

INTRODUCTION

THE TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT THAT ALMOST FELL UPON THE INHABITANTS OF SAFED [TZFAT] IN THE TIMES OF THE ARIZAL AND OF RABBI YOSEF KARO ZTK'L, BECAUSE OF THE SUFFERING OF ONE OF THE CITY'S POOR INHABITANTS

Everyone needs to be compassionate and not cruel, especially towards "the broken vessels", the poor and the needy, for the Holy One Blessed be He desires their closeness, and when they are in pain, they accuse and awaken evil decrees, Hashem Yishmor as we found written in the writings of the Ari ha Kaddosh:

ONCE RABBI YITZCHAK LURIA ZTKL [THE ARI HA KADDOSH] WAS LEARNING WITH HIS STUDENTS IN THE FIELDS OF SAFED WHERE THE PROPHET HOSHEA LIES BURIED, WHEN SUDDENLY HE INTERRUPTED HIS LESSON ON THE SECRETS OF THE TORAH AND SAID: MY FRIENDS, KNOW THAT RIGHT NOW I HEARD A PROCLAMATION IN HEAVEN THAT A PLAGUE OF GRAVE PROPORTIONS WILL DESCEND ON SAFED SOON AND WILL CONSUME ALL THE PRODUCE OF THE FIELD SPARING NOTHING, AND THIS PLAGUE IS CAUSED BY ONE POOR PERSON, A TORAH SCHOLAR AND HIS NAME IS RABBI YAAKOV, WHO SITS AND CRIES AND COMPLAINS ABOUT THE STRICT JUDGMENTS OF HASHEM. FOR HE CAN NOT ENDURE ANYMORE WHAT HIS EVIL NEIGHBORS DO TO HIM, FOR THEY SHOW NO COMPASSION AND DO NOTHING TO ALLEVIATE HIS SUFFERING. AND THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE IS FULL OF ANGER AT ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY BECAUSE OF THIS SITUATION. Therefore the proclamation goes out and announces the imminent arrival of the plague. Therefore my students, quickly collect some money and take it immediately to the house of this poor person, Rabbi Yaakov, maybe in this fashion we will be able to annul the evil decree. Then Rabbi Yitzchak haKohen got up and took the money they had collected and went to the house of Rabbi Yaakov. He ran and when he got to the house, he found Rabbi Yaakov sitting and crying. Rabbi Yitzchak told him: Why are you crying? And Rabbi Yaakov replied: How Am I not to cry? for besides my steep poverty, now the clay pots that I used for carrying water for the neighbors broke and I have no money to buy others. That's why I cry, for I am suffering so much, and am I really more evil than the rest of the people? And when Rabbi Yitzchak heard the words of Rabbi Yaakov he was amazed for he realized the truth of what the Ari ha Kaddosh had told the students. Then Rabbi Yitzchak ha Kohen gave the money to Rabbi Yaakov, bringing great happiness to him and Rabbi Yitzchak requested of him not to complain about the strict judgments of Hashem because he almost caused a disgrace to all the inhabitants of Safed. Rabbi Yaakov agreed and immediately asked Hashem for mercy and for the dissolution of the plague that was about to descend on Safed and he asked Hashem to forgive his neighbors for not helping him. Then Rabbi Yitzchak ha Kohen returned to the place where the Ari ha Kaddosh was studying along with his students and he recounted everything that had transpired and everyone was very impressed. Then the Ari ha Kaddosh told his students: Blessed are you, for you caused the evil decree to be annulled. Then they continued studying. A few minutes afterwards, they raised their eyes to the sky and saw a great army of locusts crossing the skies and they feared greatly. Then the Ari ha Kaddosh told them: Do not fear for the sin of the peoples towards that poor man has been already forgiven and the evil decree has already been annulled. And a powerful wind blew and took with it the locust and plunged them into the sea and not even one locust remained. And from that day on, the people of Safed were very diligent in providing all the needs of that poor man Rabbi Yaakov

Kitve ha Ari ha Kaddosh brought in Kav ha Yashar Chapter 9, and in Sefer Meil Tzedakah

AND THIS SHOULD SERVE AS A WARNING TO ALL OF ISRAEL, TO BE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED FOR THE NEEDS OF THE POOR AND THE DESTITUTE, WHO ARE REFERRED TO AS "BROKEN VESSELS", AND HA KADDOSH BARUCH HU IS ALWAYS CLOSE TO THEM, and dwells among them as our Sages (Baba Batra 9a) have said: Whoever gives a coin to the poor person earns six blessings, while one who comforts him with his speech earns eleven" For the heart of the poor person is always bitter because of his inability to obtain what he needs...For when the winter time comes, the rich person sits like a prince in his warm house. But the poor has no way of heating himself. For all the days of the poor are full of suffering, day and night...And when Shabbat and Yom Tov come, a time for rejoicing with food and clean dressing, the poor lack these things and yet they praise and thank their Master...Who can put into paper all that the poor man suffers?...THEREFORE I AM WARNING YOU: WHOEVER HELPS A POOR PERSON IN HIS TIME OF NEED, HAS TO BE VERY CAREFUL, THAT HE WILL DO

SO WITHOUT EMBARRASSING HIM, G-D FORBID, BECAUSE IT IS ENOUGH FOR HIM THE SUFFERINGS OF POVERTY. Sefer Kav ha Yashar Chapter 9

THE STORY CITED ABOVE OCCURRED AT A TIME WHEN SOME OF THE GREATEST TORAH SAGES LIVED IN THE CITY OF SAFED, YET THE LACK OF COMPASSION FOR A SINGLE POOR PERSON ALMOST CAUSED A TERRIBLE CALAMITY TO STRIKE ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS. HOW AWESOME THE POWER OF THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH IS AND HOW TERRIBLE ITS NEGLECT.

