



Tzedakah

The greatest of all mitzvos isn't always the easiest to fulfill. The Rebbe encourages us to give generously.



Making a Pledge

One's financial difficulties need not stop him from giving tzedakah. On the contrary, giving tzedakah will improve one's finances.

Although the money that you will earn in the future is not yet available to you in liquid assets, the widespread custom in this country ([a country] that is **outstanding** in charity and benevolence) is to make a pledge—meaning that one guarantees and obligates himself (and since this obligation is a **merit**, it's not referred to as an "obligation" but as a "pledge") in writing, that he will give a certain sum to tzedakah every month. Since all Jews can be assumed to be upstanding (כל ישראל בחזקת כשרות), you will certainly fulfill your pledge.

When a Jew resolves to give a large sum of money to tzedakah, Hashem helps him bring this positive intention

into fruition—meaning that he will earn a lot so that he will be able to fulfill his pledge to give a large sum to tzedakah.

There is a well-known story that occurred with my father-in-law, the Rebbe: When the initiative to print the *sefarim* of the Tzemach Tzedek began, a young man went in to my father-in-law, the Rebbe, and pledged to cover the entire cost of the printing; this was despite the fact that in the man's current financial state, such a sum was far beyond his means. Nevertheless, since he resolved to give this sum, Hashem opened **new channels** of livelihood to him (specifically **new**

channels, meaning that this wasn't merely an expansion of the preexisting channels, but rather entirely new channels). He was then able to give the entire sum that he pledged with joy and goodwill, with several times the sum remaining for his personal needs (even without this, he would have given the sum with joy and goodwill).

This story is in the category of "*Torah Shebaal Peh*" from my father-in-law, the Rebbe, our generation's *nassi*. The lesson to be learned from it is that when a Jew resolves to give a large sum of money to tzedakah, even if this sum is beyond his means, Hashem opens new channels for him

"WHEN A JEW RESOLVES TO GIVE A LARGE SUM OF MONEY TO TZEDAKAH, HASHEM HELPS HIM BRING THIS POSITIVE INTENTION INTO FRUITION."

so that he is able to fulfill his pledge in its entirety.

(It is obvious that the intention isn't that one should act in the way of "*Olam HaTohu*" (the World of Chaos, i.e. unreasonably) but rather in a way befitting *Olam HaTikkun* (the World of Repair, i.e. reasonably.)¹

Two Jews – Three Beneficiaries

Many thousands of people met with the Rebbe and received a dollar from his holy hand. In this sicha, the Rebbe explains the significance of this.

There is a well-known teaching of the [Friediker Rebbe,] whose *yahrtzeit* is today, that when two Jews meet, they must endeavor to ensure that their meeting benefits a third Jew.

This means that besides the benefit that the meeting brings the two participants in their *ahavas Yisroel* and Jewish unity, as well as in their Divine service—as the Mittler Rebbe taught, that when two Jews meet, there are two G-dly souls combating one animalistic soul—they should also endeavor to benefit a third Jew.

This is one of the reasons for the recent custom that when Jews come to meet with me, to request a *bracha* and the like, I include in this [meeting] a *shlichus mitzvah* in the form of tzedakah. This is in accordance with the abovementioned directive, that when two Jews meet, they must endeavor to benefit a third. [This directive] can easily be fulfilled through a *shlichus mitzvah* (which unites the sender and the one sent) in the form of tzedakah, which brings benefit to the recipient.

Therefore, my advice and request is that it is appropriate to do this everywhere; whenever two Jews meet, they should endeavor to benefit a third, beginning with the mitzvah of tzedakah; by giving each other a *shlichus mitzvah* to give money to



THE REBBE GIVES TZEDAKAH TO TWO ELDERLY WOMEN ON HIS WAY OUT OF 770.

tzedakah, which unites the two of them in the mitzvah of tzedakah.²

Misplaced Modesty

Anonymity isn't always a good thing, especially when publicity can increase the amount of tzedakah given.

Regarding acting modestly, it should be noted that there are those who claim that their charitable acts aren't well-known because of they act in a way of "Go modestly with your G-d" (הצנוע לכת עם אלוקים).

The response to this is that while "Go modestly with your G-d" is such an important trait that it's even greater than bringing *korbanos*—as the *pasuk* continues, "Does Hashem want thousands of rams?... But rather... and go modestly with your G-d"³—nevertheless, those around him may think that he doesn't give tzedakah, and they will learn from him, because, seeing a wealthy and respected Jew who doesn't give tzedakah, they might think that this "proves" that giving tzedakah isn't something "respectable" people do.

