



“You shall surely give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him” Give Tzedakah Sincerely to Avoid Reincarnating into a Pauper

In this week's parsha, parshas Re'eh, we will focus on the mitzvah of tzedakah. Apropos this mitzvah, Chazal teach (B.B. 9a): **“שקולה צדקה כנגד כל המצוות”**—**tzedakah is commensurate to all of the mitzvos.** Furthermore, it hastens the geulah, as we learn elsewhere (ibid. 10a): **“גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה”**—**tzedakah is so great, because it hastens the geulah.** Here are the pesukim in our parsha related to the mitzvah of tzedakah (Devarim 15, 7):

“כי יהיה בך אביון מאחד אחיד באחד שעריך בארצך אשר ה' אלקיך נותן לך, לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפוץ את ירך מאחיד האביון. כי פתוח תפתח את ירך לו... נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו, כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ידך, כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ, על כן אנכי מצוך לאמר פתוח תפתח את ירך לאחיד לענייך ולאביונך בארצך.”

If there shall be a destitute person among you, any of your brethren in any of your cities, in the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him . . . You shall surely give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking. For destitute people will not cease to exist within the land; hence, I command you, saying, “Open your hand generously to your brother, to your indigent, and to your destitute in your land.”

Regarding the last passuk, the Gemara teaches (Shabbas 151b): **“כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ, תניא רבי אלעזר: הקפר אומר, לעולם יבקש אדם רחמים על מדה זו שאם הוא לא בא בא בנו, ואם בנו לא בא, בן בנו בא, שנאמר כי בגלל הדבר הזה, תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: “Poor people will not cease to exist within the land.” It has been taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: A person should always plead for mercy regarding this fate (poverty). For, if he does not become poor, his son will come to be so; and if his son does not come to be so, his son's son will come to be so. For it is stated: “For in return for this matter . . .” A Baraisa was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael: Poverty is a wheel that revolves in the world.**

At first glance, this passage should raise some eyebrows. After all, in the pesukim above, the Torah states explicitly that HKB”H promises the person who gives tzedakah wholeheartedly that He will bless all the fruits of his labor. That being the case, how can we make sense of the elucidation: **“כי”**—**בגלל הדבר הזה, גלגל הוא שחוזר בעולם**—that as a reward for the mitzvah of giving tzedakah, if he or one of his descendants becomes poor and destitute, they, too, will receive tzedakah?

Failure to Give Tzedakah Wholeheartedly

We will begin our discussion by introducing an illuminating insight presented in the sefer Dvash

HaSadeh (1) in the name of the esteemed Rabbi Meir the son of the great Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, zy" a. This should inspire and motivate every Jew to perform the mitzvah of tzedakah generously and wholeheartedly. He refers to the following Mishnah (Avos 4, 11): "רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, העושה מצוה אחת קונה לו 'Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: A person who performs one mitzvah acquires for himself one advocate (a supportive malach); while a person who commits one aveirah acquires for himself one accuser (a prosecuting malach).'"

Now, our sacred sources explain that although a malach is a spiritual creature, nevertheless, it is composed of a body and a neshamah. The body of the malach is generated by the actual performance of the mitzvah, while the proper intent to perform the mitzvah sincerely and happily generates the neshamah of the malach. Based on this premise, Rabbi Meir teaches us a wonderful chiddush. Say we have a rich man who gives tzedakah begrudgingly. In such a case, only the body of the malach is generated but not its neshamah. Therefore, HKB" H arranges for him to become destitute. As a result, he will constantly lament not having performed the mitzvah of tzedakah sincerely and happily and will yearn to do so. This positive thought and good intent will generate a malach with a neshamah but lacking a body.

Then, HKB" H combines all the bodies of malachim that were generated by the mitzvah of tzedakah performed when this man was rich with the neshamos of the malachim generated when he became poor. Thus, all of his mitzvos of tzedakah become complete in both deed and intent, and all the malachim these mitzvos generated will possess both a body and a neshamah.

Therefore, HKB" H implores us: "נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך—give tzedakah sincerely. After all, if you fail to do so: 'גלגל הוא שחזור בעולם'—as it was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael, HKB" H will arrange for the rich man to become poor, so that he will yearn

to perform the mitzvah of tzedakah, and his prior insincere deed will be complemented by a proper intent. Therefore, to avoid this sequence of events, it is advisable to perform the mitzvah of tzedakah sincerely and happily to begin with. Then, a person will not need to become impoverished and the words of the passuk will be fulfilled: "For in return for this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking." This is the gist of his illuminating insight.