May it be Hashem's will to guide us in the ways of Tzedakah and Chesed and may we merit to see the complete redemption as it is written (Yeshayahu 1:27) "Zion will be redeemed through judgment, and those who return to her through Tzedakah" and it also says (YESHAYAHU 56, 1) "Thus Says Hashem, Keep Judgment and do Tzedakah, for My salvation is near to come and My Tzedakah to be revealed."

*There is nothing in the world more severe than poverty, the most terrible of all sufferings. Our sages said: All sufferings are on one side, and poverty is on the other
Midrash Shemot Rabba 31:12*

*And included among the poor people of your city, are the poor people of Eretz Israel who really are the poor of our city, the city of our strength, therefore it is the custom of all exiles to give to the emissaries from Eretz Israel, Fortunate are you Israel.
Rabbi Eliezer Papo ZTK'L, Sefer Pele Yoetz Tzedakah*

*Come and see: anyone who has riches and gives Tzedakah to the poor, and does not lend on interest is regarded as if he observed all the Mitzvot
Midrash Shemot Rabba 31:4*

CHAPTER 1

SELECTED LAWS OF TZEDAKAH

READ THE LAWS OF TZEDAKAH SLOWLY FOR AS THE RAMBAM SAYS [IN HILCHOT MATANOT LA ANIYIM CHAPTER 10:1], THIS IS THE POSITIVE MITZVAH WE SHOULD BE MOST CAREFUL ABOUT

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch

Chapter 34: The Laws Pertaining to Tzedakah

1. It is a positive Mitzvah to give Tzedakah to the poor of Israel, as [Devarim 15:8] states: "You shall surely open your hand for him," and [Vayikra 25:36] states: "And your brother shall live with you." Whoever sees a poor man requesting help and turns away from him without giving him Tzedakah violates a negative Mitzvah, as [Devarim 15:7] states; "Do not close your heart or shut your hand from your poor brother."

Tzedakah is the sign of the descendants of our Patriarch Abraham, as [Bereshit 18:19] states: "for I know him; that he will command his children...to perform Tzedakah."

The throne of Israel will not be established and the true faith will not stand except through Tzedakah, as [Yeshayahu 54:14] states: "I shall be established through Tzedakah." Giving Tzedakah supersedes all the sacrifices, as [Proverbs 21:3] states: "The performance of Tzedakah and judgment will be more desirable before G-d than an altar." Israel will be redeemed only through Tzedakah, as [Yeshayahu 1:27] states: "Zion will be redeemed through judgment, and those who return to her through Tzedakah."

A person will never become poor because of giving Tzedakah, nor will any evil or damage come because of Tzedakah, as [Yeshayahu 32:17] states: "The work of Tzedakah is peace." Whoever shows mercy will have mercy shown towards him, as [Devarim 13:18] states: "He will grant you mercy, have compassion on you, and make you flourish." In contrast, the lineage of anyone who is cruel is a matter of doubt.

The Holy One, blessed be He, is close to the call of the poor, as [Job 34:28] states: "And He hears the cries of the poor." Accordingly, one should take great care lest they cry out, for a covenant has been established with them, as [Shemot 22:26] states: "And it shall come to pass that he will cry to Me, and I will hear, for I am compassionate." The Jerusalem Talmud (see Shir Hashirim Rabba 6:11) states: "The door which will not open for the poor will open for the physician."

A person should meditate on the fact that, at every moment, he asks G-d for his livelihood. Just as he requests that the Holy One, blessed be He, hear his cry, so too should he hear the cry of the poor. He should also meditate on the fact that the wheel of fortune turns constantly, and ultimately either he, his children, or his grandchildren will need to receive Tzedakah.

A person should not think: How can I reduce my wealth by giving it to the poor? He must realize that the money is not his, but rather a trust granted to him in order to carry out the will of the One who entrusted it to him. This is the portion which he will ultimately receive for all his labor in this world, as [Yeshayahu 58:8] states: "Your Tzedakah will proceed before you." Tzedakah wards off harsh decrees and prolongs one's life.

2. Every person is obligated to give Tzedakah according to his potential, even a poor man who derives his livelihood from Tzedakah. If he has some money of his own which he does not invest in business, he is permitted to take Tzedakah since the principal is not invested in a manner which will allow him to live off the profits. Nevertheless, since he has a base which could provide an income, he is obligated to give Tzedakah from what is being given him.

Even if he is able to give only a small amount, he should not hold himself back, because the small amount he gives is equivalent to a large amount given by a rich man. In this vein, [Menachot 110a] states: When The Torah [Vayikra 1:9] describes a burnt offering of a beast, it uses the expression "a fire-offering, a pleasing fragrance"; when it (ibid. 1:17) describes the burnt offering of a fowl, it also states: "a fire-offering, a pleasing fragrance"; when it (ibid. 2:9) describes the meal offering, it also states: "a fire-offering, a pleasing fragrance." This teaches that there is no difference whether one gives a lot or a little, so long as one directs one's heart to one's Father in Heaven. Nevertheless, anyone who has no more than what is necessary for his own livelihood is not required to give Tzedakah, for one's own livelihood has precedence over that of any other person.

