

Behold! I shall rain down for you food from Heaven... so that I can test them, whether they will follow My teaching or not. (16:4)

Heavenly bread, or sustenance from Heaven, was to be the test that determined the faith and trust of the Jew. Would he listen by observing *Shabbos*, trusting that the amount of food necessary to feed his family would arrive in a timely manner? Would he follow Hashem even if, at the end of the day, he had no food available for the next day? Last, would he now devote all his free time to matters of the spirit – Torah study and *mitzvah* observance? The test continues to this very day. Some individuals contend that they trust in Hashem; He provides for their needs. All is good. The *Maggid, zl, m'Kelm*, counters that these people are deficient in their *bitachon*, trust in Hashem, not because they are malicious, but because they simply lack the concept of *bitachon*. Trust in Hashem means: unequivocal trust in only Hashem. In other words, explains the *Maggid*, one should not say that he is, *Baruch Hashem*, doing well financially because his business is successful, his investments are doing quite well – and, also, Hashem has been good to him.

He attributes his success and financial well-being to himself – and also to Hashem. If he trusts so much in Hashem, why does he expend so much toil in his business? He should do what he must, because, after all, one must be *mishtadel*, endeavor, but he can achieve this level with minimal work. His over-exertion is largely due to a lack of *bitachon*. He “talks the talk,” but is unwilling to “walk the walk.” It is no different concerning *tzedakah*, charitable endeavors, and *limud HaTorah*. On the one hand, he is to assist those in need because it is a *mitzvah*. On the other hand, he has just so much in available funds. If he contributes, he will deplete his account. Likewise, he knows that learning is a Heavenly imperative upon which the life of a Jew is predicated. He is also acutely aware that, when he is learning, he cannot be active in his business. How will he provide for his family? This is not *bitachon*.

Since *parnassah*, livelihood, is *min ha'Shomayim*, Heaven-sent, it is incumbent upon us to lift our eyes Heavenward and plead. Nothing is achieved; nothing is granted, unless one takes the prayer initiative. The *Mabit, zl*, comments: “We have heard of a blind man that was cured and could now see; a mute person who began to speak. We have never seen a *shoteh*, imbecile, however, who became normal cognitively. This is because the *shoteh* thinks he is normal. (On the contrary, he thinks everyone else is crazy.) Since he is “normal,” what reason does he have to pray? Without prayer, nothing is achieved.” We must do our part, and Hashem will respond.

Whenever someone came to the saintly *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, for a blessing, he would reply, “Go directly to the Source of blessing: Hashem.” A young *avreich*, recently married scholar, who was facing severe economic hardship, came to the *Chafetz Chaim* and said, “My wife sent me to the *Rav* to ask for a blessing for *parnassah*.” The *Chafetz Chaim* smiled, “A poor man sent another poor man to a third poor man to intercede on his behalf. Go directly to the *Ribono Shel Olam* and ask Him to help.”

The *Admor, Horav Yochanan, zl, m'Rachmenstrivka*, had a large following of *chassidim*. These were successful men who were blessed with great material bounty. Conversely, the following of his brother, the *Admor of Horav David, zl, m'Tolna*, was not as large, and, for the most part, it was comprised of *chassidim*, many of whom lived in abject poverty. The *Tolna* explained the reason for this disparity: "My brother has a large following. As a result, one must wait to get in to petition his blessing. Even when a *chassid* finally enters his room, he is only permitted to stay for a minute. Therefore, when a *chassid* leaves, he feels that he has waited hours just to see the *Rebbe* for a minute. He perceives that he has not even been able to express his problems adequately. Thus, when he leaves, he says to himself, "I have no one to rely on other than my Father in Heaven. He then goes home and davens to Hashem – Who listens to him. I have a much smaller following, which allows my *chassidim* to spend time with me, discussing all their challenges. When I give my blessing, they mistakenly think that it is sufficient. Thus, they do not pray to Hashem. Without prayer, the blessings I give have no efficacy. The supplicant must personally plead his case to the Almighty.