

Rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live... That it was He (Hashem) who gives you the strength to make wealth. (8:3,18)

The Torah reiterates numerous times (of which the above *pesukim* are a mere sample) that everything – large or small – comes from Hashem. Man endeavors, but Hashem decides the end result. The first step toward living with faith and trust in the Almighty is acknowledging that He is the only reality. Everything else is a façade. The department of education oversaw a county which had, among its schools, a private yeshivah high school. The superintendent had serious issues with the school's general studies program, or lack thereof. In order to receive a federal subsidy, the school was required to comply with the federally mandated curriculum or have a legitimate excuse for not doing so. The *Rosh Yeshivah* met with the superintendent to discuss the grievances against the *yeshivah*.

"Rabbi, explain to me why you refuse to follow the standards set forth by our department? How is your mode of education different from ours?" The *Rosh Yeshivah* explained how our approach to education differs from theirs: "Let me give you an example. Our approach to mathematics is different. For instance, with what number do you begin to count?"

"We count zero, one, two, three, etc." was the superintendent's reply. "See, right from the very onset, we are different. You begin your count with zero; we begin with one. There is only 'one' Hashem, Whom we include in any mathematical calculation – or in anything, for that matter. Without Hashem, we have nothing to count."

This is how a Jew should live his life: knowing, acknowledging at every phase of his life's endeavor that, without Hashem, he has nothing. A father who had just married off his daughter to a fine *ben Torah* rose up at the last *sheva brachos* to address the guests. This was unusual, because, at the prior *simchos*, he had made it a point not to speak. When he stood up and walked to the lectern, a hush went through the crowd.

"My friends, I would like you to know that I have merited to marry off seven daughters, and I declare unequivocally that, at no point, did I receive help from Hashem." The quiet was heavy. To have made such a statement he was either unhinged or an apostate. To deny Hashem's assistance in miraculously marrying off seven daughters without troubles is ludicrous. The *chassan* was shocked; his father could not believe what he had just heard. They all stared at the speaker in disbelief, until he continued his speech.

"Allow me to qualify my earlier statement. At no time did Hashem help me, because He did it all. He provided me with everything: fine *bnei Torah*, the funds to marry off my daughters, homes for each of them. I can truly state that it was all Hashem. I had absolutely nothing to do with these *shidduchim*."

People ask: “*Ribono Shel Olam*, would it not be better if we did not have adversities of all sorts plaguing our lives? Do we need illnesses, economic struggles, trouble marrying off our children, couples waiting longingly for a child? Is it really necessary that so many should experience various hardships: physical, emotional and even spiritual?” The saintly *Sefas Emes* addresses this question and offers a powerful insight: “The Torah (*Devarim* 6:13) says, *Es Elokecha tira*, ‘Hashem your G-d, shall you fear.’ What is the definition of fear? We find the mitzvah to fear one’s parents. *Chazal* (*Kiddushin* 31a) define fear as, *Lo yeishav bim’komo*, ‘Do not sit in his place; do not stand in his place.’ Likewise, fear of Hashem means not to ‘sit’ in His place and attempt to direct the world. What right does a puny mortal – with a limited perspective and knowledge of past, present and future – have to sit in judgment and make a decision that only Hashem, in His Infinite wisdom, could make?”

Horav Michel Feinstein’s daughter suffered from asthma. As such, the family had no shortage of inhalers and breathing assistive devices in their home. One day, she had a terrible asthma attack. The family immediately searched throughout the house for an inhaler to relieve her distress. They found none. By the time the ambulance arrived, it was too late to save her life. A little while later, they discovered five inhalers under her bed! The family was grief-stricken over her tragic, untimely passing and over the irony that the devices that could have saved her life were right there in front of them.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, visited the family to be *menachem avel*, comfort, them somehow. When he heard them reiterating how they could, and should have saved her, he said the following. “I heard a *shmuess*, ethical discourse, from the saintly *Mashgiach* of Yeshivas Lomza who addressed the seeming contradiction between our belief that Hashem ‘creates and guides all creatures and that He alone made, makes and will make everything’ (*Ani Maamin*) and the imperative that we be *mishtadel*, endeavor, to do all that we can to realize our goals. If it is Hashem Who does it all, why bother with *hishtadlus*?”

The *Mashgiach* explained that all *hishtadlus* applies to the future. It has absolutely nothing to do with what has already passed. Concerning the past, we have only one verity to which we should adhere and which should guide us: “Hashem Alone made, makes and will make everything.” One who thinks that had he acted differently, the result would have been altered renders a statement that borders on *kefirah*, heresy! If one did not act in a certain manner or perform a specific *hishtadlus*, it is an indication that the result could not have been different. Hashem runs the world. We are spectators who should do whatever we can to participate. In hindsight, however, when we see what we think might have been different had we acted differently, we are wrong.

One must know how and when to be *mishtadel*. How often do we think that, if we endeavor one way, the result for which we hope will materialize, when, in fact, it is specifically the *hishtadlus* that we thought would not benefit us which does. *Rav Chananiah Tzolek* would attend to *Horav Elazar M. Shach’s* needs. The *Rosh Yeshivah* was ill and had been blessed with extraordinary longevity, which required that someone attend to him. *Rav Tzolek* would go up to the *Rosh Yeshivah’s*

apartment daily to see to it that all was in order and that the *Rosh Yeshivah* was well. It happened that Eizer MiTzion (Israeli health support organization offering a wide-range of medical and social support services for *Eretz Yisrael's* ill, disabled and elderly) was low on funds, and *Rav Tzolek* was delegated to fly to America to fundraise to cover the deficit. Ezer MiTzion's work saves lives, but, without the generosity of others, its work would be severely curtailed. *Rav Tzolek* went to *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, zl*, prior to leaving to receive his blessing.

Rav Chaim asked, "How can you go? Who will attend to *Rav Shach*?" "I asked a trusted friend to replace me while I am away," he replied. "The responsibility of Eizer MiTzion rests squarely on my shoulders. We require \$80,000 to continue. I must at least make my *hishtadlus* and attempt to raise this sum," he replied.

Rav Chaim countered, "Your *hishtadlus* on behalf of Eizer MiTzion is to go up to *Rav Shach's* apartment and attend to his needs – as you do daily. This is the extent of your *hishtadlus*."

Incidentally, two weeks later, *Rav Tzolek* received a notice from the bank that an anonymous donor had deposited \$80,000 in the account. Until this day, the identity of this donor has not been revealed.