
REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL



THE BALANCE OF ACTION

REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL

THE BALANCE OF ACTION

WORK VS STUDY:

TALMUD BERACHOS, 35B

The view of Rabbi Yishmael is that you are to combine the study of Torah with a worldly occupation. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says: Is that possible? If a man ploughs in the ploughing season, and sows in the sowing season, and reaps in the reaping season, and threshes in the threshing season, and winnows in the season of wind, what is to become of the Torah? Rather, when the Jews perform the will of God (and learn Torah), their work is performed by others... and when they do not perform God's will, they must do their own work ... and even the work of others. Abaye said: Many have followed the advice of Rabbi Yishmael, and it has worked well for them. Others have followed Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and it has not been successful.

CHAZON ISH, EMUNAH AND BITACHON, CHAPTER 2

There is a common misconception regarding the concept of trust. The word "trust" is often misunderstood to imply that in every uncertain situation in which the future may hold success or failure, one is obligated to believe that everything will be successful. And if one remains uncertain, one lacks faith in God. This is not the true meaning of trust, for no future event can be known with certainty unless through the agency of prophecy, for who can completely understand God's judgments?



What then is the true meaning of Trust? It is the belief that nothing happens by chance, everything is ordained by Heaven. True trust includes accepting that even if one should suffer pain or hardship, this is a Divine decree. For nothing at all happens by chance.

PIRKEI AVOS (ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS), 2:16



It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.

Commentary of Rav and Rabbeinu Yonah:

God does not engage man in His service with the expectation that he can complete the task; and He does not penalize him for being unable to finish. On the other hand, man is obligated to commit his best efforts to the service of the Creator. He should not think that if he is willing to forgo the reward, he may be absolved of the duty. The work is not optional – it is a burden that must be borne.

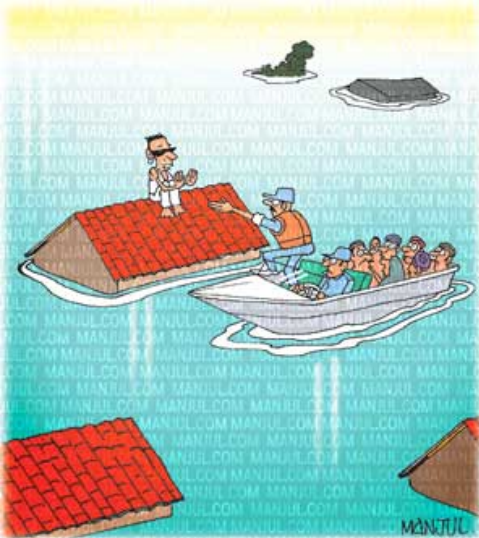
TO WHAT EXTENT?:

TALMUD TAANIS, 25A

Once, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's wife said to him: How long shall we go on suffering (in poverty) so much? He replied: What shall we do? Pray that something may be given to you, [she replied]. He prayed, and the figure of a hand reached out to him and gave him a golden table leg. After this, he saw in a dream that the righteous would one day eat at a three-legged golden table, but he would eat at a two-legged table. Rabbi Chanina said to her: Are you content that everybody shall eat at a perfect table, while we eat an imperfect table? She replied: Well then pray that the leg should be taken away from you! He prayed and it was taken away.



A WELL-KNOWN JEST ILLUSTRATES THE POINT THAT GOD EXPECTS SOME EFFORT ON OUR PART: A FLOOD CAME AND A MAN HAD TO CLIMB ONTO THE ROOF OF HIS HOUSE. AS THE WATERS ROSE, A NEIGHBOR IN A ROWBOAT APPEARED AND TOLD HIM TO GET IN. "NO," REPLIED THE MAN ON THE ROOF, "GOD WILL SAVE ME." THEN A FIREFIGHTER APPEARED IN A SPEEDBOAT. "CLIMB IN!" SHOUTED THE FIREFIGHTER. "NO," REPLIED THE MAN ON THE ROOF, "GOD WILL SAVE ME." A HELICOPTER APPEARED AND THE PILOT SHOUTED THAT HE WOULD LOWER A ROPE TO THE MAN ON THE ROOF. "NO," REPLIED THE MAN ON THE ROOF, "GOD WILL SAVE ME." EVENTUALLY THE MAN DROWNED AND WENT TO HEAVEN, WHERE HE ASKED GOD WHY HE HADN'T HELPED HIM. GOD REPLIED: "I SENT A NEIGHBOR, A FIREFIGHTER, AND A HELICOPTER! WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?"



