

YOU TAKE THE FIRST STEP!

PARSHAS KI TETZEI

The **Torah** (Devarim 22:4) says, if you notice that the load on the back of your friend's animal has fallen, you should help your friend pick it back up. **Rashi**, quoting the **Talmud** (Bava Metzia 32A), explains that you are only obligated to help if your friend does the work, together with you. That is what the Torah is teaching us with the word "imo", *together with your friend*. What if the owner of the animal tells you, since it is your mitzvah to load the animal, he is not going to help? In that situation, you are not obligated to do the work (unless the owner is incapable of doing it due to age, etc...). You are only instructed to help if the owner does it with you.

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Sefer Chofetz Chaim on the Torah) extends this idea to all the mitzvos that we do. If we put in our effort to do a mitzvah, then Hashem will help us succeed. However, if we just ask Hashem for help but do nothing on our own, then Hashem will not help us. We must also put in our own effort!

The **Chofetz Chaim** illustrates his point with a parable:

Beryl was very poor and was in dire straits. He met Moshe on the street. Moshe was very rich and very charitable. Beryl asked Moshe to do him a favor and lend him 5 rubles. Beryl said that he had a business opportunity, and this loan could set him on his feet. Moshe graciously agreed and told Beryl to come to his house at 5 o'clock that afternoon. At that time, Moshe would loan Beryl the money. Moshe rushed his afternoon schedule to be home by 5 o'clock. He waited for Beryl, but Beryl did not come. Thinking that Beryl was unavoidably delayed, Moshe waited for him until 6 o'clock. Beryl still had not come.

The next afternoon, Beryl again met Moshe on the

"You should not see and ignore your friend's donkey or ox falling on the road. Rather, together with your friend, you should lift up the load." (Devarim 22:4)

street and asked him for a loan of 5 rubles. Moshe told him that he was willing to help, and he even waited for Beryl for an extra hour on the previous day. Beryl apologized and agreed to come that afternoon at 5 o'clock. Moshe rushed his schedule to be home promptly, but Beryl did not come. Moshe waited and waited, but Beryl still did not come. The next day, Beryl again met Moshe and asked him for a loan. Moshe got upset saying that that Beryl was insincere and probably did not need the money.

The **Chofetz Chaim** says, if we ask Hashem to help us refrain from speaking *loshon hara*, then we must also put in our own effort. That shows that our request is sincere. Then Hashem will help us because Hashem wants to help us! This is included in "imo", *together with your friend*. One who tries to "purify" himself and improve in any area, is helped by Hashem to succeed. The **Chofetz Chaim** also says that there are numerous places in our prayers that we ask Hashem to enlighten our eyes to understanding Torah. **Hashem is ready to help us!** However, we must also put in some effort.

by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

When we leave the synagogue immediately after praying, without learning, we are like Beryl in the parable. We are making a request but not showing Hashem that we are sincere about it. This scenario

occurs day after day. However, if we **do** show Hashem that we truly desire that which we are praying for, by learning some Torah, then Hashem **will** help us.

Hashem is happy to help us succeed in doing mitzvos. We need to ask Hashem for help and make an effort on our own, to show Hashem that we truly desire what we are asking for.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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