#  *B”H*

**Is Hashem Withholding Wages?**

**By Rabbi Nissim Lagziel**

*A poverty-stricken Jew turned to G-d and cried out with a plea from the depths of his heart: “Master of the Universe, You are all-powerful and unconstrained. To You, a thousand years is considered as one day. To You, millions of dollars are just small change!”*

*“Would you spare me a penny or two, please?”*

*“No problem,” Hashem replied to him. “Your request has been accepted. You will receive the money – tomorrow…”*

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This week’s Torah portion, **Parshas** **Ki Seitzei**, deals with a wide variety of mitzvos. Practically speaking, this is the parsha with the most mitzvos in the Torah. Seventy-four (!) in number, positive and negative commandments, mitzvos between man and G-d, mitzvos between man and his fellow man – *chukim*, *eidos*, and *mishpatim*. Out of all these mitzvos, there is one prominent mitzvah likely to interest us a great deal!

A principle in the teachings of Chassidus is the fact that there is no mitzvah, even the most seemingly inconsequential, that G-d Himself doesn’t fulfill. “What He does, he tells Israel to observe and do, as is said, ‘He tells His words to Yaakov, His statutes and His judgments to Yisroel’” (Shemos Rabba 30:6). If G-d commanded us to keep Shabbos, he does so as well, and if he wants us to put on tefillin, then he too puts them on…

But it seems that there is one mitzvah that apparently Hashem does not fulfill…

**Is Hashem Withholding Wages?**

The Torah instructs every employer that he pay his workers on time – “You shall give him his wage on his day.” The employer has a halachic obligation to pay a worker immediately upon completion of the job he was hired to do – that same day, whereas G-d has been waiting with his payment of the Jewish People’s wages far longer than a day…

Our Sages, of righteous memory, say on the passuk (Devarim 7:11) *“Keep ... the commandments that I command you to do them this day,”* that “this day” refers to this world, while “tomorrow” means the World to Come. Thus, the message conveyed by the passuk is that the fulfillment of the mitzvos, the service of the Jewish People *(“to do them”*) is meant to be done *“this day,”* in *this* world. However, we will only receive the payment for our wages “tomorrow” – in the Future to Come, as is explained in Pirkei Avos (2:16): “And know, that the reward of the righteous is in the World to Come.”

Is it possible that G-d doesn’t fulfill the Torah commandment of “You shall give him his wage on his day”?

**What is the Reward?**

Before we talk about *when* we get paid, let’s explain *what* we get paid.

What are the “wages” we are waiting for? What is the true “reward” that the Creator of Heaven and Earth has promised, “to those who love Him and keep His commandments”?

The “reward” we are talking about is not a physical “reward” – bread to eat, clothes to wear, and enough money to buy a sports car and a vacation in the Caribbean. To be clear, the Torah *does* promise tremendous physical prosperity to those who serve G-d and fulfill His Torah, [[1]](#footnote-0) which was in fact given to man “this day” – in *this* world.

**Improved Working Conditions**

However, this is not the main reward. The Rambam, in his golden language, describes it as follows

“We are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill it with joy and good spirit and meditate on its wisdom at all times, [G-d] will remove all the obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it, for example, sickness, war, famine, and the like. Similarly, He will grant us all the good which will reinforce our performance of the Torah, such as plenty, peace, an abundance of silver and gold.” (Hilchos Teshuva 9:1):

According to Rambam, the abundance of material good is not defined as “reward,” but as an “improvement of working conditions.” Just as an employer is supposed to make certain that his workers have comfortable working conditions, so too, the Alm-ghty grants us material plenty so that we can serve Him joyfully and with peace of mind. The reward we refer to here, the true reward for fulfilling G-d’s commandments, is a mysterious, hidden, and spiritual reward for which our souls have endured much.

**Gan Eden or Geulah?**

Among the great Torah giants, there is a difference of opinion regarding the long-awaited spiritual reward. According to Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva, Commentary on the Mishnah, *et-al*), the main reward is *“Gan Eden”* – the time when the soul departs the body and rises heavenward to delight in G-d’s Infinite Wisdom. This is a very different sense of pleasure, a supernal delight that no words can describe adequately – “No eye had ever seen a G-d besides You; perform for he who hoped for Him.”

