

A Gift from God

written by Chaim Kramer
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We all work hard for a living, putting in the hours, seeking new customers, making sure we get paid. But in reality, God provides the sustenance, through the particular work that a person does. Rebbe Nachman once said, "When we work, we work because of our sins. Eating [i.e. our sustenance] is given to us for nothing!" In other words, we are required to work to rectify Adam's sin and all subsequent sins. Our sustenance is a gift from God, given to us through Divine providence.

The Rebbe offers a parable to illustrate this idea:

There once was a poor man who traveled around collecting money for his family. The travel and the effort to collect was very

difficult and lent itself to much sadness and grief.

He heard of a place where anyone who came was welcomed and given a complimentary meal and lodgings. He traveled to that city, which took some time, and asked a passerby, "Where can I find the free kitchen?" He was directed to a certain house and knocked on the door. A man opened the door to him and he asked about getting a meal.

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The man told him, "First you must chop firewood, then do other work, and then you'll get your meal." The poor man was taken aback, but he realized he had no choice, so he did all the work assigned to him. At the end of the day, he asked for his meal. The homeowner said, "Go across the street, you'll get your meal there."

The poor man went to the house across the street, where he was warmly welcomed and given a place at the table. Seeing others sitting there, he began haranguing them about how hard he had to work for this meal. When asked what his problem was, he told them that when he arrived in the city, tired and hungry, he went to the house across the street and was told to do hard labor. Afterward, he was sent to this house for the meal. The others told him, "In this house, there are no requests to work. Everything is given for free. Your problem is that you went to the wrong house!"

That's when the Rebbe said, "We work because of our sins. Eating is for free!"

From the upcoming book ["Earning a Living, Earning a Life"](#)