3. How much should be given to a poor person? "Enough to meet all his needs" (Devarim 15:8). This applies to a poor man who receives Tzedakah without anyone knowing of it. The people of his city are obligated to give him enough for all his needs, allowing him to maintain the same standard of living as before he became impoverished. In contrast, if a poor man goes around collecting alms, it is only necessary to give him a small donation according to his stature. At the very least, in the entire city, he should be given enough bread and food for two meals each day and a place to sleep. We must support and clothe the gentile poor together with the Jewish poor, as an act of peace.

4. How much should a person give to Tzedakah? During the first year, he should give one-tenth of his principal. Afterwards, he should give one-tenth of the profit he makes each year (after deducting his household expenses!).

This is an average measure. The most desirable way of performing the Mitzvah is to give one fifth of the principal in the first year, and then one fifth each year from one's profit.

Nevertheless, a person should not give away more than a fifth, lest he himself later require other people's assistance. This restriction applies only during his lifetime. However, on his deathbed a person can give away up to a third of his property to Tzedakah.

One should not use his tithes [Money set aside for Tzedakah] to perform a Mitzvah - e.g. to donate candles to the synagogue or to perform other Mitzvot. Rather, they should be given to the poor. If the chance to perform a Mitzvah presents itself - e.g. to circumcise one's son, to help provide for the marriage of a poor bride and groom, or the like, and similarly, to buy sacred texts to study from and to lend to others to study from - if one does not have the means and would not be able to perform the Mitzvah from his own money, he may use his tithes for that purpose.

If he used his tithes to purchase sacred texts, he must take care to lend them to others - when he does not need them, for he receives first priority. He should also write in them that they were purchased with his tithes, so that after his passing his sons will not regard them as their own property.

5. A person who seeks merit should constrain his evil inclination and open his hand. Everything which is done for the sake of heaven should be done in the best and nicest manner. If one builds a synagogue, it should be nicer than one's home. If one gives a hungry person food, one should feed him from the best and sweetest foods on one's table. If one clothes a naked person, one should clothe him from the finest garments in one's wardrobe. If one [desires to] consecrate something [for Tzedakah], he should consecrate the choicest of his possessions. Thus, [Vayikra 3:16] states: "All the fat [Best part] shall go to G-d."

6. A person who provides for his older children whom he is not obligated to sustain (i.e., those above six years old) in order to teach his sons Torah and train his daughters in a proper path, and similarly, one who gives presents to his father (whom he can sustain only from his Tzedakah money) - should they require it - may consider these expenses as Tzedakah. Furthermore, he should give these individuals precedence over others. Even someone who is neither a son nor a father - merely a relative - receives priority over others.

The poor of one's household take precedence over the poor of one's city, and the poor of one's city take precedence over the poor of another city, as implied by [Devarim 15:11]: "[Open your hand generously] to your poor and destitute brother in your land." Nevertheless, the manager of a charitable fund should take care not to give his relatives more than other poor people.

7. Anyone who gives Tzedakah to a person in an unfriendly manner, with his face buried in the ground, forfeits his merit even if he gave him one thousand gold pieces. He also transgresses the prohibition (Devarim 15:10): "Do not feel bad about giving him." Rather, one should give in a pleasant manner, with happiness, sharing his suffering with him, as [Job 30:25] declares: "Did I not cry for the person beset by difficulty? Did my soul not grieve for the needy?" He should speak words of comfort and consolation to him, as [Job 29:13] states: "I brought joy to the widow's heart."

8. It is forbidden to turn away empty-handed a poor man who asks for a gift, even if all you give him is a dried fig, as [Psalms 74:21] states: "Do not turn away the oppressed ashamed." If you have nothing to give him, console him with words. It is forbidden to rebuke harshly or raise one's voice against a poor person, for his heart is broken and humble; behold, [Psalms 51:19] states; "a broken and humble heart, G-d will not disdain." Woe to he who embarrasses the poor! Rather, we should be like parents to them, showing them mercy and speaking to them, as [Job 29:16] states: "I am a father to the destitute."

9. Promises to Tzedakah are considered as vows. Therefore, someone who says: "I promise to give a sela [An amount of money] to Tzedakah" or "This sela [This amount] is for Tzedakah" must give it to the poor immediately. If

he delays, he violates the prohibition (Devarim 23:22): "Do not delay," for it was possible for him to have given it immediately.

If there are no poor in his vicinity, he should set the money aside until he meets a poor person. If he makes a vow in the synagogue to give Tzedakah which is entrusted to the Gabbai, he does not violate the above mentioned prohibition until the Gabbai requests that he pay. If he delays doing so, he violates the prohibition immediately. There is an exception when the Gabbai tells him that he has no immediate need for funds and merely requests that he entrust the promised monies to him.

10. A person who promises: "I will give a sela [Money] to so and so," does not violate the above prohibition until he meets that poor person. A person may set aside money for Tzedakah so that it will be available for him to distribute a little bit at a time, as he sees fit.

