,” Menachem thought. “I better remember that next time I’m in the mood to tell someone some juicy *lashon hara*.”

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A few days later, Menachem came home from yeshivah, tossed his briefcase onto a chair, and headed for the kitchen. “Menachem,” Mommy called, “before you eat anything, please put your briefcase away. And there are still clothes all over your bedroom floor from this morning.”

Menachem turned around and trudged back toward his room. He put away his briefcase and started picking up the clothes from the floor. There was a shirt near his bed, a pair of pants under his chair, and somehow one of his socks had ended up near the window. As he bent down to pick it up, he sighed. There was always work to be done.

And then he stopped. *There was always work to be done*. Suddenly he remembered about בועת אפיך תאכל לחם and he pictured the workers digging up 16th Avenue in the blazing heat, and Fred dragging his mail cart through the snow.

Menachem looked down at the sock in his hand and laughed. Mr. Schwartz was right. The gas company had its work, Fred had his work, and Menachem Kugelbaum had his.

At least *he* was doing the mitzvah of *kibbud eim* while he worked.

**RABBI
MILNER
SPEAKS**

“All of the work in the world is the great memorial of בועת אפיך – to remind us that a sin is not merely that little act. Every *aveirah* is an earthquake, a terrible calamity that will have repercussions forever and ever.” –October 1991



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