



Parashat Vayishlach



English version

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WORK SMARTER / PRAY HARDER

How does a person know if he is doing the right amount of Hishtadlut, or if he is overdoing it? This is the million dollar question, and one of the most common dilemmas of every-day life. It has ramifications in all areas of performance. In dating, in business, in academic achievement - in almost anything in life that is stress related. How many shadchanim to call? How many hours to work? How long to study for the test, or prepare the lesson for the class? Mastering this balance is one of the keys to happiness (see Orchot Tzaddikim Simcha, שריעיה). And is something that may be worthwhile praying for. This is the underlying message of the serenity prayer, "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference."

Yaakov was faced with fear. His brother, Esav, was after him. What does Yaakov do? Three things. He splits up klal Yisrael, his family, into two. He prays that he not get hurt, that he not hurt others. And he sends presents to Esav. Yaakov was afraid that he might be vulnerable because it could be that he had sinned. And that is why he did not want to rely on a miracle. But, don't we know that if Hashem wants something to happen, it will happen anyway? Why was Yaakov even trying, even doing hishtadlut? Also, we know that Yosef was punished with two additional years of jail for doing hishtadlut, when he asked the Sar Hamashkim to remember him. What is the difference between the two scenarios?

The answer is that "G-d does His Thing" through a person's hishtadlut (שער הביטחון פ"ג התנאי השביעית). Whenever a person is faced with confronting an Esav, or worldly matters which Esav represents, he needs to do some type of hishtadlut, to bring about Hashem's Will. For most people of the religious world today, it is not as hard to have emunah and bitachon as it is to balance Hishtadlut with Emunah. Even though we learn from Yaakov's splitting the family that a person should do what needs to be done to make things work, we see that Yaakov was punished for bowing down to Esav and for calling him "Adoni", my master. So, was it right or wrong that Yaakov tried to do his best?

The answer is that there is a golden rule at the base of hishtadlut. The rule is the the knowledge that whatever G-d wants is going to happen, when and how He wants it to happen. G-d does not need this specific hishtadlut from our part to do what He wants to do. Any hishtadlut can do the job. Hishtadlut brings G-d's blessings, without our having to rely on an open miracle. As R' Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, a"h teaches that it is like buying the ticket to get on the train. The train is going from point A to point B, not moving from its track, even one centimeter. You just need the ticket to get onto that train. But, you are not doing anything more than buying the ticket. The only hishtadlut that can change a decree is prayer and spiritual service. And even prayer does not change the Will of G-d. Prayer just changes the person; he becomes more humble, more accepting. And when he becomes a different person, he deserves different decrees (Sefer HaIkrim 4;18).



This underlying rule of hishtadlut has three conditions. The three conditions of proper hishtadlut are based in question format. 1. Am I reacting to a problem or taking control of it? Am I acting out of fear, doubt, insecurity, lack of patience; if so, it is a sign that my emunah is off, or am I able to respond in a way that is most productive? 2. Are my efforts crossing over the boundaries of the spiritual commitments and standard that I believe I could reach? 3. Am I praying as hard as I am trying?

The first rule is based on the Chazon Ish's answer to what Yosef did wrong. Yosef's asking the Sar Hamashkim was not proper hishtadlut. Why was he asking this low-grade person to remember him? The chance that this type of hishtadlut would work is nil! Yosef's belief in G-d was not off, but his hishtadlut was not appropriate. It was rooted in despair; such hishtadlut is not emunah-based hishtadlut. Another point here, made by R' B. D. Povarski, is that Yosef asked for the favor 3 days before the Sar Hamashkim was taken out of jail. At that point, Yosef did not have to ask for help from this Sar Hamashkim, it could have been that Yosef would be freed from prison before the three days were up. This shows that Yosef's response was one of despair, not of emunah and proper hishtadlut (Adapted from the Mashgiach, zt"l, Rav Dov Yaffe, לעבודך באמת).

This is a great lesson. Proper hishtadlut is only when someone acts with intent, not as a reaction to emotions or external situations. Proper hishtadlut has to be planned ahead, thought out, its degree, timing and manner carefully considered. What makes the most sense? How much do I have to do in order for it not to be an open miracle that G-d helps me? This is such an important rule in all areas of life. To think ahead, before letting

I DON'T CARE ANYMORE

I coached someone who once had a lot of money. We had a heart to heart discussion about those years when EVERYONE was his best friend. He would take guys out to restaurants, on trips, and pay for all of his "friends'" expenses. He told me,

hishtadlut take over your headspace, your schedule, and your spirituality.

I recently saw a piece of sound business advice from Dale Carnegie, one that can knock down 50% of your worries at work and in so many other areas of hishtadlut. It can quadruple your productivity. It is a solution to having mindfulness, instead of losing it. You see, usually, the question that people ask themselves in business management or any other management is, What do I do next? This question is ineffective. The best hishtadlut to approach a business problem, or any problem in life is with the four questions. 1. What, exactly, is the problem? 2. What is the core of the problem, why does it exist and why is it still here? 3. What are all the possible solutions to the problem? 4. What is the best solution? ... and then choosing that solution as your hishtadlut.

The second rule is based on the fact that Yaakov was punished for bowing down to Esav seven times, and from calling him my master eight times. This was improper, because if hishtadlut in anyway crosses tracks with emunah or bitachon, it is inappropriate. I remember what R Yehuda Ades, Shlita, said in a class to some working people from the Syrian community in New York. He said that if you set up time for prayer, time for Torah, and you are giving up from your service of G-d for the sake of your hishtadlut, you are overstepping the boundaries of proper hishtadlut, as if G-d can't bring your salvation while doing His Will.