11. A person who influences others and prevails upon them to give Tzedakah receives a greater reward than the giver, as [implied by Yeshayahu 32:17]: "The work of Tzedakah is peace." [Daniel 12:3]: "And those who motivate the many to righteousness shall be as the stars" applies to the managers of Tzedakah funds and those who collect Tzedakah. The manager of a Tzedakah fund should not be upset if the poor insult him, for this increases his merit even more.

12. The greatest rung of Tzedakah, which cannot be surpassed, is to support a poor Jew and maintain his position before he reaches utter poverty. This includes giving him a proper gift in an honorable manner, granting him a loan, involving him in a partnership, or finding him a business or profession which allows him to support himself, and thus not be forced to rely on others. This is implied by the Mitzvah (Vayikra 25:35): "You shall come to his aid" i.e., assist him so that he does not fall.

13. One should take care to give Tzedakah secretly, hiding one's gifts to the greatest extent possible. If it is possible to give in a manner where the donor is unaware of the identity of the recipient, and the recipient of the donor, this is very desirable. At the very least, one should not boast of the Tzedakah one gives. Nevertheless, a person who consecrates an article as Tzedakah is permitted to write his name upon it, so that it will serve as a memorial for him. It is fitting to do so.

14. In particular, attention should be paid to give Tzedakah to a poor Torah Sage in a manner fitting to his honor. If he does not want to accept Tzedakah, he should be offered merchandise for business dealings. It should be sold to him at a low price and purchased from him at a high price. If he is knowledgeable in commerce, he should be lent money to invest in a business. The Talmud [Pesachim 53b] declares "Whoever supplies a Torah Sage with merchandise merits to sit in the heavenly academy." Similarly, [Berachot 34b] states: "All the prophets envisioned only [the reward resulting from] engaging in commerce on behalf of a Torah Sage and marrying one's daughter to a Torah Sage."

15. A person should always avoid taking Tzedakah, accepting difficulty rather than seeking the assistance of others. Similarly, [Shabbat 118a] states: "Make your Shabbat like a weekday, but do not seek assistance from others." Even a dignified Torah Sage who has become impoverished should involve himself in a profession, even a menial profession, rather than accept help from others.

16. Anyone who does not need to accept Tzedakah, but deceives people and takes, will not die before he requires public assistance. However, anyone who needs to receive Tzedakah and cannot live unless he takes it - e.g. an older man, a sick person, or someone suffering from privation - and yet, out of pride, refuses to take it, is considered as a murderer and is liable for his life. All he has for his pain is sin and iniquity. However, anyone who needs to take Tzedakah and refrains, afflicting himself and living a life of privation rather than burdening the public will not die before he is able to support others. Concerning such an individual, [Yirmiyahu 17:7] states: "Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d."

SELECTED LAWS OF TZEDAKAH FROM THE RAMBAM'S
MISHNE TORAH, HILCHOT MATANOT ANIYIM

The redemption of captives receives priority over sustaining the poor and providing them with clothing. [Indeed] there is no greater Mitzvah than the redemption of captives. For a captive is among those who are hungry, thirsty, and unclothed and he is in mortal peril. If someone pays no attention to his redemption, he violates the negative commandments: "Do not harden your heart or close your hand" (Devarim 15:7), "Do not stand by when the blood of your neighbor is in danger" (Vayikra 19:16), and "He shall not oppress him with exhausting work in your presence" (ibid. 25:53). And he has negated the observance of the positive Mitzvot: "You shall certainly open up your hand to him" (Devarim 15:8), "And your brother shall live with you" (ibid. 19:18), "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18), "Save those who are taken for death" (Proverbs 24:11), and many other decrees of this nature. There is no Mitzvah as great as the redemption of captives.

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, "Mishneh Torah" (Laws of gifts to the Poor, 8:10)

"We must be more careful about the Mitzvah of Tzedakah than about all the other positive Mitzvot [Mitzvot Ase], for Tzedakah is a distinguishing characteristic of the descendants of Abraham, as it is written: 'For I have loved him because he commands his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Compassionate One to do Tzedakah and justice' (Bereshit 18:19)." Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon "Mishneh Torah" (Laws of gifts to the Poor, 10:1)

Anyone who turns his eyes away from [giving] Tzedakah is described as being "rebellious". Just the same as someone who worships false divinities is described as "rebellious, as [Devarim 13:14] states with regard to the worship of false divinities: "Rebellious men went out." And with regard to a person who turns his eyes away from [giving] Tzedakah, [ibid. 15:9] states: "Be careful, lest a rebellious thought arise in your heart." Such a person is also called "wicked," as [Proverbs 12:10] states: "The mercies of the wicked are cruel." And he is called a sinner, as [Devarim, loc. cit.,] states: "And he shall cry out against you to G-d and you will be deemed as sinning." The Holy One, blessed be He, is close to the outcry of the poor, as it is written: "You hear the outcry of the poor." Therefore one must be careful with regard to their outcry, for a covenant has been established with them, as [Shemot 22:26] states: "When he will cry out to Me, I will listen, for I am compassionate." Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, "Mishneh Torah" (Laws of gifts to the Poor, 10:3)

There are eight levels in Tzedakah, each level surpassing the other:

