



It's Up to You

רמב"ם הלכות שמיטה ויובל, יג:יג

וְלֹא שָׁבַט לוֹי בְּלִבָּד אֲלֵא כָּל אִישׁ וְאִישׁ מִכָּל בְּאֵי הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נִדְבָה רוּחוֹ אוֹתוֹ וְהִבִּינּוּ מִדַּעוֹ לְהַבְדִּיל לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי ה' לְשִׁרְתוֹ וּלְעַבְדוֹ לְדַעַה אֶת ה' וְהִלָּךְ יֵשֶׁר כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂהוּ הָאֱלֹהִים וּפְרָק מֵעַל צְוָאָרוֹ עַל הַחֲשֻׁבּוֹנוֹת הַרְבִּים אֲשֶׁר בִּקְשׂוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם הֲרִי זֶה נִתְקַדֵּשׁ קֹדֶשׁ קַדְשִׁים וְיִהְיֶה ה' חֶלְקוֹ וְנִחְלָתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים וְיִזְכָּה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה דְבַר הַמַּסְפִּיק לוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁזָּכָה לַכֹּהֲנִים וְלַלְוִיִּם. הֲרִי דָוִד עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם אָמַר "ה' מִנְתַּחֲלָקִי וְכֹסֵי אֶתָּה תוֹמִיד גּוֹרְלִי

Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously motivates him and he understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before God to serve Him and minister to Him and to know God, proceeding justly as God made him, removing from his neck the yoke of the many reckonings which people seek, he is sanctified as holy of holies. God will be His portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the priests and the Levites. And thus David declared: "God is the lot of my portion; You are my cup, You support my lot."

When one lends money to his fellow, and then the *Shemita* year arrives, Torah law automatically cancels the debt and the money is never paid back.

The obvious issue is that as a result, no one would want to help another with a loan knowing full well that there's a strong possibility they won't ever see their money again.

The Torah itself addresses this, and warns against this calculation, guaranteeing the Yid that if he will continue to give loans without worrying about the fast approaching *Shemita* year, Hashem in turn will bless him in all things.

Later in time, in the generation of Hillel Hazaken, these Torah warnings



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and *brachos* were no longer enough to help Yidden keep giving loans; they were worried for their money. So Hillel came up with the “*pruzbul*,” a process in which the *beis din* takes charge of the loan and makes it immune from being annulled by *Shemita*—in order to save these Yidden from violating a clear prohibition in the Torah.

Although the *pruzbul* does seem like a loophole created out of necessity to save Yidden from an *aveira*, the Rebbe points out that it actually brings a new and stronger level of connection between the Yidden and the mitzvos. Now, even Yidden who would ordinarily be violating Torah because they are scared for their money are keeping the mitzvah of *Shemita*.

Until the time of Hillel, a Yid with this attitude was a contradiction to the mitzvah of *Shemita*, and only time could tell what would happen to the mitzvah of *Shemita* when the Yidden are in a state that the wallet takes precedence to their belief in Torah.

Once *pruzbul* was invented, it became clear (and we were given the tools to ensure) that the mitzvah of *Shemita* will forever be kept by all Yidden.

What we see from here is that something that even the Torah could not accomplish, a Tanna in a later generation, Hillel, was able to accomplish.

This offers insight into the last halacha in Sefer Zeraim of the

Rambam, where he states that not only Levi'im are part of Hashem's “workforce” but every Jew that devotes himself completely to Hashem's service becomes holy like the Levi'im.

From a simple Torah perspective, it seems that this is not possible; there are specific laws that apply particularly to Levi'im because of their holy status, like not owning land (other than designated cities). They are born into a status that can't be changed or otherwise attained.

Comes a later *chacham*, in this case the Rambam, and reveals a new reality in which *every* person can indeed become a spiritual Levi!¹ **T**

1. Adapted from Shabbos Parshas Emor 5749; Sefer Hasichos 5749 vol. 2, p. 440.