

חובות הלבבות • שער יחוד המעשה • פרק חמישי (91-

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Sentence by Sentence • Punctuated Hebrew with Translation and Notes • Navy & Gold Edition

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In this chapter, the Chovos HaLevavos exposes the deep-seated cunning of the yetzer hara, who seeks to trap a Yid in the subtle sin of self-worship and hidden association. If the yetzer cannot succeed there, he shifts his tactics to confuse the neshama with the deep philosophical tension between Hashem's decree and human free will, using this confusion to breed laziness in avodas Hashem while encouraging frantic, self-reliant effort in worldly matters.

We are also warned here against the yetzer's attempts to instill spiritual pride and arrogance. The yetzer will try to convince a person that he has reached the loftiest levels of the tzaddikim, urging him to look down upon and publicly shame his fellow Jews under the guise of holy rebuke.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

ואם תשמע אליו ותסמוך על דבריו, יפילך במין ממניג השתוף הנסתר, והוא ששמת נעבדך לנפשה, ממה שאתה משתדל במה שתמשך בו הנאת עצמך ושמחתה, ותדחה בו מעליה הדאגות והיגונות.

And if you listen to him and rely on his words, he will topple you into a form of hidden association—which is that you have made your own self the object of your worship, by exerting yourself only in that which brings you personal pleasure and joy, and through which you ward off worries and sorrows.

NOTE The term "hidden association" (shittuf nistar) refers to a subtle form of idolatry where a person outwardly serves Hashem but is actually motivated entirely by self-interest and personal gratification.

ולוא תקנותה לזה, היית כופר בטובות האלהים המתמידות עליה, ולא היית מחייב את עצמך עבודה עליהם, עם שאינך רואה שהעבודה תאות לו לגדלתו ועצם יכלתו ואותות חכמתו.

Were it not for your hope for these personal benefits, you would deny the constant favors that Hashem bestows upon you, and you would not obligate yourself to serve Him because of them; moreover, you fail to see that serving Him is fitting solely because of His greatness, His infinite power, and the signs of His wisdom.

ובזה אמרו רז"ל: "אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס, אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס."

And regarding this, our Sages of blessed memory said: "Do not be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward."

וכאשר יתיאש ממה מן הפנים האלה אשר זכרנו, ישליכה בים הספקות מעניגי ההכרח והצדק.

When the yetzer hara despairs of enticing you through these ways we have mentioned, he will hurl you into a sea of doubts regarding the matters of divine decree and free will.

NOTE The terms "necessity and justice" (hechrech ve-tzedek) refer to the classic theological tension between Hashem's absolute decree (predestination) and His justice in rewarding or punishing us (which requires free will).

וכאשר יראה אותך מתעלם במעשי העבודה ונוטה אל דרך העברות, ישתדל לברר אצלך ענין ההכרח בטענות חזקות מן הכתוב ומן הקבלה, כדי להרחיב האמת לאות עליה, ויאמר לך:

When he sees you becoming lax in your divine service and leaning toward the path of sin, he will try to prove to you the concept of divine decree with powerful arguments from Scripture and Tradition, in order to provide you with ample excuses, and he will say to you:

"אלו היה רוצה הבורא שתעבדוהו, היה מכריחה בזה ומזרו אותך עליו, ולא היה אלא מה שהוא גוזר; וכי תוכל לעמד כנגד גזרותיו ולנצח דיניו? אין לך לעשות אלא מה שנגזר לך לעשותו, כי ממשלת כל הדברים ביד הבורא יתעלה, כמ"ש: 'אנכי ה' עשה כל'".

"If the Creator wanted you to serve Him, He would have forced you to do so and made you zealous for it, and nothing can happen except what He decrees. Can you stand against His decrees or overcome His judgments? You can only do what has been decreed for you to do, for the dominion over all things is in the hand of the Creator, may He be exalted, as it is written: 'I am Hashem, Who makes all things.'"

ואם יראה אותך מתעסק במעשה מעניני העוה"ז ועסקיו, יאמר לך: "הזהר מן העצלה והרפיון, ואל תסמך על זולתך, כי הטוב והרע ביכולתך, והמעשה וההנחה בלחך.

But if he sees you engaged in worldly matters and business, he will tell you: "Beware of laziness and slackness, and do not rely on anyone else, for good and bad are within your power, and action or inaction are in your hands.

