

The Importance of Charity

PARASHAT VAYISHLACH

Yaakov Avinu was fighting with a mysterious man. He saw that he could not take Yaakov and he hit Yaakov's thigh and the ball of Yaakov's thigh became dislocated as he struggled with him. Yaakov was limping after the encounter. When the Torah tells us a story, it could be understood on many levels. The Zohar says, "he hit the ball of his thigh"-he hit him on the legs. What do the legs represent? These are the supporters of Torah. What does it mean to his the supporters of the Torah? There are always going to be problems with the supporters of the Torah? That's not true. How much does a person have to give to tzedaka? Avraham instituted to the idea of Maaser. When the Jews lived in the agricultural society, you had to separate terumah and leket, and on top of that there was the mitzva of tzedaka. You are not allowed to hold your hand back if someone needs tzedaka, you need to help them. Everybody must give tzedaka. If all Baal Habatim gave 10 percent, then there would be no budget cuts in yeshivas. Torah would be in a lot better shape.

The Vilna Gaon said to his family, you can never give less than 1/5th to tzedaka. The poskim argue if you can give tzedaka more than 20%. As opposed to any other mitzva, tzedaka is unique. It is the one mitzva that Hashem says, "test me". "Uvchanooni na bezot". A person gives tzedaka on basis he wants to get wealthy, he will get wealthy. Rav Moshe Feinstein says you test G-d, G-d will test you. You may not be able to save a dying relative even though you have a lot of money. The rationale of tzedaka is that when you take money and give it to tzedaka, you are saying that anything you have is from G-d. Tzedaka is Bitachon in action. A guy who doesn't give tzedaka is a fraud. You cannot think you earned everything yourself. You cannot predict who will make the money. Tzedaka is the acknowledgement that all is from G-d. G-d chooses who will make the money. A person never becomes poor because of giving to much tzedaka. People are so foolish, they need this and that. G-d gave you money to be a shaliyach, to distribute. If G-d loves the poor, why doesn't he give them money? G-d gave it to us so we could have merit of giving it to them. Tzedaka is putting your money where your mouth is. It's easy to give the money that you don't have, but once you have it, it's a real yetzer, it's a real test. Do you realize that G-d gave you everything or not? Until you have recognized that this fruit comes from G-d, you can't it (terumah). In this area, it's so difficult to realize that. You have to constantly remind yourself.

This lecture has been typed by Daniel Agalar for <http://www.puretorah.com/>

“When your brother stretches his arm out to you, grab him, strengthen him.” Don’t grab your hand back from your poor brother. When someone knocks at your door, it’s a genuine opportunity. If a person goes to a lot of people, you only give him a little. Better to give many small sums, than one big sum. Every time you give, you become a better person, you grow, it’s makes you more into a giver. If there is a person who doesn’t give tzedaka, you have to question if he’s Jewish. Most big givers of Jewish causes are not religious and they mostly give to Non-Jewish causes. You’re going to end up giving it one day or another. G-d will collect it. Maybe something will break, maybe you’ll get sick?

Mr. Reichman, one of the most wealthy Jews, gave maaser of 100 million just off Battery Park City. He came to Rav Shach. Rav Shach said to him, I am jealous of your Olam Haba, but your Olam Hazeh I don’t care less about. My daf of gemara gives me much more pleasure than all of your money.

In our modern world, people don’t support Torah as much. The Rosh Yeshiva has to say a big speech and bring them to give. People will give to places that don’t need as much because they make them feel good. You support a yeshiva, you get their Torah. You can give more than 1/5th for a will and for supporting Torah. Most people don’t give money lishma. They give money because they want their name on the wall. People give money because they like the guy who wants the money. You have to check out the place before giving tzedaka. Give smartly, to what’s needed most.