

ourselves from resentment/entitlement. If I'd be able to uproot only one thing from my having been brought up in America, it is the feeling of entitlement that infiltrated into my mind/heart/psyche from Western culture. And if there is one thing that I want to preserve from my American upbringing, it is that *other people are* entitled to respect, dignity, space, and their spot on line...

So, what is the solution? How do we undo entitlement, before it undoes us? Judaism, of course, has the ancient and eternal solution. An emotional/psychological exercise, three times a day. You see, not only do we learn to pray three times a day from our Patriarchs, we also learn *how* to pray from our Patriarchs. According to Rabbenu Bachye, it is appropriate, befitting, and correct that a person meditate, while praying, on his total dependency on G-d, and how G-d is the Master to whom he is a servant. This is learnt from Yaakov's prayer, קָטַנְתִּי מִכָּל הַהֶסְדִּים: Only after Ya'akov's confession of his utter dependence upon G-d, does he ask Him to be saved from his brother Esav. **ONLY AFTER THIS MEDITATION CAN WE OFFER A REQUEST!** So many people complain that G-d has not answered their prayers. But real prayer is changing yourself, undoing all of your supposed entitlement. (Sefer Halkrim 4;18)

The Rabbenu Bachye continues. Even in times of plenty, to meditate on the times we realized how we were totally dependent on G-d, as Yaakov said, that he remembers clearly how he started off at the age of 77, with nothing more than his walking staff. Everything was taken by his nephew and student, Elifaz, son of Esav, in order to spare his life.(Nedarim 64 ; Rashi 29;11) As one of the wealthy first generation Syrian American Jews told me, "They used to call me Banana Boat (a derogatory term for Syrian immigrants and foreigners- Banana is a term for an Asian person living in a Western country, e.g., an Asian American). Now they call me Luxury Liner! But I will never forget that I was once a Banana Boat!"

In the world of American psychology, undoing entitlement is to say that I am not *more* entitled than the other. Here are some signs of entitlement psychologists look for... 1. You expect the same

rules that apply to others shouldn't apply to you. For example, other people might need to start at the bottom and work their way up, but you shouldn't have to. 2. You feel massively put upon when other people ask you for small favors, but expect that when you ask people for favors, it requires no big effort, on their part. 3. You expect other people to be more interested in you and what's on your agenda than you're interested in them and what's on their agenda. You see your own interests as more interesting than other people's, and see your goals/dreams as more valid or important than theirs. 4. You disregard rules that are intended for everyone's comfort. For example, you ignore signs to "please not put your feet on the chairs in public places". 5. You use programs to download music rather than pay for it. Or, you benefit from free services, shiurim, content, etc., on public platforms all the time, but never donate during donation drives. 6. You inconvenience others, without thinking. For example, you cancel appointments or reservations repeatedly. Or, you make plans with friends and then cancel without considering that your friend may have organized other plans specially to accommodate you. Or, you run into a store 1 minute before closing, without thinking about the fact you'll be delaying the shop assistant from getting home on time. You think "it's only 5 minutes", without considering that the assistant may have somewhere they need to be. 7. You think it's OK to upset or offend other people. 8. You cheat in environments that are based on reciprocity. For example, you use all the gemachs you can, but you don't spend the same amount of time trying to give back...9. When working in groups, you think you should be the leader or get the most credit. And you don't recognize the contributions of others or the balance of the team. (adapted from Psychology Today – Dr. Alice Boyes)

But the real solution, the only solution is to think out of your box. Not only we are not more entitled than others, but we are not entitled at all! To recognize that whatever we have, even our ability to pray, is a gift, gratis, from Hashem. As we remind ourselves before each prayer, אֲדַבֵּר וְשִׁפְתַי תִּפְתָּח, אֶפְתֹּחַ וְאֵי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ: *My Master! Open my lips, and my mouth will say Your prayers!* Without You G-d, I can't even open my lips to praise You!

Of course, it is much easier to say this with our mouths than to say this with our hearts. But we can't afford entitlement beliefs. Entitlement is from the worst traits one can be suffering from. The antonym of entitlement is gratitude - people who feel entitled do not feel grateful. And people who

are not grateful are miserable people. And people who are miserable people become bad people.

If only we could meditate in our hearts on what we say with our lips, our social problems would be solved. We would be happier and better people. And all of our prayers would be answered.

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*, שביעית). 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 Halkrim 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 Yaffeh, 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 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.

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