השתדל בלחך וטרח בכל יכלתך, תגיע אל מה שתתאוה מתענוגי העוה"ז; והזהר מסבת הפגעים הרעים בכל כחה, תמלט מהם, כמו שאמר החכם: 'צנים פחים בדרך עקש, שומר נפשו ירחק מהם', ואמר: 'אולת אדם תסלף דרכו וגו'', ואמר מלאכי: 'מיידכם היתה זאת'".

Exert yourself with your strength and toil with all your ability, and you will attain whatever you desire of the pleasures of this world; and guard yourself from harmful mishaps with all your might, and you will escape them, just as the wise man said: 'Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; he who guards his soul keeps far from them,' and he said: 'The foolishness of man perverts his way,' and Malachi said: 'This has been from your own hand.'

והוא מהפך הטענות, פעם בהכרח ובגזרה, ופעם בצדק ובבחירה, כפי מה שיאות לו לפתותך ולרפות ידיך.

Thus, the yetzer hara reverses his arguments—sometimes arguing for absolute decree and necessity, and other times for justice and free will—whichever suits his purpose to entice you and weaken your hands.

ואם תיקח ותתן אל לבך מה שאמרו רז"ל: "הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים", תשתדל בעניני התורה השתדלות מי שנתברר לו כי במעשיו יהיה לו גמול וענש, כמ"ש: 'כי פעל אדם ישלם לו, וכארח איש ימצאנו'.

But if you wake up and take to heart what our Sages of blessed memory said, "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven," you will exert yourself in Torah matters with the diligence of one who clearly understands that his reward and punishment depend on his own actions, as it is written: "For He repays a man according to his work, and brings upon him according to his ways."

וְתִתְנֶהג בְּעֵינַי הָעוֹלָם מִנְהַג מִי שֶׁנִּתְבָּרַר לוֹ כִּי קָשָׁר כָּל תְּנוּעוֹתָיו וְהִתְהַפְּכוֹת עֵינָיו בְּגִזְרַת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְעַלֶּה, וְהוּא בּוֹטֵחַ עָלָיו בְּכָל־ם, וּמִשְׁלִיךְ יְהוּבֵהוּ עַל ה', כִּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר: 'הַשִּׁלָּה עַל ה' יְהוּבָה'.

And you will conduct yourself in worldly matters like one who clearly understands that the outcome of all his movements and the turn of his affairs are bound by the decree of the Creator, may He be exalted, placing his trust in Him for all of them and casting his burden upon Hashem, as it is said: "Cast your burden upon Hashem."

וְכֹאֲשֶׁר יִתְיַאֵשׁ מִפְּתוּתָהּ מִהַפְּנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר זָכְרָנוּ, יִשְׁתַּדֵּל בְּזֶה מִצַּד אַחֵר וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ: "אֲמַנָם מָה שֶׁאַתָּה חָפֵץ לְמַלֵּא מַעֲבֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא וְיִחּוּדָהּ לְשִׁמּוֹ, תּוּכַל עַל זֶה לְאַחֵר זְמַן בְּעֵתִיד.

When he despairs of enticing you through these ways we have mentioned, he will try from another angle and say to you: "Indeed, that which you desire to fulfill of the Creator's service and dedicating it purely to His Name, you can do at a later time in the future.

גַּם אִם יִשְׁאַר לָהּ יוֹם אֶחָד מִחַיָּיהָ, וְאַתָּה תִּשְׁלִים עֲבֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא כִּמוֹ שֶׁרְאִוִי יוֹם אֶחָד לִפְנֵי מִיתָתָהּ, כִּכָּר זְכִיתָ אֶצְלוֹ לְגִמּוּל מִתְמִיד וּלְהַצֵּלָה מֵעֶנֶשׁ; וְאַתָּה הֲלֹא יָדַעְתָּ אִפְּנֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְשֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִקְבֹּלָהּ מִמֶּה, אִם אַךְ תַּעֲבֹדֵנוּ בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם, כִּמוֹ שֶׁרְאִוִי וְדְרוּשׁ".

Even if only one day remains of your life, and you complete the service of the Creator properly one day before your death, you will have already merited eternal reward with Him and salvation from punishment; and do you not know the ways of teshuvah, and that the Creator will accept it from you, if you only serve Him with a perfect heart, as is proper and required?"

