

# Work!

## אדם לעמל יולד



The Jewish world was abuzz. The Rebbe was reaching his seventieth birthday. Having already transformed the face of world Jewry over 22 years of the *nesius*, many people speculated about the Rebbe's plans for the future.

As the Rebbe later attested, he received many suggestions to consider taking a more relaxed approach going forward.

Of course, the Rebbe used this milestone as an opportunity for a major expansion of Lubavitch activities, famously calling for the establishment of 71 new *mosdos* all over the world.

Much of the Rebbe's Torah from this period is dedicated to the theme of "עמל"—a person's charge in this world to constantly work and strive for higher and higher achievements. The Rebbe's farbrengen on Yud-Aleph Nissan, as well as the *michtav-kloli* dated that day discuss this in great depth.

Speaking of the birth of *am Yisroel* to be celebrated on Pesach, the Rebbe

opens the letter with an overarching question of how the newborn nation is supposed to see itself:

**"Should this nation strive towards a state of life in which it can enjoy the maximum pleasure with the minimum effort; or, should it prefer a life of toil and maximum achievement, a life of much action and much accomplishment?"**

**"The question is just as pertinent to the individual and his personal life as an individual."**

The Torah already prescribed the answer to this question, the Rebbe continues. The *possuk* states, "אָדָם לְעֵמָל" —אדם לעמל—man was created to toil.<sup>1</sup> When Hashem created the first man—even before his downfall and sin, Hashem gave him the stated purpose of "לעבדה" —ולשמרה—to work and to guard it [the land]." Only after that did He tell him that, "Of all the trees in the Garden you may eat..."

But doesn't this seem to contradict the basic tenet that Hashem is always good and only ever wants to do good?

Wouldn't that mean that all He wants for his creations is to experience maximum pleasure with little or no effort?

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Hashem's desire is that man should enjoy the good in its perfection and human nature is such that a person derives true pleasure only if he is a partner in its attainment, through his own exertion and travail. Good in its perfection is enjoyed only when a person earns it through hard work, and the harder the effort, the sweeter the taste of the fruit of achievement.<sup>2</sup>

At the farbrengen, the Rebbe dedicated the better part of five *sichos* to expounding deeper and broader on the idea of אדם לעמל יולד, even explaining why Hashem put this trait into our very nature as humans, as we shall soon see.

Being such a major cornerstone of life, the Rebbe points out that the concept of עמל is always there at every major milestone in history.



caught up in the currents of the day. Our job is to change things—to make the world better, nicer, elevated to a higher and more spiritual level than before.<sup>8</sup>

The real toil and exertion of our lives is the ability to utilize and not waste any of the time or any of the resources given to us by Hashem. Every single moment and every single

thing we have is precious, to be used for holy and spiritual purposes, as the *possuk* says, “בכל דרכיך דעהו”—Know Hashem in all your ways.”<sup>9</sup>

## Why?

As mentioned, Hashem created our nature that we only appreciate something if we work for it. Getting something for free without expending any effort is frowned upon by human nature and referred to as *המאז* *דכסופא*—bread of shame.

But why couldn't Hashem program our nature differently? After all, Hashem is the essence of goodness and He wants only what is best for us. Why wouldn't he want us to appreciate the good He gives us even when we don't work towards it?

The answer, says the Rebbe, lies in a deeper understanding of why we were created in the first place.

Hashem wanted to give us the opportunity to become His partners in creation. If we never had to work on fixing and perfecting the world, we would all only stay at the level of *נבראים*—created by Hashem and receivers of His bountiful goodness. But Hashem wanted us to be able to reach the level of *בורא*—to have a part in creation as well. To be a partner, we need to put in the work.