Reincarnating into a Pauper Who Yearns to Give Tzedakah

This fascinating insight from Rabbi Meir the son of the Kedushas Levi is also presented in the sefer Doveir Shalom (229) in the name of the holy Sar Shalom of Belz, zy" a, but with an intriguing twist: Once, our master, Sar Shalom, was sitting at Seudah Shlishit on Shabbas, and they were singing Tehillim 112. When they reached the ninth passuk: "פזר נתן—לאביינים—he distributed widely to the destitute—he repeated it several times and sighed deeply. He remarked that there are rich Jews who give tzedakah insincerely and reluctantly, without intending to fulfill the command of the Creator but for some ulterior motive such as kavod. He explained that every mitzvah generates a malach; however, an insincere mitzvah generates a malach without a neshamah. So, when this Jew arrives at the heavenly court, and his mitzvos are reviewed, they find that the malachim he generated lacked neshamos. This prompts HKB" H to send him back to Olam HaZeh as a poor man with an extravagant heart; he wants to give but cannot. Thus, the tzedakah he performed previously is completed (in both deed and intent). This is the meaning of the passuk: "פזר נתן לאביינים"—HKB" H gave the destitute the midah of extravagance, so that their tzedakah would last forever.

In light of the remarks of Sar Shalom, zy" a, we can interpret the words of the Gemara cited above slightly differently: "כי בגלל הדבר הזה, תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל גלגל—הוא שחזור בעולם. Why is it crucial to give sincerely? Because otherwise one will be forced to reincarnate."

According to this explanation, the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael are associating the word "בגלגל" in the passuk with the concept of "גלגול"—reincarnation. So, when they say "גלגל הוא שחזור בעולם"—poverty is a wheel ("galgal") that revolves in the world—they are suggesting that this person will have to return to this world through the process of reincarnation—"gilgul neshamos"—as a pauper who sincerely wants to give tzedakah to complete his previous deed. Clearly, it is preferable to give tzedakah initially willingly and sincerely to avoid the need to reincarnate.

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa and the Three-Legged Golden Table

Latching onto the coattails of the esteemed Sar Shalom, zy"a, I would like to explain the matter in greater depth. We will begin by introducing a fascinating story recounted in the Gemara (Ta'anis 25a) involving Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, whose wife could no longer tolerate their extreme poverty:

"אמרה ליה דבייתהו, עד אימת ניזיל ונצטער כולי האי. אמר לה מאי נעביד, בעי רחמי דניתבו לך מידי. בעא רחמי, יצתה כמין פיסת יד, ויהבו ליה חד כרעא דפתורא דדהבא.

His wife said to him, "How much longer will we have to suffer so much (poverty)?" He replied to her, "What should we do?" She replied, "Request mercy that you be given something of value from the heavens." He prayed for mercy, and something like the palm of a hand emerged (from heaven), and he was given one leg of a golden table.

חזיא בחלמא, עתידי צדיקי דאכלי אפתורא דדהבא דאית ליה תלת כרעי, ואיהו אפתורא דתרי כרעי.

Then, his wife told him, "I have seen in a dream that in the future (Olam HaBa), the tzaddikim are going to be eating at a golden table with three legs, but you are eating at a table that has only two legs."

אמר לה, ניהא לך דמיכל אכלי כולי עלמא אפתורא דמשלם ואנן אפתורא דמחסר, אמרה ליה ומאי נעביד, בעי רחמי דנשקלינהו מינך, בעי רחמי ושקלוהו".

When she told her husband this story, he said to her, "Are you content that everyone will eat at a complete table, and we will eat at a defective table?" She said to him, "But what can we do?" "Pray for mercy that it (the leg of the golden table) should be taken back from you." He prayed for mercy, and it was taken from him.

In Ye'aros Dvash (Volume 1, Drush 4), the great Rabbi Yehonasan Eybeschutz, zy"a, explains the meaning of this dream based on the Mishnah (Avos 1, 2): "על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים"—the world stands on three pillars: On Torah study, on the avodah (religious service), and on gemilus chasadim (acts of kindness). For this reason, the tzaddikim in Olam HaBa will eat off of a golden table with three legs, indicating that they served Hashem in Olam HaZeh with these three vital pillars.

Without a doubt, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa's wife did not intend, chas v'shalom, to indulge in the pleasures of Olam HaZeh; her intent was solely l'shem shamayim. Upon seeing the suffering of the poor, who were penniless, she requested that her husband pray that HKB"H provide them with the means to perform the mitzvah of "gemilus chasadim" by giving tzedakah to the poor.