Therefore, tzedakah-giving must be publicized so that people will follow the giver's example. For this reason, "it is a mitzvah to publicize those who perform a mitzvah."

If he also wants the advantages associated with modesty, he can privately add to his contributions **many times as much** as he gives publicly.⁴

Then there is another category of people that act modestly. When such a person is asked how much he contributed and to whom—to which poor person or institution—he answers that he is modest and therefore nobody knows about the sums of money that he has given to tzedakah. How could he publicize that he gave a specific sum to tzedakah, [he asks,] if doing so might give him feelings of self-worth and conceit—the most negated trait in both *mussar* and *Chassidus*. Therefore, [he says,] he wishes to distance himself from it "to the farthest point;" and what's more, [he wants] "neither anything of it nor any part of it" (the detailed differences between these terms are explained at length in connection with the Alter Rebbe's opinion in this matter) and so he chooses to act modestly.

This is the reason for the drastic reduction in tzedakah-giving. [It is] because no one knows how much he gave to tzedakah. If he were required to report how much tzedakah he gave, he wouldn't end up reducing



THE REBBE HANDS TZEDAKAH TO POOR PEOPLE AT 770.

[his contributions], for he would be embarrassed to reduce the sum he had been giving until now, and instead, he would try and give more!

The extent of the importance of [publicizing one's tzedakah] can be seen from the words of Rabban Yochanan Ben Zakkai to his students: "May it be G-d's will that your fear of Heaven be as great as your **fear of human beings!**" If this was said to Jews who were on the lofty level of **students of Rabbi Yochanan Ben**

"TO THE POOR PERSON WHO RECEIVES THE TZEDAKAH, EVERYTHING ELSE, INCLUDING WHETHER OR NOT THIS WILL CAUSE FEELINGS OF CONCEIT [IN THE GIVER], DOESN'T MATTER!"

Zakkai, what can people such as ourselves say?

If someone is worried about feelings of conceit and self-worth, firstly, there is a simple solution: let him report to **one individual**. In this way, he will have the benefit of "fear of human beings," and there won't be any room for concern about conceit or self-worth; because aside for this one individual, no one else knows anything about it!

In addition, there is a well-known answer that the Mittler Rebbe gave to one of the *Chassidim* who complained about feelings of conceit resulting from his saying *maamarim* by heart: "An onion should become of you, but *Chassidus* you must say over" (א ציבעלע). זאל פון דיר ווערן אבער חסידות זאלסטו (חזר'ן). Similarly, in our case, regarding the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzedakah, what matters is that the poor person or the institution receives the sum that they deserve. To the poor person who receives the tzedakah, everything else, including whether or not this will cause feelings of conceit [in the giver], doesn't matter!

Another important point is that the advice given to negate feelings of conceit and self-worth should not, G-d forbid, be to lessen one's giving of



tzedakah. Rather, it should be that he should work on himself **not** to feel any conceit or self-worth!

It is clear that one should not rely on the fact that no one knows about his actions, for Chazal said, "A person sins in secret and Hashem announces it publicly!"⁵

Now or Later?

In this letter, the Rebbe addresses a quandary: If one wills his money to



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tzedakah, perhaps he could give more that way than if he gives while living?

You write about distributing money after 120 years.

There are well-known words of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, in numerous *sichos*, that logic doesn't agree with such ideas. For why should any good thing be pushed off until after many decades, as Hashem will grant very long life to each and every

Jew, and one could do the good deed personally, during his life in this world. And this will increase one's lifespan, as it's known that tzedakah and good deeds [lengthen one's life].

Although there is an instruction that one who gives away large sums [to tzedakah] should not give away more than one-fifth [of his assets], whereas after 120 years [one could give away everything]—nevertheless, besides for the fifth, which you can certainly

give away, there are also many ways in which it's permitted - and indeed, it is a great mitzvah and obligation - to give more than one-fifth to tzedakah, as detailed in the *Achronim*.⁶ **T**

1. Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 4 p. 2030.
2. Ibid. 5748 vol. 1 p. 239.
3. Micha 6:7-8.
4. Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol. 3 p. 253.
5. Ibid. 5745 vol. 1 p. 655.
6. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 373.