1. The highest level beyond which there is none is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him, or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others [for alms]. Concerning this [Vayikra 25:35] states: "You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you." Implied is that you should support him before he falls and becomes needy.
2. A lower [level] than this is one who gives Tzedakah to the poor without knowing to whom he gave and without the poor person knowing from whom he received. For this is an observance of the Mitzvah for its sake alone.' This [type of giving was] exemplified by the secret chamber that existed in the Beit ha Mikdash. The righteous would make donations there in secret and poor people of distinguished lineage would derive their livelihood from it in secret. A level close to this is giving to a Tzedakah fund. A person should not give to a Tzedakah fund unless he knows that the person managing it is faithful, wise, and capable of administering it in a proper manner as Rabbi Chananya ben Teradyon was.'
3. A lower level than that is an instance when the giver knows to whom he is giving, but the poor person does not know from whom he received. An example of this was the great Sages who would go in secret and throw money into the doorways of the poor. This is an appropriate way of giving Tzedakah and it is the proper conduct if the trustees of the Tzedakah fund are not conducting themselves appropriately.'
4. A lower level than that is an instance when the poor person knows from whom he took, but the donor does not know to whom he gave. An example of this was the great Sages who would bundle coins in a sheet and hang them over their shoulders and the poor would come and take them so that they would not be embarrassed.'
5. A lower level than that is giving [the poor person] in his hand before he asks.
6. A lower level than that is giving him after he asks.

7. A lower level than this is giving him less than what is appropriate, but with a pleasant countenance.
8. A lower level than that is giving him with sadness.

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, "Mishneh Torah" (Laws of gifts to the Poor, 10: 8-14)

It is better for a person to increase in gifts to the needy [Matanot la Evyonim] than to increase in his festive meal [Seudat Purim] and his sending of foods to friends [Mishloach Manot], for there is no greater happiness nor a more exalted one, than to gladden the heart of the poor, the orphans and the widows and the converts, for he who gladdens the heart of those afflicted people befits the Shechina as it is written "To revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Yeshayahu 57:15) Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Mishneh Torah Hilchot Megilah 2:17

It is the custom of the entire Jewish community to give greater amounts to Tzedakah, and [do more acts of] good deeds, and to be concerned with fulfillment of Mitzvot from Rosh Hashana through Yom Kippur, than the rest of the year. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvah 3:14

FROM SEFER HA CHINUCH
66 [THE MITZVAH OF LENDING TO THE POOR]

To lend to a poor man as one can afford, according to what he needs in order to bring him relief and ease (lift) his anguish from him. This Mitzvah of giving loans is a stronger and greater obligation than the Mitzvah of giving Tzedakah: For if someone's penury has become revealed and known among people, and he has come out into the open to ask [help, Tzedakah] of them, his distress and suffering is not as great as that of a person who has not yet been reduced to this ignominy and who fears to enter this state; and if he will have the small help of a loan, so that he can find a little relief, perhaps he will never need to come asking [for Tzedakah]; then, when G-d will mercifully grant him financial ease, he will pay his creditors and live from the rest. Therefore our complete, perfect Torah adjured us about this, to support a destitute person with a loan before he will be reduced to begging [Tzedakah]

THE ROOT REASON FOR THE MITZVAH IS THAT HASHEM WISHED FOR HIS CREATED HUMANS TO BE EDUCATED AND ACCUSTOMED IN THE QUALITY OF LOVING-KINDNESS AND COMPASSION, SINCE IT IS A NOBLE QUALITY. THEN, OUT OF THEIR PHYSICAL, BODILY TRAINING IN THE GOOD QUALITIES, THEY WILL BECOME FIT, WORTHY TO RECEIVE GOODNESS. AS WE HAVE STATED, THE BESTOWAL OF GOODNESS AND BLESSING IS EVER UPON THE GOOD [PERSON], NOT ON HIS OPPOSITE. AND WHEN HASHEM, BE HE BLESSED, BESTOWS GOODNESS UPON GOOD PEOPLE, HIS DESIRE—TO DO GOOD TO THE WORLD—IS FULFILLED.

Now, if not for this root reason, He (blessed is He) could supply a poor man enough for his needs without us. It is only that by His kindness (be He blessed) we have become His agents, to achieve our merit.

A man is repulsive despicable, abominable, rotten and abhorrent, so much so that his loathsomeness is almost as great as that of an idol worshipper—if he has the means yet withdraws his hand (holds back) from this Mitzvah [On the other hand] how delightful, beloved, worthy of compassion and blessed with many blessings is a person who strongly upholds (fulfills) it. It is all explained in various places in the Talmud tractates Ketubbot and Baba Batra, and in many [other] places in the Talmud.

NOT TO REFRAIN FROM SUSTAINING A POOR MAN AND GIVING HIM WHAT HE NEEDS

478 that we should not withhold kindness and Tzedakah from our Jewish brethren, and all the more certainly not from relatives,' when we know the sorry state of their situation and we have the ability to aid them. About this it is stated, "You shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your needy brother" (Devarim 15 7); in other words, do not let the quality of miserliness and meanness rule you, but rather train your heart, under all circumstances, in the quality of generosity and compassion, and do not reckon that the matter will mean a lack in your personal wealth, because for the sake of this thing, Hashem... will bless you (ibid. 10), and His blessing for a brief instant is better for you than any number of treasures of gold and silver.

THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH

479 to act with Tzedakah toward a person who needs it, with gladness and a good heart; in other words, that we should give of our personal wealth to anyone in need, and support the poor man with whatever he requires for his sustenance, with all our ability. About this it is stated, "You shall surely open your hand to him" (Devarim 15:8); and the Sages of blessed memory interpreted, "You shall surely open"— even a hundred times.' It is also stated, "Then you shall uphold him; as a stranger and a settler shall he live with you" (Leviticus 25:35); and further "That your brother may live, along with you" (ibid. 6)

Now you, my son, are not to think that the subject of the Mitzvah of Tzedakah applies to none but a poor man who has neither bread nor clothing. For with men of great wealth, too, the Mitzvah of Tzedakah can be fulfilled at times: for example, if a wealthy man is in a place where he is not recognized, and he needs to borrow money. Even for a wealthy man in his own town, among those who know him, there can be times when, on account of illness or some other event, he needs one thing that is in your possession, and he will not find any of it anywhere else. This too is included in the scope of the Mitzvah of Tzedakah, without any doubt. For the Torah always prefers deeds of kindness, and it commands us to fulfill the wishes of those human beings who are members of the covenant, insofar as we are able. Whoever benefits his fellow-man, whether with goods, food, or any other needs of his, or even with good words, words of comfort— it is [all] within the meaning of the Mitzvah of Tzedakah, and his reward will be very great.

THE MITZVAH OF LEAVING AN EDGE OF ONE'S FIELD UNREAPED, FOR THE POOR

216 to leave over an unrequited part of a field of produce: for it is stated, "You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger" (Leviticus 19:10), this after the verse, "You shall not reap every last edge of your field" (ibid. 9).

In substance, the obligation of the unrequited part is that when reaping his produce, a man should leave a little of the produce over at the edge of the field. There is no set amount for this remainder by the law of the Torah; the Sages, however, set a minimal amount for the matter, which is one sixtieth.

At the root of the Mitzvah lies the reason that Hashem, blessed is He, wished that His people, whom He chose, should be adorned with every good and precious quality, and that they should have a blessed soul and a generous spirit. I have written previously that as a result of one's activities, the soul is influenced accordingly, and it thus becomes good, so that the blessing of Hashem is bestowed upon it. Well, there is no doubt that when a man leaves over one part of the produce in his field and makes it ownerless, so that those in need can benefit from it, you will perceive in his soul a fulfilling satisfaction and a decent and blessed spirit, whereupon Hashem will satisfy him with His goodness, and his soul shall abide in good fortune (Psalms 25:13).

On the other hand, if someone gathers everything into the house, leaving no blessing behind him, so that the poor could benefit from it, having seen the field with the crops grown tall and thus felt a yearning desire for it to fill their souls with it when they grow hungry—he displays in his soul, no doubt, an evil heart and a mean spirit. Then evil will equally befall him. As the Sages of blessed memory said: "By the yardstick with which a man measures, by that is he measured". And this reason will be enough, too, by way of the plain meaning, [to explain] about the Mitzvah of gleanings, forgotten sheaves, single grapes in the vineyard, and small single bunches of grapes.

Until here Sefer ha Chinuch

TZEDAKAH AND CHESED FURTHER EXPLAINED

"Tzedakah" is the Hebrew word for the acts that we call "Charity" in English: giving aid, assistance, and money to the poor and needy. But the nature of Tzedakah is very different from the idea of charity. The word "Charity" suggests benevolence and generosity, a magnanimous act by the wealthy and powerful for the benefit of the poor and needy. The word "Tzedakah" is derived from the Hebrew root Tzadi-Dalet-Qof, meaning righteousness, justice, or fairness. In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous, magnanimous act; it is simply an act of justice and righteousness, the performance of a duty, giving the poor their due

Gemilut Chasadim, the Performance of acts of Kindness, is a more comprehensive term than Tzedakah. Its implications and effects are much more far-reaching than those of Tzedakah. The duties of Tzedakah relate specifically to the poor and express themselves in terms of monetary assistance only. Gemilut Chasadim, however, knows of no such limitations. The Mitzvah of Gemilut Chasadim has for its object both the poor and the rich, and has reference to the dead as well as to the living. Above all, its essential characteristic is not monetary but personal service. It is the personal involvement, the personal attitude and effort, which qualifies for the term Chesed.

TYPES OF CHESED

Gemilut Chasadim – Loving-Kindness includes any kind of personal service that one performs for another. More specifically it refers usually to the following personal obligations and their derivatives: a) To grant free loans (of money or any other object); b) To provide hospitality; c) To visit and comfort the sick; d) To provide clothing to those in need thereof; e) To assist and gladden brides and grooms; f) To attend the dead; g) To comfort mourners; h) To reconcile those that are at variance.

CHAPTER 2**SELECTIONS FROM THE TALMUD DEALING
WITH TZEDAKAH AND CHESED**

The Holy One, blessed be He, says: Whoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah and with acts of Kindness and prays with the congregation, I account it to him as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world. Berachot 8a

Rabbi Yossi son of Rabbi Chanina said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer Ben Yaakov: If a man receives a Torah scholar in his house and lets him enjoy his possessions, Scripture accounts it to him as if he had sacrificed the daily burnt-offering. (Temidim) Berachot 10

Rabbi Abba also said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish: He who lends [money] is greater than he who performs Tzedakah; (Rashi: because the poor man is not ashamed to borrow. Also perhaps because one generally lends a larger sum than he would give as Tzedakah, and that may suffice to make the poor man independent.) and he who forms a partnership (With a poor man, providing the capital for him to trade with on agreed terms. Lit., 'who throws (money) into a (common) purse') is greater than all. Shabbat 63a