In response to his initial prayer, they were sent the golden leg of a table from above. Subsequently, his wife saw in a dream that in Olam HaBa, their table would be missing one golden leg. This conveyed the message that it is Hashem's will that they long wholeheartedly to give tzedakah to the poor. As a result (Kiddushin 40a): "מחשבה טובה מצרפה למעשה"—He (HKB"H) unites a good thought with a corresponding deed. Thus, it is viewed as if they fulfilled the mitzvah of "gemilus chasadim" completely and ideally. Indeed, if they had the means, they would have actually given tzedakah; however, what HKB"H wanted specifically from them was their intense desire to give tzedakah when they did not have the means to do so.

The Ye'aros Dvash concludes with inspirational words that every Jew should heed: We must all accept and embrace fondly the role that HKB"H has given us in our lives. A Jew should not question his lot in life. HKB"H has given him the brains and means that are suited for him; he should not think otherwise. Everything is for our benefit and for a specific purpose.

This important lesson is also taught by the brilliant Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, ztz"l, in his sefer Ruach Chaim on Maseches Avos (1, 3). There, he adds a wonderful point explaining why HKB"H arranged for Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa to be destitute. He refers to the following Gemara (Berachos 17b): **"בכל יום ויום: כל העולם כולו ניזון בשביל חנינא בני, וחינא בני די לו בקב חרובין מערב שבת לערב שבת."** **Every day a heavenly voice emerges from Har Choreiv and says: The entire world is sustained by the merit of Chanina ben Dosa, My son, and for Chanina, My son, a kav of carobs is sufficient to sustain him (for an entire week) from one erev Shabbas to the next erev Shabbas.**

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains the matter as follows: The entire world is sustained by the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, because he accepted his poverty and suffering with love. He sufficed with one kav of carobs each week, so that he could give more tzedakah rather than accumulate possessions. In this manner, not only did he provide for poor individuals, but he actually sustained the entire world. Therefore, when he was no longer in distress, the only thing he lacked was the one leg of "gemilus chasadim."

The Wonderful Revelation of Rabbi Zusha

Since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, I would like to explain in greater depth the matter of the "bat kol"—the heavenly voice that announced: **"The entire world is sustained by the merit of Chanina ben Dosa, My son, and for Chanina, My son, kav of carobs is sufficient to sustain**

him (for an entire week) from one erev Shabbas to the next erev Shabbas." We will refer to a fundamental principle gleaned from the immaculate teachings of Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, zy"a. In his own sacred style, he explains the statement of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair (Chullin 7b): **"ישראל קדושים הן, יש רוצה, ויש שיש לו ואינו רוצה"—the people of Yisrael are holy; there is the person who wants to share but lacks sufficient resources; then there is the person who has sufficient resources but does not sincerely want to share.** Tosafos ask an obvious question. If the latter individual possesses the resources to share with others but does not wish to do so, why is he considered holy? They answer is that in reality he does not sincerely wish to share with others; nevertheless, he invites others to share his food due to his sense of shame. Even so, it is still difficult to comprehend why he is referred to as holy—"kadosh."

Rabbi Zusha explains the matter based on the concept we discussed above. When a person gives tzedakah reluctantly, only out of shame, his mitzvah was not whole; it only generated the body of a malach but not its neshamah. In contrast, the person who wishes to give tzedakah but lacks sufficient funds to perform the mitzvah generates the neshamah of a malach; for, he sincerely desires and intends to fulfill the mitzvah. Since HKB"H wants the mitzvos of Yisrael to be complete, in His infinite mercy and kindness, He combines the rich person's deed with the poor person's sincere intent. Together they form a complete, holy malach, containing both a body and a neshamah.

This then is the message conveyed by Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair: **"Yisrael are holy!"** In other words, when the two types of Jews are joined together, they form a holy union. He explains how this works: **"There is the person who wants to share but lacks sufficient resources"—his good intentions generate the malach's neshamah; "then there is the person who has sufficient resources but does not sincerely want to**

share”—yet he gives out of embarrassment; his act, albeit insincere, generates the malach’s body. HKB”H graciously combines the insincere deed with the sincere thought to produce both a complete mitzvah and a complete malach. As a result of this partnership: **“Yisrael are holy!”**

Notwithstanding, this leaves us with an interesting question. Since the completion of the mitzvah required two separate individuals, who receives credit for the mitzvah—the rich man who actually gave the tzedakah reluctantly or the poor man who intended sincerely to perform the mitzvah but the lacked the means to do so? Perhaps, they both receive equal credit for the mitzvah.