אָבֵל אַתָּה שׁוֹב אֶל טַעֲנָתָהּ הַנִּכּוֹנָה, וְהֵשֵׁב עָלָיו בְּזֶה וְתֹאמַר לוֹ: "וְאֵיךְ אֲמַתִּין עַד יוֹם אֶחָד לִפְנֵי מוֹתִי, וְאֲנִי לֹא אֵדַע יוֹם מוֹתִי?"

But you must return to your correct argument, and answer him on this, saying to him: "And how can I wait until one day before my death, when I do not know the day of my death?"

הֲלֹא אֶהְיֶה כְּאוֹתוֹ הָעֶבֶד, שֶׁהָאֱמִין בְּמַלְכוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא יִסִּירָהוּ מִלִּפְנֵיו כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיו, וְיִתֵּר לְבוֹ לְרִדְף אַחֲרָי תַּעֲנוּגוֹת הָעוֹלָם, וַיִּשְׁתַּדֵּל לְהַגִּיעַ אֵלֵיהֶם עַד שֶׁעֲבֹדָתוֹ לְמַלְכוֹ נַעֲשְׂתָה עָלָיו לְטָרַח.

Would I not be like that servant who trusted that his king would not remove him from his presence all the days of his life, so his heart went astray to pursue the pleasures of the world, and he exerted himself to attain them until serving his king became a burden to him?

וְהִנֵּה נִקְרָא פְּתָאוֹם לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ לָתֵת לוֹ דִּין וְחִשְׁבוֹן עַל עֲבֹדָתוֹ, וְלֹא הָיוּ לוֹ תְּשׁוּבוֹת וְאַמְתָּלוֹת, וְנִתְחַיֵּב גְּרוּשׁ מֵעֲבֹדַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמִכָּל עֲרֵי מַלְכוּתוֹ, וַיֵּצֵא מִלִּפְנֵיו עֲנִי וְנִפְשׁוֹ אֲבֵלָה, שֶׁלֹּא רָכַשׁ לוֹ שׁוֹם דָּבָר בְּכָל זְמַן עֲבֹדָתוֹ לְמַלְכוֹ, בְּזְמַן שֶׁהָיָה יָכוֹל לַעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת.

And behold, he was suddenly called before the king to give an accounting of his service, and he had no answers or excuses; so he was sentenced to banishment from the king's service and from all the cities of his kingdom, and he left his presence impoverished and mourning in soul, having acquired nothing during all the time of his service to his king, when he had been able to do so.

וְכֵן נִשְׁאַר כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיו עֲנִי וְאַבְיוֹן, נֶאֱנָח וְדוּוִי, מִתְאַבֵּל וְנִתְעַב עַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ".

And so he remained all the days of his life poor and destitute, sighing and suffering, mourning and despised until the day of his death."

וְכֹאֲשֶׁר יִתְיַאֵשׁ הַיֵּצֵר מִפְּתוּתָהּ מִהַפְּנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר זָכְרָנוּ, מִשְׁתַּדֵּל בְּזֶה מִצַּד הַגָּאוּת וְהַגָּאוֹן וּמַעוֹט הָעֲנָוָה.

And when the yetzer hara despairs of enticing you through these ways we have mentioned, he will try to do so through pride, arrogance, and a lack of humility.

וַיֹּאמֶר: "כָּבֵד הִגַּעְתָּ אֶל הַמַּעֲלֹת הַגְּדֹלֹת שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ אֵלֶיָּהֶן הַחַסִּידִים וְהַצְדִּיקִים בְּאַמוּנָתָם לְבָבָהּ וּבְמַעֲשֵׂיהָ הַשְּׁלֵמִים בַּעֲבוּדַת הָאֱלֹהִים, וְאַתָּה יָחִיד בְּדוֹרְךָ וְאַחַד בְּאַנְשֵׁי זְמַנְךָ.

He will say: "You have already reached the lofty levels that the pious and the righteous attained, through the faithfulness of your heart and your perfect deeds in the service of Hashem, and you are unique in your generation and singular among the people of your time.

