



A Golden Opportunity

When we are successful, we may feel it is an outcome of our own efforts as it says Kochi V'Otzem Yadi... my strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth (Devarim 8:17. See Devarim 8:12-14, 11:15,16 with Rashi, 32:15).

The Tur tells us the money we possess is actually a deposit. We need to do the will of the one who deposited it by us, which is to distribute it to the poor (Tur, Yoreh Deah, 247. See Ohr Hachaim, Shemos 22:24. See also Chovas Halvevos, Shaar HaBitachon, 4.). Turanusrufus once asked R' Akiva if Hashem loves the poor, why doesn't He sustain them. R' Akiva answered that Hashem makes people needy so that through giving them charity we may be saved from the judgment of Gehinom (Baba Basra 10a). In this way we can comprehend Ki Yiyeh Becha Evyon as the poor person is there because of you, meaning in order for you to sustain him and fulfill the Mitzva of Tzedaka, charity (Ohr Hachaim, Devarim 15:7).

Some may feel that giving money to charity will diminish the amount they have. The Imrei Shefer gives us an alternative interpretation of He'ashir Lo Yarbeh V'hadal Lo Yamit (Shemos 30:15. The simple meaning is that the wealthy shouldn't increase and the destitute not decrease from half a Shekel.): a wealthy person's wealth will not be increased by not giving charity nor will a poor person become poorer by giving charity. The Rambam (Hilchos Matnas Aniyim 10:2) writes one won't become poor from giving charity and no evil or damage will come about because of it.

Years ago, there was a Syrian who resided in America and wanted to send mail to Syria. At the post office, he was told that he needs more money (stamps) to send the package since it was heavy. The uncultured Syrian was confused as he said if more stamps are added, that would just make it heavier. It was explained to him

that with these stamps it gets it through to Syria. The same applies to charity. People say they are low on money and can't give. It is just the opposite, as when one is low on money that is surely when he should give. This same idea is brought out from the following metaphor. There was a wagon that didn't drive well. As a result, it was decided amongst the people there to unload unnecessary items. One of them said that since the wheels are the heaviest, they should be taken off. Needless to say what a fool he was, as the wheels are what gets them to their destination. The same applies to charity, that if one is going through a tough time financially, he shouldn't give less charity as that is like removing the wheels. Rather he should take off the unnecessary expenses just as he would remove the unnecessary items from the wagon.

It is preferable to give the money before the poor person even asks (See Kesubos 67b). An allusion to this is found in the Trop on Becha Evyon (which means if there shall be a destitute person among you) which is a Kadma V'azla-we should precede and give the poor person before he asks (See Shekalim 5:4).

We should be sensitive to the feelings of the poor as the Rambam (Hilchos Matnas Aniyim, 10:4) writes we should give Tzedaka with a cheery countenance and happiness in addition to feeling his pain. One should also speak words of consolation. The Mitzvos of Leket, Shichicha, and Peah are for the poor (Vayikra 19:9, Devarim 24:19. Leket- If one or two ears of grain fall to the ground at any point during the harvest, they are gleanings that must be left for the poor. If three or more ears fall together, the farmer may retrieve them. Shichicha- if one forgot to pick or gather a bundle from his field, he leaves it for the poor. Peah- an edge of the field must be left unharvested, and the poor are to be permitted unhindered access to take the

leftover produce.). Leket is from the ground, reminding us of the status of a pauper as it says Ma'oshpos Yarim Evyon, from the trash heaps He lifts the destitute (Tehillim 113:7). Shichicha is rooted in Shachach, to forget, since the poor are forgotten- Lo Lanetzach Yishachach Evyon, the pauper shall not be forgotten eternally (Tehillim 9:19). Peah is the edge of the field. This is just as a poor person is one on the edge as he feels no one cares about him. Now, when we take the initials of these three- Leket, Shichicha, Peah- we get Shafal, low, since the poor are viewed like this and feel this way.

There was a beggar that was collecting in Yeshiva Torah Ohr. One of the boys in the Yeshiva went to give him some money. When the man said that today was his 60th birthday, the boy told his friends- "Let's make him a birthday party in center one (a Charedi mall)." They bought party hats and balloons and told the beggar they would take him out to eat and that he could order anything he wanted. About twenty boys came to the party. They put in extra effort to make this beggar feel good since obviously, no one else was celebrating his birthday. They even gave him the pictures they took at the party which he clearly cherished. This was this man's last birthday on this world, as he died later that year.

What about those who don't give because of those who are deceivers and not worthy of charity? The Sanzer Rebbe once told a wealthy person the difference between me and you is that I give Tzedaka to 1,000 people on the possibility one is authentic whereas you won't give to 1,000 people just in case one is a fraud (Incidentally, the Gemara says we must be grateful to the frauds among the poor who pretend to be paupers in order to solicit charity as if not for them we would be punished for being lax in giving charity to all who request it (Yerushalmi Pe'ah 8:8, See Kesubos 68a).

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