



Tremendous Tzedakah

One of the major themes found in the *parahshat hashavua* is the mitzvah of giving tzedakah. Aside from the money one distributes to the needy when asked, we are mandated to give at least a tenth of our income to the poor. This mitzvah carries with it many rewards and dividends.

Rambam in *Hilchot Matanot L'evyonim* notes that no one ever becomes poor from giving tzedakah. The *Sefer Hachinuch* adds that giving tzedakah is a medium of connection to Hashem and creates a conduit of blessing from Above. Conversely, those who are stingy block blessing from coming into their lives.

The Navi *Malachi* teaches that this is the only mitzvah with which one can test Hashem. “*Havi’u et kol hama’aser el beit ha-otzar, vihi teref be-veiti, u’vechanuni na bazot, amar Hashem Tzivaot: im lo eftach lachem et arubot hashamayim, ve’harikoti lachem brachah, ad beli dai* - Bring the whole of the tithes into the treasury so that there may be nourishment in My House, and **test Me** now therewith, says the Lord of Hosts, [to see] if I will not open for you the sluices of heaven and pour down for you blessing until there be no room to

suffice for it.” (*Malachi 3:10*) When one gives *ma’aser*, Hashem will repay him with tremendous bounty. The *Chida*, based on *Sefer Chasidim* explains that when one gives tzedakah and does not look at the recipient’s deeds, whether they are righteous or otherwise, likewise Hashem, measure for measure, will not look to see if we are deserving; His blessing will be showered with abundance.

The Torah teaches, “*pato-ach tiftach et yadecha*” (*Devarim 15:8*), with regard to tzedakah, one should open his hands when giving. The Vilna Gaon derives a profound message from this verse. When one closes his hand in a fist, all of his fingers appear to be the same size. However, when one opens his hand, notice that the fingers are different sizes. Similarly, when giving to the needy, we should examine each person’s individual needs and give accordingly.

Rav Elya Lopian, z”l adds a deeper dimension to the act of giving. In the *Selichot* prayers we ask the “*machnisei rachamim*” to bring our kindness before the Master of Kindness. Who are these angels of kindness? Explains Rav Lopian, these are the beggars who knock on our door asking for a donation. Each person who asks us for a donation or for a favor is an “angel,” a messenger sent from Above to gift us with an act of kindness, so we can be worthy of

kindness. Rav Pam, z'l explains that this idea is reflected in the Thirteen Middot of Mercy. We extol Hashem as the "Rav chesed ve'met." Why the focus on the middah of emet, truth? Notes Rav Pam, at times Hashem wants to do kindness with us but we are not deserving of kindness. Therefore, Hashem gives us an opportunity to do an act of kindness, thus rendering us deserving of the rav chesed from the aspect of truth.

Rav Biderman in *Be'er Hachayim*, quotes the *Zohar Hakadosh* -when Hashem wants to give a 'gift' to someone, He sends them a *shaliach* to ask for a donation. We can view giving tzedakah as a great merit, a mitzvah we have been gifted to perform. In particular, Elul is a time to increase our giving, thereby opening the conduit of mercy from Above into our lives. ■

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