וְרָאוּי לָךְ לְהִרְאוֹת יְתִירוֹנְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּמֵאֹס אוֹתָם וּבְהַפְחִיתָם, וְתִזְכֹּר רְעוּתֵיהֶם וּתְפַרְסֶם רַע לְבָבָם, וְתַכְלִימֶם וְתוֹכִיחֶם עַל זֶה עַד שִׁיכְלְמוּ וְיָשׁוּבוּ אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים וְיִתְחַרְטּוּ עַל מָה שֶׁקִּדְּמוּ לָהֶם, וְתִתְנַהֵג בְּזֶה מְנַהֵג הַנְּבִיאִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב: 'אַתָּה בֶן אָדָם הִגַּד אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַבַּיִת וְיִכְלְמוּ מַעֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם'."

It is fitting for you to show your superiority over them by despising them and looking down on them; you should recall their faults, publicize the badness of their hearts, shame them, and rebuke them for it until they are humiliated and return to Hashem, regretting their past deeds, and in this you will be acting in the manner of the prophets, as it is written: 'You, son of man, describe the Temple to the House of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities.'"

וְאִם תִּשָּׁיב עָלָיו בְּזֵה וְתֹאמַר לוֹ: "אֵיךְ אֶמָּאֵס וְאֶכְלִים מִי שֶׁאֵינֶנִּי יוֹדֵעַ עֲנִינִי לְבָבוֹ וּמַצְפוּנוֹ לָאֱלֹהִים? וְאִם הוּא בְּנִרְאָה מְמֵנוּ נִמָּאֵס, אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁאֵין מַצְפוּנוֹ כְּנִרְאָהוּ.

But you must answer him on this and say to him: "How can I despise and shame someone whose inner heart and thoughts before Hashem I do not know? Even if he appears reprehensible on the outside, it is possible that his inner self is not like his outward appearance.

וְאִם הַנְּבִיאִים הִכְלִימוּ וְהוֹכִיחוּ בְּנֵי דוֹרָם, עָשׂוּ בְּרִשׁוֹת הַבּוֹרָא שֶׁהָיָה מְשַׁקִּיף עַל לְבָבָם וְרַע מַצְפוּנָם; אָבָל אֵין בְּכַח חֲכָמָתִי וְדַעְתִּי לְדַעַת מָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּלִבָּבוֹת וּמַצְפוּנֵיהֶם, וְשָׂמָּה מַצְפוֹן הַנִּמָּאֵס בְּעֵינֵי טוֹב מִגְּלוּיֵי הַרְבֵּה וְאֵינֶנִּי יוֹדֵעַ בוֹ, וְאוּלַּי מַצְפוּנוֹ טוֹב מִשְּׁלִי אֲצֵל הַבּוֹרָא.

If the prophets shamed and rebuked the people of their generation, they did so with the permission of the Creator, Who looked into their hearts and saw the badness of their inner thoughts; but it is not within the power of my wisdom and knowledge to know what is in hearts and minds, and perhaps the inner self of the one who is despised in my eyes is much better than his outward behavior, though I do not know it, and perhaps his inner self is better than mine in the eyes of the Creator.

וְאִם הוּא בְּנִרְאָהוּ רַע, אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁגֵּרַם לוֹ זֶה סְכָלוּתוֹ בְּמָה שֶׁהוּא חַיֵּב לַבּוֹרָא, וְיֵשׁ לוֹ טַעֲנָה יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי מִפְּנֵי יִתְרוֹן חֲכָמָתִי עַל חֲכָמָתוֹ עָלָיו, כִּי הַבּוֹרָא אֵינֶנּוּ תוֹבֵעַ הָאָדָם אֲלֵא כִּפִּי חֲכָמָתוֹ.

And even if his outward behavior is bad, it is possible that this was caused by his ignorance of what he owes to the Creator, and he has a better excuse than I do because of the superiority of my wisdom over his, for the Creator demands of a person only according to his level of wisdom.

וְאֵנִי יוֹתֵר רָאוּי שֶׁאֶהְיֶה נִמָּאֵס מִמֶּנּוּ מִפְּנֵי יִתְרוֹן קְצוּרִי בְּמָה שֶׁאֵנִי חַיֵּב בוֹ מַעֲבוּדַת הַבּוֹרָא עִם דַּעְתִּי אוֹתוֹ, עַל קְצוּרוֹ עִם סְכָלוּתוֹ בוֹ; וְהוּא מְמַרָּה אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים בְּסְכָלוּת וּבְשִׁגְגָה, וְאֵנִי מְמַרָּה אוֹתוֹ בְּדַעַת וּבְזָדוֹן.

