

PENINEI MEHKERE ERES

פניני מחקרי ארץ

HaRav HaGaon Rachamim Moshe Shayo Shlit"a

פרשת ראה תשפ"ו



כִּי פֶתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת יָדְךָ לּוֹ וְהַעֲבַט תַּעֲבִיטֵנוּ דִּי
 "מִחֲסָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִחְסֹר לּוֹ"

"For you shall surely open your hand to him, and you shall surely lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he may lack." (15:8)

The *Gemara* in *Masechet Ketubot* (67b) teaches: "The Rabbis taught that the phrase 'sufficient for his need' teaches that you are commanded to sustain him, but you are not commanded to make him wealthy. But the phrase 'Whatever he may lack' teaches that he must be provided with whatever he is used to [from before his period of poverty] even a horse to ride upon and a servant to run before him." It is related of Hillel the Elder that he provided just such a horse and a servant for a certain impoverished man of good family. On one occasion, no servant could be found to run before him, so Hillel himself ran before him for three *mil*.

The *Gemara* then relates that a poor man came before Ribbi Nechemiah, told him he was hungry, and wished to eat. Ribbi Nechemiah asked him: what do you normally dine on? He replied: fat meat and aged wine. Ribbi Nechemiah said: I have no fat meat at the moment — would you be willing to eat lentils with me? The man agreed, and ate lentils together with Ribbi Nechemiah. Shortly afterward, the poor man died. Ribbi Nechemiah said: "Woe to that poor man, whom Nechemiah has killed." The *Gemara* asks: why did he put it that way? Should he not have said, "Woe to Nechemiah, who killed the poor man"? The *Gemara* answers: since the poor man had accustomed himself to eating fat meat, the sudden change to lentils caused his death — it was therefore his own fault for having indulged himself so extravagantly, leaving himself unable to tolerate ordinary food. He bore responsibility for his own death.

The *Gemara* then tells of another poor man who came before Rava with the same complaint of hunger. Rava asked him what he was accustomed to eating, and the man replied: fattened fowl and aged wine. Rava challenged him: have you no concern for the burden you place on the community? You are a poor man, living on *tzedakah* — and yet you accustom

yourself to eating fattened fowl every day at the community's expense? The poor man replied: am I eating from what belongs to the community? I eat only from what belongs to Hashem — for it is written, "עֵינֵי כָל אֱלִידָךְ יִשְׁבְּרוּ וְאַתָּה נֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת אֲכֻלָּם" "The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in its time" — it does not say *be'itam*, "in their time," but *be'ito*, which can be read as "in his time," teaching that Hashem provides each person's sustenance in his own proper time. While they were still speaking, Rava's sister arrived and brought — of all things — a fattened fowl and aged wine. Rava turned to the poor man and said: Heaven has sent this to you; rise and eat.

These two stories seem to stand in contradiction. In the story of Ribbi Nechemiah, the poor man was blamed for having accustomed himself to delicacies — and it cost him his life. Yet in the story of Rava, Heaven itself sent a fattened fowl to the poor man, apparently expressing approval of his habits.

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 The following year, the Sages returned to the area and asked the townspeople about Abba Yudan. They replied, "Who can even gain an audience with Abba Yudan now? He has become an immensely wealthy man, with many servants, countless camels, oxen, and abundant possessions."
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The truth is that each person's behavior is viewed in the context of his level of *bitachon* (faith in G-d). If a poor man genuinely trusts in Hashem — who feeds and sustains all creation — then he is permitted to accustom himself to eating well and to rely on Hashem to provide. But if he indulges himself, not out of *bitachon*, but merely for the pleasures of this world, that is another matter entirely. Such a person brings danger upon himself and bears

responsibility for his own wellbeing — for he ought not to consume more than his means allow. As the *Gemara* in *Masechet Chulin* (84b) teaches: "Rav Avira expounded: what is the meaning of the verse (Tehilim 112:5), 'טוֹב אִישׁ חוֹנֵן וּמְלוּהַ יִכְלָל' 'Good is the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice'? — A person should always eat and drink less than his means allow, dress and clothe himself according to his means, and honor his wife and children beyond his means — for they depend on him, while he depends on the One who spoke and the world came into being."

We must understand why the *Gemara* advises a person to eat less than his means. If one truly places his trust in Hashem, will Hashem not provide for him—as He did for that poor man who came before Rava, to whom a fattened chicken was

miraculously sent?