RAB YEHUDAH SAID IN RAB'S NAME: HOSPITALITY TO WAYFARERS IS GREATER THAN WELCOMING THE PRESENCE OF THE SHECHINAH, Shabbat 127

AS HASHEM IS COMPASSIONATE SO SHOULD YOU BE COMPASSIONATE (For it was taught: "This is my G-d, and I will adorn him" (ANVEHU): Abba Saul interpreted, and I will be like him (ANI VE HU): You be like Him: just as He is gracious and compassionate, so you be gracious and compassionate.) Shabbat 133b

"RABBAN SHIMON BE RABBI SAID: "AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU MERCY, AND HAVE COMPASSION UPON YOU, AND MULTIPLY YOU" (DEVARIM 13: 18) HE WHO IS MERCIFUL TO OTHERS, MERCY IS SHOWN TO HIM BY HEAVEN, WHILE HE WHO IS NOT MERCIFUL TO OTHERS, MERCY IS NOT SHOWN TO HIM BY HEAVEN". Shabbat 151b

Rabbi Chama son of Rabbi Chanina further said: What is meant by the verse: You shall walk after Hashem your G-d? (Devarim 33, 5) Is it, then, possible for a human being to walk after the Shechinah; for has it not been said: For Hashem your G-d is a devouring fire? (Deuteronomy 4, 24) But [the meaning is] to walk after the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He. As He clothes the naked, for it is written: And Hashem G-d made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them, (Bereshit III, 21) so you should also clothe the naked. The Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick, for it is written: And Hashem appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, (Bereshit 18) so you should also visit the sick. The Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners, for it is written: And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that G-d blessed Yitzchak his son, (Bereshit 25, 11) so you should also comfort mourners. The Holy one, blessed be He, buried the dead, for it is written: And He buried him in the valley, (Devarim 34, 6) so you should also bury the dead. Sotah 14a

IT HAS BEEN TAUGHT: RABBI MEIR USED TO SAY: WE MAY COMPEL A PERSON TO ESCORT [A TRAVELER], BECAUSE THE REWARD FOR ESCORTING IS LIMITLESS Sotah 46

Surely it was taught: If one declares, This amount is for Tzedakah in order that my son may live, or, that I may merit the future world, he is completely righteous. Pesachim 8b

Rabbi Yitzchak further said: Four things cancel a harsh decree on a man, namely, Tzedakah, supplication, change of name and change of conduct. Tzedakah, as it is written, And Tzedakah saves from death. (Proverbs 10, 2)... Rosh ha Shana 16b

RABBI ELEAZAR STATED: GREATER IS HE WHO PERFORMS TZEDAKAH THAN [HE WHO OFFERS] ALL THE SACRIFICES, for it is said, "To do Tzedakah and justice is more acceptable to Hashem than sacrifice." (Proverbs 21, 3) Rabbi Eleazar further stated, Acts of Kindness [Gemilut Chasadim] are greater than Tzedakah, for it is said, "Sow to yourselves according to your Tzedakah, but reap according to your Chesed"; (Hoshea 10,12) if a man sows, it is doubtful whether he will eat [the harvest] or not, but when a man reaps, he will certainly eat. Rabbi Eleazar further stated: The reward of Tzedakah depends entirely upon the extent of the kindness in it, for it is said, (Hoshea 10, 12) "Sow to yourselves according to Tzedakah, but reap according to kindness". Our Rabbis taught, In three respects are Acts of Kindness superior to Tzedakah: Tzedakah can be done only with one's money, but Acts of Kindness can be done with one's person and one's money. Tzedakah can be given only to the poor, Acts of Kindness both to the rich and the poor. Tzedakah can be given to the living only, Acts of Kindness can be done both to the living and to the dead. Rabbi Eleazar further stated, He who executes Tzedakah and justice is regarded as though he had filled all the world with kindness, for it is said, "He loves Tzedakah and justice, the earth is full of the loving kindness of Hashem" (Psalms 33, 5) Sukkah 49b

It is related of Nachum Ish Gamzu that he was blind in both his eyes, his two hands and legs were amputated and his whole body was covered with boils and he was lying in a dilapidated house on a bed the feet of which were standing in bowls of water in order to prevent the ants from crawling on to him. On one occasion his disciples desired to remove the bed and then clear the things out of the house, but he said to them, My children, first clear out the things [from the house] and then remove my bed for I am confident that so long as I am in the house it will not collapse. They first cleared out the things and then they removed his bed and the house [immediately] collapsed. Thereupon his disciples said to him, Master, since you are wholly righteous, why has all this befallen you? and he replied, I HAVE BROUGHT IT ALL UPON MYSELF. ONCE I WAS JOURNEYING ON THE ROAD AND WAS GOING TO THE HOUSE OF MY FATHER-IN-LAW AND I HAD WITH ME THREE DONKEYS, ONE LADEN WITH FOOD, ONE WITH DRINK AND ONE WITH ALL KINDS OF DAINTIES, WHEN A POOR MAN MET ME AND STOPPED ME ON THE ROAD AND SAID TO ME, MASTER, GIVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT. I REPLIED TO HIM, WAIT UNTIL I HAVE UNLOADED SOMETHING FROM THE DONKEY; I HAD HARDLY MANAGED TO UNLOAD SOMETHING FROM THE DONKEY WHEN THE MAN DIED [FROM HUNGER]. I then went and laid myself on him and exclaimed, May my eyes which had no pity upon your eyes become blind, may my hands which had no pity upon your hands be cut off, may my legs which had no pity upon your legs be amputated, and my mind was not at rest until I added, may my whole body be covered with boils. Thereupon his pupils exclaimed, Alas! that we see you in such a sore plight. To this he replied, Woe would it be to me did you not see me in such a sore plight. Why was he called Nachum of Gamzu [Gamzu means "This also"]? Because whatever befell him he would declare, This also is for the best. Taanit 21a