Thus, I am more deserving of being despised than he is, because of my greater shortcoming in what I owe to the service of the Creator despite my knowledge of it, compared to his shortcoming which is due to his ignorance; for he rebels against Hashem out of ignorance and error, while I rebel against Him with knowledge and intent.

וְאִפְשָׁר שֶׁרָעָתוֹ נִרְאָה וְנִגְלָה וְטוֹבָתוֹ צְפוּנָה נִסְתָּרָה, וְאֲנִי בְּהִפּוֹךְ זֶה, וְהוּא רָאוי לְרַחֲמֵי הָאֵל וּכְפָרָתוֹ יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי.

And it is possible that his bad deeds are visible and revealed while his good deeds are hidden and concealed, whereas with me it is the opposite; thus, he is more worthy of Hashem's mercy and forgiveness than I am.

וְזִכּוֹת אַחַת מִמֶּנּוּ שׁוֹקֵלֶת זְכוּיּוֹת רַבּוֹת מִשְׁלִי, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵין מִשְׁקִיף עָלֶיהָ זולתי הבורא, וְאֵין מְשַׁבְּחִים אוֹתוֹ עָלֶיהָ וְלֹא יִכָּבֵד בְּעִבּוּרָהּ, וְאֲנִי בְּהִפּוֹךְ זֶה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִנָּרְאָה שְׁלִי הוּא טוֹב מִהִנָּרְאָה שְׁלוֹ.

And a single merit of his may outweigh many of my merits, because no one sees it except the Creator, and he is not praised for it nor honored because of it, whereas with me it is the opposite, because my outward appearance is better than his.

וְכֵן בְּשַׁעַר הָעֲבֵרוֹת, כִּי הָעֲבֵרָה הָאֶחָת מִמֶּנִּי שׁוֹקֵלֶת עֲבֵרוֹת רַבּוֹת מִשְׁלֹ, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁעֲבֵרָתִי מְכֻסָּה וְצְפוּנָה וְעֲבֵרָתוֹ נִרְאִית וּמְפָרְסָמָה.

And the same applies to the category of sins, for a single sin of mine outweighs many of his sins, because my sin is covered and hidden, while his sin is visible and publicized.

וּבִגְנוּת בְּנֵי אָדָם אוֹתוֹ עָלֶיהָ מִנְּכֵין לוֹ מַעֲנֵשׁוֹ, וְיִחְסֹר שְׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂי בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה מִפְּנֵי פְּרִסּוּמָם, וְיִשָּׂאֵר לוֹ שְׂכָר מַעֲשָׂיו בַּעוֹה"ב, וְיִחְסֹר עֲנָשׁוֹ עַל הָעֲבֵרָה בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁמִּגְנִין אוֹתוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם עָלֵיהֶם, וְיִשָּׂאֵר עָלַי עֲנָשׁ עֲבֵרוֹתַי לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

And through people's disparagement of him for his sin, his punishment is reduced, whereas the reward for my good deeds in this world is diminished because of their publicity; thus, the reward for his deeds remains intact for him in the World to Come, and his punishment for sin is reduced in this world because people disparage him for them, while the punishment for my sins remains upon me for the World to Come.

וְעוֹד, כְּשֶׁאֶטְרִיד לְבִי לִפְקֹד מוֹמֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם וּלְעֵין בְּמַדּוּתָם הָרָעוֹת, יִמְנַעֲנִי זֶה מֵעֵין בְּחֶסְרוֹנִי וּמַעַמְד עַל מוֹמֵי עַצְמִי, שֶׁהוּא יוֹתֵר צָרִיךְ לִי וְאֲנִי חָיֵב בּוֹ יוֹתֵר, כְּמוֹ הַחוּלָה אֲשֶׁר יִטְרִידוּ מְדוּהוֹ מִפְּקוּד מְדוּה בְּנֵי אָדָם וּרְפוּאָת עַצְמוֹ מִרְפוּאָת זולתו; אֲזִי יִשָּׁבֵר הַיֵּצֵר וְיִגָּה לְפָנָיִה.

