

**BADERECH****RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAMP HASC
AUTHOR OF BADERECH SERIES

Believe We Can Fix

A well-to-do business man brought a swath of expensive material to a tailor and was fitted for a new pair of pants. When he returned to the tailor a week later, the pants were not yet ready. He came back another week later, and still, the pants weren't done. Week after week the scene repeated itself, until finally, after six weeks, the pants were done.

Though the customer was quite frustrated, when he tried them on, the fit was perfect, the tailor had done an excellent, professional job. Satisfied with the final product, he still couldn't resist giving a little *shtuch*, a parting jibe to the tailor:

"You know," he remarked, "it took G-d only six days to create the entire world... and it took you six weeks to make just one pair of pants!"

"Ahhhhh...." said the tailor. "But look at this pair of pants — and look at the world!"

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"Hashem took Man, *vayanicheihu*, 'and

placed him' in the Gan Eden *l'ovda u-l'shomra*, to work and to guard it" (Bereishis, 2:15). Chazal explain that this duality is a reference to the categories of positive commandments (*l'ovda*) and negative commandments (*l'shomra*) that humanity would eventually receive as guidance for creating and safeguarding the world. *L'ovda u-l'shomra* are also commandments related to 'working for' and 'keeping' Shabbos. We are meant to 'work' for six days in preparation for the seventh day. When Shabbos arrives, we are instructed to rest, thereby 'guarding', or being '*shomer*' Shabbos.

Rashi describes Hashem introducing *Adam haRishon* to these responsibilities, "enticing him *b'dvarim na'im*, with pleasant words". This implies that mankind needs some prodding and encouragement to accept the Divine challenge to work and safeguard this world. Indeed, without perceiving any Divine encouragement, it's possible to see work as a curse to be disdained, cruel punishment and a necessary evil, or at least an unfortunate inconvenience.

However, if we understand that we are honored above all creatures to work for the Creator, we can proactively embrace our toil as the fulfillment of a greater Divine plan. When we internalize the fact that Hashem's intention is to engage us as 'partners' in Creation, that we are to sustain the world together, not only is our job bearable, but we can be highly motivated to succeed. As empowered 'shareholders' in *Olam haZeh*, this world, we will naturally take full responsibility for it.

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Rav Zelik Epstein zt'l, the wise Rosh Yeshiva of Sha'ar HaTorah in Queens, NY offered a parable relating to how we see our relationship to Torah and *Yidishkeit*. Imagine the difference between two apartment buildings: one managed by the owner, the other by a hired superintendent. While both managers may be capable of doing the job to protect and maintain the buildings, there is a clear difference in how they will respond when a problem arises. No matter how careful and attentive the hired superintendent may be, his response is as an employee. While he may fulfill his professional responsibilities completely, the job is not personal.

The owner however, is vested in the long term wellbeing of the building; it is actually his. Taking care of an electrical problem or plumbing issue is way beyond simply fulfilling his responsibility to the tenants. *Es iz nit genug tzu zein nahr 'shomrim' oif der Torah*, "It is not sufficient to be 'superintendents' of Torah;" *mir darf zein baalei batim oif der Torah*, "we need to feel as though we are 'owners' of the Torah."

It is not enough for us to learn, live, or even dance with Torah. Even taking responsibility and protecting the honor of Torah does not fulfill our obligation. *Ki heim chayeinu*, "Torah is *our* life and the length of *our* days." When we stood at Har Sinai and proclaimed, *Na'aseh V'nishmah*, "We will do and we will hear;" we actually committed to being part-owners, *baalei-batim* over Torah.

As with Torah, so it is regarding our place and role in this world. We are not just employed as 'superintendents'. We are also personally vested as *partners* in sustaining Creation:

"And G-d said, '*Na'aseh Adam*, let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and

they shall rule over all the earth..." (1:26)

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The great Tosher Rebbe, Rebbe Meshulam Feish HaLevy Lowy, zy'a, once had the opportunity to complete the writing of a Sefer Torah. The scribe and Chasidim gathered around the Tzadik to watch which letters the Rebbe would choose, and to observe his *hanhagah*, the holy way that he would fulfill the mitzvah.

The Rebbe looked at the words of the last pasuk in the Torah: "And by all the strong hand and awesome power *asher asah Moshe*, that Moshe 'had done', *l'eini kol Yisrael* before the eyes of all of Israel" (Devarim, 34:12). When he raised his hand and filled in the letters of the word *asah*, "had done", the Rebbe repeatedly whispered the words of our Sedra, *Asher bara Elokim la'asos*, "which G-d created to do". This is a reference to Hashem creating the world in order for man "to do"—to work, guard, to create and sustain.

May our return to *Sefer Bereishis* empower us with the confidence that we have the wherewithal, the ability and materials, to be Hashem's partners in creating and repairing the world. This new year may we rise to the challenge of being Jews and human beings: *l'ovda u-l'shomrah*, to work for and defend humanity — to fulfill the reason for G-d's creation of this world: *la'asos*, "to do".

Our world needs quite a mending, and it could use a good tailor. Let's get to work!

*Excerpt from newly released **Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah**, (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786) ■*

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.