

product of one's own toil and effort is more desirable — not merely than someone else's one or two measures, but — than even nine!

G-d desired that we should "have it good" in the best possible way. He wished not merely to bestow upon us the greatest goodness, but also to ensure that we should receive, absorb and "digest" this goodness in the most perfect way; so He created mankind to toil and the Jewish nation to serve. Had G-d not done so, had He instead gratuitously bestowed His blessings, then there would indeed have been vast goodness granted us, but it would have been distasteful, it would have been unearned "bread of shame" and its bestowal would not have characterized the ultimate and perfect beneficence of the Creator.

FROM AN UNEDITED ACCOUNT OF A DISCOURSE
GIVEN ON 11TH NISSAN, 5732.

**"A MAN PREFERS
ONE OF HIS OWN
TO NINE OF HIS
NEIGHBOR'S."
... HIS OWN
FRUITS ARE
PARTICULARLY
ENDEARED TO
HIM BECAUSE
HE TOILED TO
PRODUCE THEM.**

TALMUD, BAVA METZIA 38A.

YITSCHAK MEIR KAGAN was associate director of the Lubavitch Foundation in Michigan. An innovative educator and author, he compiled A Thought for the Week adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He taught Chassidic philosophy at various universities in Michigan, until his passing in 2001. Reprinted with Permission.

THE BREAD OF SHAME

BY RABBI YITSCHAK MEIR KAGAN

"Man is born to toil." This is true of the Jewish people as a nation, as well as the individual man. G-d commanded Moses at the time of the birth of our people, "When you will take this people out of Egypt you shall serve G-d on this mountain" (Exodus 3:12). Israel's deliverance from Egypt was not merely to come to "the good and broad land" or to "eat its fruit and be satiated with its goodness." The Jewish people were freed from Egyptian slavery in order to attain the level of true service of the A-lmighty.

And as at the time of Israel's birth, so was it also at the time Man

came to be; Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, "To work it and to guard it" (Genesis 2:15).



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“WHEN YOU WILL TAKE THIS PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT YOU SHALL SERVE G-D ON THIS MOUNTAIN”

● EXODUS 3:12

Why should the Creator, who is the essence of all goodness, require work and service as man's only ultimate path to perfection? Why must we struggle and toil to remove the many obstacles and barriers to realizing our true potential? Does this not seem to be the very opposite of G-d's infinite goodness?

A deeper analysis of human nature, however, reveals that requiring work, toil and effort from man was an act of ultimate and perfect goodness by G-d. When a person invests effort, he earns his reward. Even when he has not exerted great effort, but has merely pleased another person, the other might be moved to give him a

gift. But in a case when even this factor of pleasing another is absent, and he receives a totally gratuitous handout, purely as a donation — this is “bread of shame” that does not satisfy, but distresses.

Our sages illustrate the concept of “shameful bread” with the example of a bride who turns away her face in shame while eating the wedding meal. Not having yet invested any efforts in establishing or maintaining her household, she feels that the meal provided for her is not earned, is but a gratuity, and is “bread of shame.”

The Talmud teaches that if a man deposits some of his produce with a neighbor (for the latter to keep for him while he is away) and it starts to rot, one opinion is that the neighbor should sell it, before too much of it rots, so as to save his friend's money. Another opinion maintains, however, that the neighbor should not touch it, for “a man prefers one of his own to nine of his neighbor's.” His friend would prefer the smaller quantity of fruit, salvaged from the rot, that he grew himself to the larger quantity of another's fruit that he could buy with the money. His own fruits are particularly endeared to him because he toiled to produce them. One honestly-earned measure that is the



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