It appears that we can resolve this dilemma based on a teaching from Rabbi Zusha’s famous brother Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy”a. In his sefer Noam Elimelech (Metzora), he reflects on the same matter as his holy brother. He applies this idea to interpret our blessed sages’ statement (Pesachim 50b): **“לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ומצוות אף על פי שלא לשמה, שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה”**—a person should always engage in the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos even though his actions are not purely motivated—not l’shma; because from these activities that are not purely motivated, he will eventually come to learn Torah and perform mitzvos for its own sake, with the purest of intentions—l’shma. In other words, HKB”H takes the Torah and mitzvos that were learned and performed **“not l’shma”** and brings them to a tzaddik whose intentions are **“l’shma,”** who only wishes to serve Hashem. This is the implication of the words **“בא לשמה”**.

The Tzaddikim Return the Rewards for the Mitzvos to the Jews Who Performed Them

We will now introduce a teaching from our holy teacher the Arizal (Sha’ar HaKavanos, Kavanat HaAmidah, Drush 6). In Shemoneh Esrei, in the berachah of **“Ahl HaTzaddikim,”** we say: **“ותן שכר טוב ויתן שכר טוב לכל הבוטחים בשמך באמת ושים חלקנו עמהם”**—**and give ample reward to all who sincerely trust in Your name**

and put our lot with them. We will summarize what he says:

Occasionally, a person commits transgressions that cancel out his mitzvos and prevents him from receiving the rewards for his mitzvos. In the meantime, until he performs teshuvah, the malachim and advocates generated by the mitzvos he performed are given to a tzaddik. There are, however, select, outstanding tzaddikim who do not wish to benefit from the deeds of others. Hence, when the ones who actually performed the mitzvos perform teshuvah, these tzaddikim happily return the rewards they received to them. Therefore, in this berachah, we pray to the Almighty to place the rewards that have accrued to us for the mitzvos we performed in Olam HaZeh but did not receive on account of our sins with these outstanding (altruistic) tzaddikim, so that they will return them to us when we perform teshuvah.

So, even if we have yet to achieve the level of performing mitzvos l’shma, and HKB”H combines our less-than-ideal deeds with the intentions of tzaddikim who yearn to perform those mitzvos l’shma, the rewards for our mitzvos will belong to them. Nevertheless, we can be consoled by praying: **“ושים חלקנו עמהם”**. We beseech HKB”H to place our portions of the mitzvos that we performed **“lo l’shma”** with those tzaddikim who do not wish to benefit from others in this manner.

Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa Completes the Intent of the Mitzvah of Tzedakah of the Entire World

With immense joy, we can now illuminate the statement in the Gemara: **“בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת מהר חורב ואומרת, כל העולם כולו ניוזנין בשביל חנינא בני, וחנינא בני די לו בקב חרובין מערב שבת לערב שבת.”** Without a doubt, many Jews give tzedakah in every generation, but not everyone is capable of doing so ideally, without ulterior motives or a desire to be rewarded. Therefore, HKB”H, in His infinite mercy, combines their less-than-ideal

giving of tzedakah with the pure, ideal desire of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa and other tzaddikim who emulate him—who want to give tzedakah but lack the funds and means. In this manner, the act of tzedakah of all Jews is completed ideally. Thus, the entire world is sustained by the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa and the tzaddikim who follow his example. Furthermore, all of Yisrael are rewarded for the mitzvah of tzedakah that they performed.

In conclusion, we will now elucidate the passuk: "נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו"—**you shall surely give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him.** The Midrash teaches (V.R. 34, 8): **"More than the householder (the wealthy person) does for the poor person, the poor person does for the householder."** In keeping with our current discussion, we are speaking about a rich man who gives albeit reluctantly and a poor person who wishes

he could give tzedakah like the rich man. As we have learned, HKB"H combines the heartfelt thought of the poor person with the actual giving of the rich person. As a result, the "ba'al habayis" giving the tzedakah fulfills the mitzvah of tzedakah totally.

This then is the interpretation of the passuk: "נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו". If you regret giving tzedakah and do not give with an open heart, you will not fulfill the mitzvah completely, because you lack the proper intent of the mitzvah. Consequently: "כי בגלל הדבר הזה"—as the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael taught: "גלגל הוא שחוזר בעולם"—you will have to reincarnate as a pauper who yearns to give tzedakah. Clearly then, it is advisable to give tzedakah with an open, loving heart, so that you will merit Hashem's blessing in your lifetime in all your endeavors: "כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ידך".



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