**RABBI TZVI MEIR ZILVERBERG, VAYIKRA, PG.
194**

We have to make some kind of an "effort" [to become better Jews], and when we do all that is within our power to do – just as the law of searching for leaven on Pesach is to search only those spots that are reachable within our property – then God Himself will fulfill that which could not be completed by our efforts.

PIRKEI AVOS (ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS), 2:2

The study of Torah together with a worldly occupation is excellent, for labor at both removes sin from the mind. All Torah without work will in the end be neglected and bring about sin.

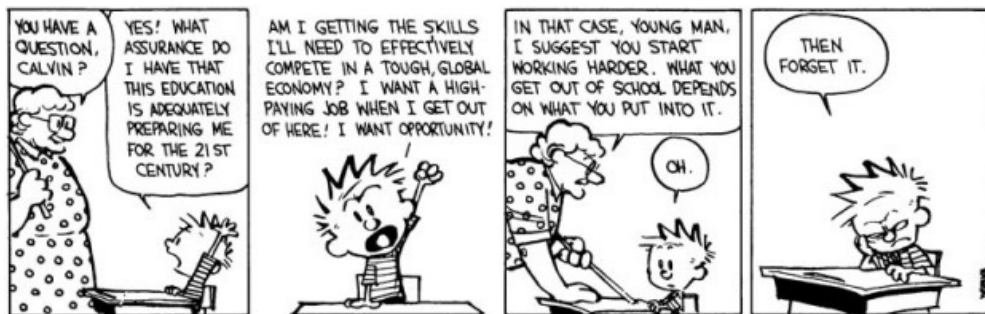
THE PROPER BALANCE:

RABBI D. DANIN, PORTALS OF FAITH, PG. 112

A person must sincerely believe that sustenance and other physical needs are not dependent on his own prowess. Rather, God ordains what one will attain... [but] without any effort on his part, one will not receive one's due...

How much effort should a person expend? Since a person's endeavors are only a medium through which God's blessings are received, the amount of effort required depends on each one's level of trust. One who has a great deal of trust in God need make only a small effort in order to acquire his needs, while those who have a smaller degree of trust in God and rely mainly on their own efforts will need to work in a normal manner to make a living.

Thus, the two are mutually dependent. The amount of effort depends on the degree of trust. And if one expends less effort than he should, his income will be correspondingly reduced.



RABBI MATISYAHU SALOMON, WITH HEARTS FULL OF FAITH, PG. 107

The Torah teaches us to have emunah and bitachon, faith and trust, in God to provide all our needs, because He controls the entire world. If He chooses to give, we have. Otherwise, we do not have. Success comes from God alone. At the same time, we must also make hishtadlus, a bona fide effort to achieve our goals. We cannot simply sit back and say to God, "All right, send me my monthly check." We must make an effort to earn it, and then God will send it to us.

Why do we need to combine faith with effort? And if we do, what exactly is the proper balance between them? How much faith must we put in our effort and how much effort into our faith?

RABBI E.E. DESSLER, STRIVE FOR TRUTH, PART II, PG. 283

Rabbi Simcha Zissel Sieff answered this question by telling us that God laid the burden of endeavor on us as a test. We have been put in a world where God's constant providence is unseen. To all appearances, man himself seems to be in control of all the matters relating to his business and livelihood. He can easily make the mistake of thinking "My strength and the power of my hand have made all this wealth for me." But his task is to rouse himself to see, in the midst of this obscurity, that "nature" has no power; everything is from the hand of God. No event, large or small, occurs without His decree...



By keeping this awareness alive in his mind, he succeeds in revealing God's providence in the midst of the obscurity caused by human mundane activities. He sanctifies the Divine name by recognizing God's glory in spite of its concealment.