According to this approach, we can explain that Hashem does pay on time, on that same day. For a day laborer, the employer must pay before the day is out. However, in the event of hiring someone to work for a longer period of time (a week, a month, a year, etc.), the Halacha is that he receives his wages at the end of the time for which he was hired when he is released from his obligation to his supervisor.

The Jewish People are obligated to serve G-d all the days of their lives. The period of our “wage agreement,” practically speaking, doesn’t end until after a hundred and twenty years, at the time of a person’s physical demise, and then the soul immediately receives its reward – in Gan Eden!

In contrast, Chassidus rules according to the Ramban (at the end of *Sha’ar HaG’mul*), who reasons that in the final analysis, “Gan Eden” is a stopover for the soul, a place to stop and refresh itself before it reaches its true and final destination – at *Techiyas Hameisim*. Only then, when the soul is enclothed in a physical body, do we receive our “paycheck” from work. If this indeed is the case, then a long time has passed between finishing our job and receiving our just “reward.” Can this be possible?

**A Contractual Agreement**

As always, Chassidus provides us with a much more significant and wider perspective about the connection between us and the “employer” – the Hashem. The Jewish People are not your average garden variety of “hired workers,” private individuals who receive work on a daily, weekly, monthly, or even yearly basis. The Jewish People are “contractors,” who as a rule have accepted an assignment to bring the *Shechina* down into this world and prepare “a dwelling place in the lower realms” for the Creator.

The halacha is that the *“kablan”* (contractor) does not receive a daily, weekly, or monthly wage, rather he is paid *at the end* of the job after the work has been completed. *Avodas Hashem* is not a private “wage agreement” concluded after a hundred and twenty years, rather it’s part of one large “contractual agreement,” including the work of the entire Jewish People throughout all generations! G-d placed the world in the hands of Am Yisrael for them to make it a “dwelling place” for Him.

In light of the above, we find that the reward given in the World to Come, after the coming of Moshiach and *Techiyas Hameisim*, is “on *his* day” – a general payment to the entire Jewish People as one, immediately after the completion of the contracted work of making the world “a dwelling place” for G-d.

**A Partnership**

Furthermore, every member of the Jewish People is a “partner” with G-d in the Creation. We are an integral part of the “investor” and the “initiator.” Therefore, we essentially don’t receive a reward, rather we take a generous “cut” from the sizable and endless profits earned as a result of our (and Hashem’s) “investment” in the world!

As a true partner, who receives his portion only at the very end, when the investment has reached its maximum level, so too with us. We don’t (just) want a few pennies of dividends; we want the great and long-awaited Divine revelation – at the True and Complete Redemption!

So, let’s take an active part as a contractor and a partner, and not just as a junior employee, in bringing the Redemption and hastening the coming of Moshiach by increasing in Torah, prayer, and acts of kindness (especially during the current month of Elul).

**To Conclude with A Story**

We’ll conclude with a story on partnerships, while on the topic:

Once during Sunday dollars distribution, a Jew came to the Rebbe with a request:

“Rebbe, I want to make you a partner in my business as a token of my appreciation for all your work on behalf of the Jewish People. I would like to present you with the keys to the business as a gift, as proof that my offer is a serious one.”

This Jew, while he was a very warmhearted person with tremendous appreciation for the Rebbe and his shluchim, he still didn’t observe Torah and mitzvos, and his store was even open on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

The Rebbe smiled and replied, “If I’m your business partner, and I have the keys…, I’m prepared to give you the keys back from Sunday until Friday. However, on Shabbos and Yom Tov, the keys (the store and the business) are mine!”

From that day forward, this Jew began to observe the Shabbos day and keep it holy.

Good Shabbos!

**Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 29, third sicha, Parshas Ki Seitzei.**

1. If you follow My statutes, etc. - I will give your rains in their time” (Vayikra 26:3-4, beginning of Parshas Bechukosai). “And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments - I will give the rain of your land at its time, etc.” (Devarim 11:13-14). [↑](#footnote-ref-0)