The answer is based on the teaching of our *Chachamim* in *Masechet Beitzah* (16a): "מזונותיו של אדם קצובים מראש השנה עד" "איש השנה" *"a person's livelihood is apportioned from one Rosh HaShanah to the next"*. True, a person is free to consume everything that Hashem provides him. Yet David *HaMelech* advises a wiser course: "טוב איש חונן ומלך" "Rather than spending everything allotted to him, a person should live somewhat below his means. The money he saves can then be lent to others, allowing him to fulfill the great mitzvah of gemilut hasadim."

This is the meaning of David *HaMelech*'s words: "טוב איש חונן ומלך." Because he lives prudently and spends less than he could, he has the means to help others. In doing so, he acquires tremendous merit through acts of kindness and earns reward in both worlds—*Olam HaZeh* and *Olam HaBa*. By contrast, one who spends everything on satisfying his own desires gains only the pleasures of this world, while forfeiting opportunities to earn eternal reward through generosity and lending to those in need.

However, when it comes to a man's wife and children, our *Chachamim* taught that a person should spend more than his means. Since their sustenance depends upon Hashem, when a person provides for them generously, Hashem will surely bless him with even greater abundance. This is not included in the fixed allotment of a person's own livelihood. Accordingly, our *Chachamim* teach in *Masechet Bava Metziah* (59a): "Ribbi Chelbo said: A person must always be careful to honor his wife, for blessing is found in a man's home only on her account," as it says regarding Abraham, "ולאברהם היטיב בעבורה" "And he was good to Abram on account of her (Sarah)." Similarly, Rava instructed the people of Mechoza: "אוקירו לנשיהו כי היכי דתתעשרו" *"Honor your wives so that you may become wealthy."*

Since the support of one's wife and children is not bound by the fixed measure of one's personal livelihood, if Hashem sees that a person willingly gives them more than he can seemingly afford, He blesses his efforts with increased prosperity and success.

The *Midrash Rabbah* on *Parashat Vayikra* (5:4) relates a remarkable incident involving Ribbi Eliezer, Ribbi Yehoshua, and Ribbi Akiva. They once traveled to the outskirts of Antioch to collect funds for the support of Torah scholars. There lived a man named Abba Yudan, who had always given generously.

In time, however, he lost his wealth. When he saw the Sages arriving to raise money, his face turned pale with distress. He went home to consult his wife and told her, "The Sages have come, and I do not know what to do."

His wife, who was even more righteous than he, replied, "We have only one field left. Go and sell half of it, and give the proceeds to the Sages."

He did exactly that, and brought his donation to the Sages. The Sages prayed for him and blessed him, saying, "May Hashem replenish all that you have lost."

Some time later, while plowing the remaining half of his field, the ground suddenly opened beneath him. His ox fell into the opening and broke its leg. As he climbed down to rescue the animal, Hashem opened his eyes, and he discovered a great hidden treasure buried there.

He exclaimed, "It was for my benefit that my ox's leg was broken!"

The following year, the Sages returned to the area and asked the townspeople about Abba Yudan. They replied, "Who can even gain an audience with Abba Yudan now? He has become an immensely wealthy man, with many servants, countless camels, oxen, and abundant possessions."

When Abba Yudan heard that the Sages had arrived, he hurried out to greet them and said, "Your prayers bore fruit—and fruits upon fruits." The Sages then applied to him the verse, "מתן אדם ירחיב לו" *"A person's gift creates a greater expanse for him."*

This episode invites a closer look. If Abba Yudan had that field to sell, why didn't he make the decision on his own? Why did he first consult his wife?

It would seem that the field had been pledged as security for his wife's *ketubah*. As such, he could not sell it without her consent. Having no other option, he turned to her. She responded, "I am prepared to forgo half of my *ketubah* for the sake of supporting the Torah scholars. Go and sell half of the field."

According to this, the sale was a tremendous sacrifice on her part, for it meant parting with not only an asset, but her last remaining guarantee of support. This explains why the *Midrash* emphasizes that his wife was more righteous than he. And it was through her selflessness and generosity that he ultimately merited the extraordinary wealth with which Hashem blessed him.



This weeks Divrei Torah is dedicated in honor of the Siyum of
Joseph Khezri

May he merit to complete many more Masechtot with health, happiness and success,
bringing much Nachat to his parents and of Am Yisrael, amen!