Furthermore, if I occupy my heart with searching out the flaws of other people and examining their bad traits, this will prevent me from examining my own shortcomings and recognizing my own flaws, which is far more necessary for me and which I am more obligated to do—just like a sick person whose own illness distracts him from examining the illnesses of others, and whose own healing must come before the healing of anyone else; then the yetzer hara will be broken and defeated before you.

וְאִם לֹא יִגִּיעַךְ חֲצִי בְּמָה שֶׁזָּכְרָנוּ, יֵאָרֵב אוֹתָךְ בְּעֵתוֹת הַצִּלְחָתְךָ וּבִצָּר לָךְ.

And if his arrows do not reach you through what we have mentioned, he will lie in wait for you during your times of success and during your times of distress.

וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִהְיוּ עֲנִינֶיךָ הוֹלְכִים כְּרִצּוֹנָךְ, יֹאמֵר לָךְ: "זֶה פְּרִי הַשְׁתַּדְּלוּתְךָ וְתַחְבּוּלָתְךָ וְחִכְמָתְךָ, עַל כֵּן הַשְׁתַּדַּל בְּעֲנִינֵי עוֹלָמְךָ וְטִרַח בָּהֶם, יִתְמִיד לָךְ הָעֲנִין הַזֶּה וְתַעֲלֶה לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּנּוּ.

And when your affairs go according to your will, he will say to you: "This is the fruit of your own effort, your cleverness, and your wisdom; therefore, exert yourself in your worldly affairs and toil in them, and this success will continue for you and you will rise even higher.

וְקִבַּל הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּשִׂמְחָת וְהִתְנַעַם בָּהֶם, כִּי עוֹד מַעַט מִזְעָר וְיִקְרָא בְּשִׁמְךָ וְתַעֲנֶה אֶל מַחֲשַׁבֵּי הַקֶּבֶר,
מְקוֹם שֶׁאֵין חֲכָמָה וְלֹא תְנוּעָה וְלֹא הִנָּאָה וְלֹא צָעֵר."

Accept these days with joy and indulge yourself in them, for in just a little while you will be called by your name and you will answer from the darkness of the grave—a place where there is no wisdom, no movement, no pleasure, and no pain."

וַיֵּשִׁים רְאִיתוֹ עַל זֶה מָה שֶׁאָמַר הַחֲכָם: 'כָּל אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכַחַךְ עֲשֵׂה, כִּי אֵין מַעֲשֵׂה וְחֶשְׁבוֹן
וְדַעַת וְחֲכָמָה בְּשָׂאוֹל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הַלֵּךְ שָׁמָּה'.

And he will bring his proof for this from what the wise man said: 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your strength; for there is no work, nor reckoning, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you are going.'

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

To defeat these schemes, the author teaches us to apply the Sages' rule that "everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven." In spiritual matters, we must act with complete personal responsibility, knowing our reward and punishment depend on our choices, while in worldly matters, we must cast our cares upon Hashem and trust in His decree. Furthermore, we must counter spiritual pride by maintaining deep humility, realizing that others may be far more pardonable due to their ignorance, and that our own hidden shortcomings and greater knowledge make us more accountable before Hashem.

לְמַעֲשֵׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The yetzer hara is a master of disguise, changing his arguments to suit his agenda. When it comes to your spiritual growth, he will whisper that everything is predestined and out of your hands, encouraging laziness. Yet, when it comes to your material pursuits, he will tell you that everything depends solely on your own strength and effort, breeding anxiety and a lack of trust in Hashem.

To defeat this trap, you must reverse his formula. In your avodah, act with the absolute clarity that your spiritual choices are entirely up to you, demanding your full effort and responsibility. In your worldly affairs and parnassah, do your basic vessel-making, but cast your cares upon Hashem, knowing that the outcome is entirely in His hands.

Furthermore, beware of the trap of spiritual pride. If you find yourself looking down on another Yid, recognize it as the yetzer hara trying to ruin your mitzvos through arrogance. Remind yourself that you cannot see into another person's heart, and their inner devotion to Hashem may be far greater than your own.

Today, when faced with a worry about your livelihood or physical needs, consciously stop and say, "I am doing my small part, but the results are entirely up to Hashem." At the same time, when it comes to your set times for learning or davening, do not make excuses; take full ownership of your choice to serve Him.