

ings. *Baruch Hashem*, the flight was uneventful, and in no time we were in our home in Brooklyn.

The following week I took my husband's suit to the neighborhood dry cleaner. Only upon returning home did I remember that my expensive jewelry was in my husband's suit pocket. I called the dry cleaner immediately asking if they had found a bag in one of the suit pockets. They replied that they had not, and I started thinking that there was no chance that I would ever see those pieces of jewelry again. Nevertheless, instead of despairing I decided that it was not yet too late to do something. I began repeating to myself again and again that I would find the lost jewelry. "No one is more powerful than Hashem," I thought. "*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has no problem whatsoever returning the jewelry to me. If I truly deserve to have it, He will return it to me."

A few days later, I received a phone call from the dry cleaner. He told me that they had found a bag full of jewelry in a pocket of the suit I gave them to clean. All my valuable jewelry was returned to me!

The *hishtadlut* we are obligated to make is an effort to clarify our desire, or to request assistance from Hashem; we must have *emunah* that increases our desire to ask for even more. All this leads us to an increased portion of Hashem's goodness and largesse.

Dealing With Abundance in Daily Life

Chazal teach us (*Pirkei Avot* 2:7), "The more possessions, the more worry." When a person owns something that he does not use, he has more possessions over which he needs to concern himself.

Since everything in the world has a purpose, the moment a person holds some item that he does not use, or hoards property, clothing, furniture or anything else—these items sap his time and energy. Indeed, there is a certain element of guilt here over the fact that some things he owns are not fulfilling their purpose—since he is not using them—so he burns out inner strength worrying about it. We must learn to relinquish, to yield, to empty out, to clear the air, to renew our inventory, and not to hoard useless things. (Based on Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, *Likutei Moharan*, *siman* 59)

One of the ideal ways of creating Heavenly channels of goodness and favor is to clear away unused or useless possessions. Our belief that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* can supply our every need helps us empty our homes of useless junk, with the realization that when the time comes that we do require something, the Almighty will attend to our needs.

The vitality—and the ability to give vitality—of every object that exists in this world derives from its designated mission in the service of Hashem. For instance, the fact that we recite a *brachah* on bread validates its existence by virtue of the fact that it nourishes the soul of the person who eats it. Bread, or any food, that provides sustenance for mankind justifies its purpose in the world. If, however, a person continues to eat even after he is already satiated, the food is no longer useful to him. It lacks any purpose in Hashem's service, and therefore it lacks any inherent vitality. The more this person continues eating, the more he injures himself. So it is with acquiring material possessions; if he collects or saves useless possessions, then, instead of benefiting him, all these possessions create a burdensome spiritual "overload" that saps his inner strength.

This does not mean that amassing wealth is forbidden. Nowhere does the Torah prohibit us from being wealthy. Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi was extremely wealthy, as were many other *Tanna'im* and *Amora'im*, and, as we have mentioned, our Forefathers Avraham,

Yitzchak and Yaakov. However, as *Chazal* tell us that “the more possessions, the more worry.” Wealth is a relative thing. We can gauge whether or not our wealth is excessive by examining the use we make of our possessions. As soon as we possess things that we do not need or use, that aspect of wealth can be detrimental to us.

Why is it that we recite the *brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* over a new garment, or over a fruit or an experience that we have not had for quite some time? What is the great happiness in acquiring yet another material item? It is because we are grateful to Hashem that an additional object or experience is now before us, which might aid us in serving Hashem. This potentially spiritual endeavor certainly deserves a *brachah*.

Ostensibly, the cultural trend of material acquisition is supposed to solve the problems of man’s existence that are so prevalent today. Yet when someone purchases new possessions because he feels emptiness in his life, he does not realize that at the root of this problem are the unused possessions that he already owns.

We must calculate our expenditures sensibly, purchasing only those items that we truly need. As a result, we will possess only goods that fill us with vitality, which in turn will create greater channels of Divine goodness that flow down to us. How much money people should spend, and what they should spend it on, is an individual issue that everyone must reckon on his own.

Giving Is Receiving

Giving to others is an important factor in opening conduits to Hashem’s beneficence. Giving influences our emotions and gives us a sense of prosperity and well-being. Our giving has to be wholehearted, free of any reservations. When we share our bounty with someone, we are redirecting the flow of Hashem’s goodness to the world, which in turn makes us vehicles for transmitting even more of His kindness. Giving to others