And the third lesson is, that if you are not putting your hishtadlut in prayer, but in physical work alone, that means that your hishtadlut is not emunah-based. These three laws of Hishtadlut are so applicable, so measurable, so real. They are all life changers.

"Yosef, none of the guys knew this, but I could not sleep at nights. I used to lie in bed for endless hours, wondering who really cares for me and who cares about my money. More than once, I concluded that no one cared for me. I wanted to



commit suicide.” I was shocked! Lack of being cared for can cause suicidal thoughts?

I finally got around to reading a great book, The Charge, by Brendon Burchard, and this is what he writes. “Babies who are not cared for die. Suicide notes ring with the haunting assumptions that no one cared and no one will care. People without a caring environment demonstrate erratic behavior, lack positive emotional range, get divorced, cheat, and abruptly quit jobs. The number-one reason people quit jobs across all industries is lack of appreciation- no one demonstrated that they cared about or were grateful for the person’s hard work and contributions. Caring is serious business.”

People have asked me what sparked me to want to become a coach. Well, it happened one day when a long lost friend came over to me and said he wanted to thank me for something. He said that our first winter semester in Yeshiva together, due to his serious case of acne, no one was interested in talking to him. I met him one time, as we crossed the street together, and I asked how he was doing. He said, “Ah, okay, I guess.” I asked him, “Are your acne creams working? Are you seeing results?”

He said, “Not really.” And then, he said I told him something that saved his life. “People don’t care what type of a person you are on the outside as much as they care about what type of person you are on the inside”. “From that day on,” he said, “I started opening up to the guys, and I saw that people actually did care about me. I never told anyone, but I was planning suicide. You saved my life. I owe you one.”

There was never a generation like ours, where people don’t show genuine care for others, just for the sake of genuinely caring, or carrying on a conversation just for the sake of giving the other person a feeling of being cared for. We do chessed, but unfortunately, too much of our chessed is political chessed. What do I mean by political chessed? What are politics? That’s when people do or say things with an ulterior motive, not because

they really believe in what they are saying or doing. Political Chessed is Chessed with an ulterior motive.

When we ponder over the ulterior motives of ourselves and those around us, we will see a different world than the world we see. Have men become rabbis because they care to pass on the word of G-d, or because that is a job they found themselves in? " כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה יבקשו " מפייהו כי מלאך ה' צבאות הוא, אם דומה הרב למלאך ה' יבקשו " תורה מפיו ואם לאו אל יבקש תורה מפיו" (Moed Kattan 17a) If you want to know who to choose as a Rabbi, make sure that he is a messenger totally dedicated to G-d, that he has no ulterior motives, and that his only wish is to pass on G-d's word. Just like an angel, whose only agenda is G-d's agenda. In chinuch, are our mentors there for the sake of chinuch, or is there prime concern keeping a job, to control others, or a need for honor and respect? Do we, as parents, care about the modesty of our daughters with their best interest in mind, or because we are afraid about the family image? Do we stay frum because we have become comfortable doing so, or because we love and fear G-d and want to serve Him?

This political caring is Esav’s way.

When Yaakov was coming home, after 34 years of missing out on the mitzvah of Kibud Av Va-em, he planned how to deal with Esav. Esav now lived in the Land of Seir, in the Field of Edom. Yaakov knew that Esav still harbored hatred in his heart, because the names that Esav gave the places where he lived, showed that he had not forgotten the episode of the Berachot. Se-ir means hair. Esav was known as איש שעיר, a person with a hairy body, and Yaakov’s mother Rivka, placed goat skins on his arms and neck to trick his father into thinking that he was the hairy son Esav. He called his field Edom, Red, to remember forever the red lentils that Yaakov used to buy the rights of the firstborn son from him.

R Yonasan Eibeshits comments that we know that Esav's behavior was the epitome of Kibud Av Va-



em. When he would serve his father, he would don royal clothing. He would say, "It does not accord honor to my father, if I serve him with any other clothes."(BR 65, 16) If so, why did Esav leave his father, in his father's old age, when his father was blind, and move to Edom, Seir ? Why was Esav in Edom, not home taking care of his father Yitzchak? He answers that it was because Esav saw that Yaakov left Eretz Yisrael and married two sisters, Even though marrying two sisters is forbidden by the Torah; but outside of Eretz Yisrael, before the Torah was given, the forefathers did not keep certain parts of the Torah. So Esav decided to leave Eretz Yisrael, so he could sin as much as his heart desired, without looking bad in his father's eyes.

R Shlomo Levenstien, in his brilliant sefer, Umatok Ha-or, answers in a different way. Esav only respected his father for the sake of getting the Berachot from him. Esav was so good at this political Kibud Av Va-em that he reached the highest level of Kibud Av Va-em while putting on his show! Once the Berachot had been given to Yaakov, Esav left his father.

But this is not the Jewish way. Yaakov was the exact opposite: he was the epitome of the trait of Tiferet, congruent, consistent in his behavior, always honoring his parents. תתן אמת ליעקב. Even after Yaakov had four wives, twelve Tribes and considerable wealth, and he needed nothing more from his father, he came home to perform the mitzvah of Kibud Av Va-em. Until today, we do not eat the Gid Hanasheh, the sciatic nerve, to remind the Jewish People for all generations, that our ancestors, the Twelve Tribes, did not join their father Yaakov when he went back to get the small jugs, which resulted in Yaakov fighting the angel alone, and having the Gid Hanasheh knocked out of place. (See Chizkuni) To always remember that the Tribes did not care for their father enough, when he needed them.

The Jewish way is to care for our parents, our spouses, our children, the people in our lives, even when we don't feel that we "need" them. To show them we care for them, even when it costs us money, time and effort.

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