This is also the answer to why so many of us encounter challenges in our lives that sometimes make following the Torah properly difficult for us. Hashem wants us to put in the extra effort, making our *avoda* all the more precious—both for ourselves and for Him.<sup>10</sup>

With toil and hard work, the deepest and often most hidden

## For Life!

*Rabbi David Hollander was a New York-based rabbi for many decades. In an interview with JEM's My Encounter team, he related:*

Every year, on the day before Yom Kippur, I would visit the Rebbe to receive a piece of *lekach*, the honey cake he handed out on that day, and also for his blessing for the new year. In 5745, the Rebbe invited me into his room. Once inside, the Rebbe said to me, “I give you a blessing that you should be successful as a rabbi and as a private citizen.” When I heard that, I latched onto the words “private citizen,” and I said to the Rebbe, “Your blessing for me as a private citizen interests me, because I am just on the verge of doing that very thing . . . of becoming a private citizen.”

The Rebbe responded, “What?! What right do you have to have such ideas? I am older than you are and I am taking on additional burdens!” He didn't leave it at that.

Later that month, I was standing in line after *havdalah* when the Rebbe was handing out wine from his cup. As I reached him, he reached across the table and poured some wine into my cup, and in a loud and clear voice he called out, in real Brooklynese English, “Remember—*rabbonus* (the rabbinate) for life!”

*Rabbi Hollander heeded the Rebbe's instructions and passed away at age 96 as the “Oldest practicing rabbi in America”—still at his job of more than 60 years.*

*(Here's My Story, Erev Yom Kippur 5774)*

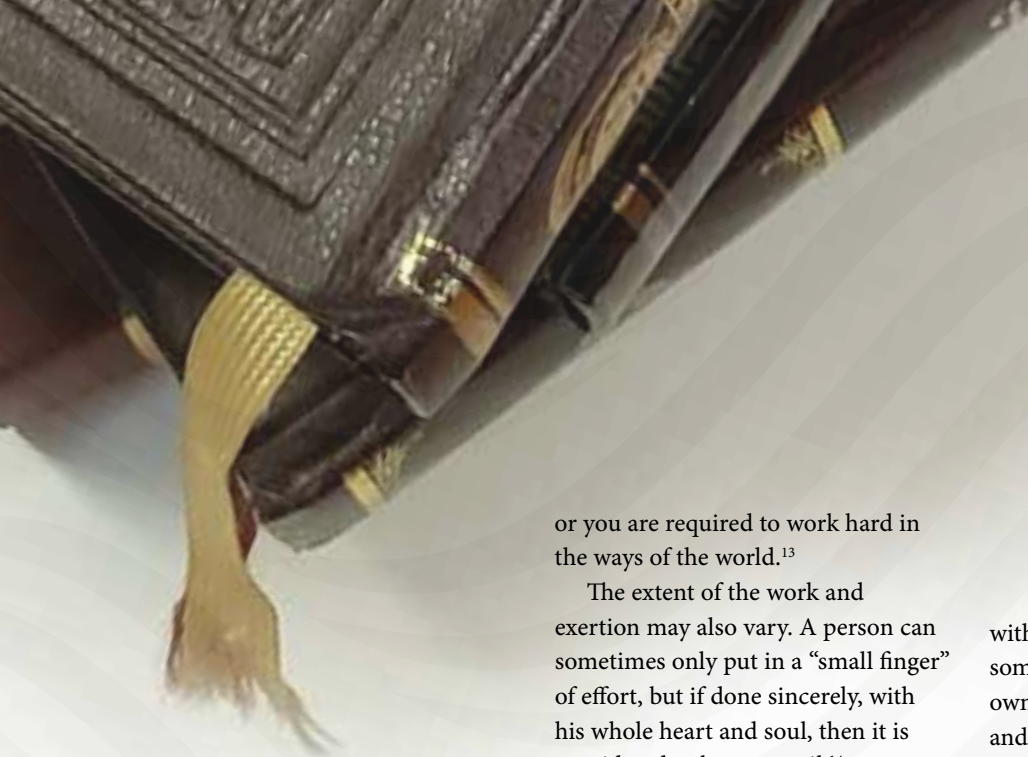
In a similar vein, Rabbi Pinchus Feldman of Sydney, Australia, relates:

I recall one occasion when the Rebbe urged me to encourage my wife's grandfather, Rabbi Osher Abramson, not to retire from community work, including his position as the presiding rabbi of the Australian Rabbinical Court, although he was elderly and not well. I protested, “But he is already over 70 years old!”

