

Clarifying the facts that Chazal teach us regarding the roles of *hishtadlus* and *bitachon* in how Hashem runs His world

In truth, Hashem alone decides everything that will happen in this world, excluding the performance of *Mitzvos* and *Aveiros*.

“On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed. How many shall pass away and how many shall be born, who shall live and who shall die, who shall reach the end of his days and who shall not... who shall have rest and who shall wander, who shall be at peace and who shall be pursued, who shall be at rest and who shall be tormented, who shall be exalted and who shall be brought low, who shall become rich and who shall be impoverished.” (Prayer of *U’Nesaneh Tokef*)

The above being true, why should one not place a gun to his head and shoot? If on Rosh Hashanah he was written in to the Book of Life, he won’t be harmed and if he wasn’t, he’ll die anyway. The Rishonim explain: Although all is decided on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, however, when one places himself in danger, such as attempting to shoot himself, the *Satan* is given permission to reopen his case against him. If he does not deserve to die, indeed, even a gunshot will not kill him, however, if he does deserve death, he will be killed. One may ask: If this is so, why are most people who attempt to shoot themselves found to be deserving of death while most people on Rosh Hashanah of each year are not? The answer is that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, one is on a much higher spiritual level due to the nature of the day, *Tefillah* and *Teshuva*, than on a regular day of the year, especially, while one is committing the sin of placing himself in harm’s way.

This is also true regarding the decree of, “Who shall become rich and who shall be impoverished.” After Adam HaRishon sinned by eating from the *Eitz HaDaas* Hashem decreed (Bereshis 3:19), “With the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread.” (One may not rely on miracles, rather he is required to perform *hishtadlus*, whereby Hashem’s sustenance will reach him under the cover of *derech hateva* – the natural order of the world, as opposed to by way of an open miracle). When one does not perform his obligation of *hishtadlus*, the *Satan* is given the right to reopen his case against him, and one is extremely likely to lose his preordained sustenance. Of course, as the Rishonim explain, the obligation of *hishtadlus*, is limited to executing the minimum work required to attain what you seek *al pi derecho hateva*.

In summary: All that will happen to us is preordained by Heaven on Rosh Hashanah. Why will it harm us if we just stay in bed and not perform *hishtadlus*? Because lack of *hishtadlus* opens to receiving a new decree, likely much worse than whatever was already decreed upon us at the beginning of the year. So, though we do not attain anything positively through all of our *hishtadlus*, it does act as loss prevention for what has already been decreed upon us.

(To be continued next week)

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