

YANKEL - CAST DOWN YOUR LOAD!

by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann

Yankel the peddler would travel from town to town, peddling his wares. Day after day he would drag his heavy cases and chests full of goods across the mud-ridden roads of Poland. One day, as Yankel was dragging along, he heard behind him the distinctive drumming of horses' hooves - a horse-drawn wagon was approaching. Yankel stood aside to let the wagon pass.

But this was Yankel's lucky day. The Jewish owner of the wagon, seeing Yankel schlepping along, bowing under the weight of his baggage, had stopped his coach, and was inviting Yankel to come along with him for the ride into the next town. Yankel happily accepted, and dragged his baggage up onto the carriage. He took a seat, and the wagon again began to move.

A few minutes later, the wagon-owner noticed that Yankel, seated in the wagon, still carried his entire burden upon his shoulders. "Yankel," he said, "why don't you put your bags down?"

"Oh, it's alright," replied Yankel, "I don't want to be any trouble."

"Yankel, you fool!" he exclaimed, "My horses are pulling the wagon, and you and all your chests and cases anyway. It makes no difference at all whether you carry them upon your shoulders or not! Please - throw them down on the floor of the wagon, and stop carrying all this unnecessary weight!"

Oh foolish Yankel! Didn't you realize the wagon's horses were pulling all the weight anyway! Yet, says the Dubner Maggid, is Yankel really that foolish? Isn't there a little Yankel in all of us?

How so? you ask. Well, we all know that parnasah, our sustenance and financial well-being, is ultimately in the hands of Hashem. True, one must put in the required effort; that is part of the curse which mankind received through our forebear Adam (Bereishis 3:19), "By the sweat of your brow will you eat your bread." But ultimately it is not through our efforts, our hishtadlus, that we achieve success, but by the help of Hashem, "Who sates and sustains all His creations." As we say every day in Ashrei (Tehillim 145:16), "You open Your hand, and satisfy the needs of every living thing."

Thus we all acknowledge that ultimately our parnasah, our material success or lack thereof, is not dependent on us. So why, asks the Dubner Maggid, do we spend so much time fretting over it? Why do we vainly attempt to carry the psychological burden of making a living upon our shoulders, if in the end it's really not up to us? Yankel, wake up! Throw down your burden - and let Hashem, Who carries us and all our needs, do His job. This is precisely what David HaMelech says in Tehillim (Psalms 55:23), "Hashleich al Hashem yehavcha, Throw your 'baggage' upon Hashem, ve-Hu

yechalkalecha, and He will sustain you."

I heard this mashal (parable), many years ago at a Friday-night Tisch (Chassidic gathering) of the Bobover Rebbe Shlita. Its powerful message found a place in my heart, and I have never forgotten this thought.

However, it actually goes a little further. By trusting in Hashem, by "throwing down our peckele" and letting Him carry the load, our "eyes" are opened and we actually *see* Hashem helping and providing for us from day to day. The more trust we put in Hashem, the greater the "revelation" we experience of Hashem's hand in our lives, guiding our every move.

Chazal, our Sages say (Beitzah 16a), "A person's entire livelihood [for the coming year] is decided on Rosh Hashana." The rest of the year, it's just a matter of going out and collecting what's already waiting for us. The effort still has to be there. If something's waiting, but no one comes to pick it up, it will not be received. But, by the same token, even a herculean effort can not change what Hashem has arranged for us. Incessant anxiety and stress will get us no where.

This week we read the Tochachah/Admonition. The numerous curses which the Torah promises will befall our nation if we fail to live up to our mission as members of Hashem's "Chosen nation." Undoubtedly, one of the greatest curses of our time is the "curse of livelihood." This curse, says the Belzer Rebbe R' Sheyale, is homiletically alluded to in the following pasuk (28:66), "And your life will hang before you; you will be frightened night and day, and you will not trust in your life."

"Life," refers to livelihood. "And your life will hang before you" - your livelihood has been hung out for you by Hashem - Who sustains and provides for all of His universe - since Rosh Hashana, like fruits hanging on a tree, waiting to be picked. There is no reason to fret and be anxious; it's not up to you. So why is it that, "You are frightened night and day" - constantly worrying about earning a living? It's because, "You do not trust (ve-lo ta'amin) in your life" - you lack emunah, belief in Hashem. You don't really believe in the words of Chazal, that a person's livelihood is decided and apportioned on Rosh Hashana. You mistakenly feel its "up to you" - so you worry.

Yankel, you've been carrying that burden for far too long. Enough already! Cast it off, and let Hashem, Who lovingly carries you and your load, do His job.

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