As soon as I said it, I realized who I was talking to—the Rebbe was also in his 70s. I was very embarrassed, but the Rebbe gave me a big smile and said, “I am also 70 but I have plans for 10 years, and after that, for another 10 years.”

*(Here's My Story, Erev Shabbos Haazinu 5776)*





strengths of a person are brought to the forefront and revealed. The Midrash tells a story about a man who came to a new town and no one knew what his strengths were. Until one wise person suggested: “מִן אֲבָנָא דְהוּא מִתְגֹּשֵׁשׁ” —From the type of stone he exerts himself with, you will know how strong he is...<sup>11</sup> Similarly, explains the Rebbe, when a person is faced with troubles and challenges, and instead of giving in, he fights the darkness and overcomes it, only then does he maximize the potential of his tenure here in this world.<sup>12</sup>

### Details?

What sort of hard work is a person expected to perform in this world?

The Rebbe points to an interesting lesson from the Mishna: “כֹּל הַמְקַבֵּל” עליו עול תורה מעבירין ממנו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ—Anyone who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah is exempt from the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly affairs.”

We see from the Mishna that no matter what, a person must always be working hard, with a “yoke” on his back. Either you work hard in Torah,

or you are required to work hard in the ways of the world.<sup>13</sup>

The extent of the work and exertion may also vary. A person can sometimes only put in a “small finger” of effort, but if done sincerely, with his whole heart and soul, then it is considered to be great toil.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the Rebbe emphasizes that when we seek to make things easier on ourselves, it is not because we shy away from hard work, *chas v’shalom*. Rather, we are freeing ourselves from a lower-grade *avoda* by getting it done in an easier manner, so as to be able to use our strength for even greater tasks.<sup>15</sup>

### End in Sight?

Our job in this world never ends, so long as we are still here. A person could think: I have already toiled so much and worked so hard, now is the time for someone else to step in! This is the wrong approach, says the Rebbe. Your *neshama* came down here, enduring all the pain and suffering from being sent down to this lowly world. The only way to make that pain worthwhile is by you working hard at your job as long as you are still here in this world.<sup>16</sup>

In this regard, the Rebbe points out that the concept of “retirement” is unthinkable! The fact that your *neshama* is still here in *olam hazeh* is proof that there is still much work for you to do. True, you may feel that your physical strength is waning, but if you connect yourself to Hashem

with true *bitachon*, you become part of something so much greater than your own self. Your *kochos* become limitless and you can carry on working hard for many more years.<sup>17</sup>

The time to sleep is after 120 years. Until then, a person must constantly be busy, constantly working. Every day is precious! And even after 120 years, when a person is supposed to enjoy the reward for his labor, he will still not be “asleep,” because a reward needs to be good and enjoyable. Just resting as an end to itself certainly doesn’t qualify...<sup>18</sup> **T**

1. Iyov 5:7.
2. Michtav-Kloli 11 Nissan 5732.
3. 11 Nissan 5732, *sicha* 2.
4. Motzei Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5728.
5. Sefer Hasichos summer 5700, p. 57. See also *sichas* 19 Kislev 5722.
6. Footnote to Michtav-Kloli 11 Nissan 5732.
7. Shabbos Parshas Noach 5745.
8. Yud Shevat 5735, *sicha* 2.
9. 11 Nissan 5733, *sicha* 2.
10. 11 Nissan 5732, *sicha* 3. This idea was later added by the Rebbe into the Michtav-Kloli as well.
11. Yalkut Shimoni Nach, Remez 673.
12. 12 Tammuz 5743, *sicha* 2. See also the *maamar* Boruch Hagomel at this farbrengen.
13. Shabbos Parshas Vaera 5711.
14. 11 Nissan 5732, *ibid*.
15. Yechidus Klolis 26 Nissan 5746.
16. Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5714.
17. 11 Nissan 5742, *sicha* 3.
18. Shabbos Parshas Matos-Masei 5747.