Rab Yehudah said in Rab's name: Had Jonathan given David two loaves of bread for his travels, Nob, the city of priests would not have been massacred, Doeg the Edomite would not have been destroyed, and Saul and his three sons would not have been slain. Sanhedrin 104a

[It is written] (Daniel 12: 3) "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament": this applies to a judge who gives a true verdict on true evidence". (Daniel 12: 3) "And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever": these are the collectors for Tzedakah. Baba Batra 8b

RABBI ASSI FURTHER SAID: TZEDAKAH IS EQUIVALENT TO ALL THE OTHER MITZVOT COMBINED; AS IT SAYS: (NEHEMIAH 10, 33) 'ALSO WE MADE ORDINANCES': IT IS NOT WRITTEN, 'AN ORDINANCE', BUT 'ORDINANCES'. Baba Batra 9a

RABBI YEHOSHUA BEN KORCHAH SAYS: WHOEVER TURNS AWAY HIS EYES FROM TZEDAKAH IS CONSIDERED AS IF HE WERE SERVING IDOLS. IT IS WRITTEN IN ONE PLACE, (DEVARIM 15, 9) "BEWARE THAT THERE BE NOT A BASE THOUGHT IN YOUR HEART" , AND IN ANOTHER PLACE (DEVARIM 13, 14): "CERTAIN BASE FELLOWS ARE GONE OUT".. JUST AS IN THE SECOND CASE THE SIN IS THAT OF IDOLATRY, SO IN THE FIRST CASE THE SIN IS EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF IDOLATRY. Baba Batra 9a

Raba said to the townsfolk of Mahuza: I beg of you, hasten [to the assistance of] one another, so that you may be on good terms with the Government. Rabbi Eleazar further said: When the Beit ha Mikdash stood, a man used to bring his shekel and so make atonement. Now that the Beit ha Mikdash no longer stands, if they give for Tzedakah, well and good, and if not, the heathens will come and take from them forcibly. Baba Batra 9a

RABBI ELEAZAR SAID: HE WHO CAUSES OTHERS TO DO GOOD IS GREATER THAN THE DOER HIMSELF, AS IT SAYS: (YESHAYAHU 32:17) "AND THE WORK OF TZEDAKAH SHALL BE PEACE, AND THE EFFECT OF TZEDAKAH QUIET AND CONFIDENCE FOR EVER". Baba Batra 9a

In the name of Rabbi Eleazar What is the meaning of the verse: (Yeshayahu 59:17) "And he put on righteousness as a coat of mail"? It tells us that just as in a coat of mail every small scale joins with the others to form one piece of armor, so every little sum given to Tzedakah combines with the rest to form a large sum. ...Just as in a garment every thread unites with the rest to form a whole garment, so every small coin given to Tzedakah unites with the rest to form a large sum. Baba Batra 9a

RABBI ELEAZAR SAID: A MAN WHO GIVES TZEDAKAH IN SECRET IS GREATER THAN MOSHE RABEINU, FOR OF MOSHE IT IS WRITTEN, (DEUTERONOMY 9:19) "FOR I WAS AFRAID BECAUSE OF THE ANGER AND THE WRATH", AND OF ONE WHO GIVES TZEDAKAH [SECRETLY] IT IS WRITTEN: (PROVERBS 21:14) "A GIFT IN SECRET SUBDUES ANGER". Baba Batra 9b

RABBI YITZCHAK ALSO SAID: HE WHO GIVES A SMALL COIN TO A POOR MAN OBTAINS SIX BLESSINGS, AND HE WHO GIVES HIM WORDS OF COMFORT OBTAINS ELEVEN BLESSINGS. Rabbi Yitzchak further said: What is the meaning of the verse (Proverbs 21:21) "He that follows after Tzedakah and mercy finds life, Tzedakah and honor"? Because a man has followed after Tzedakah, shall he find Tzedakah? The purpose of the verse, however, is to teach us that if a man is anxious to give Tzedakah, the Holy One, blessed be He, furnishes him money with which to give it." Rabbi Nachman Ben Yitzchak says: The Holy One, blessed be He, sends him men who are fitting recipients of Tzedakah, so that he may be rewarded for assisting them. Baba Batra 9b

IT HAS BEEN TAUGHT: RABBI MEIR USED TO SAY: THE HERETIC MAY BRING AGAINST YOU THE ARGUMENT, 'IF YOUR G-D LOVES THE POOR, WHY DOES HE NOT SUPPORT THEM?' IF SO, ANSWER HIM, 'SO THAT THROUGH THEM WE MAY BE SAVED FROM THE PUNISHMENT OF GEHINNOM.' THIS QUESTION WAS ACTUALLY PUT BY TURNUS RUFUS TO RABBI AKIBA: 'IF YOUR G-D LOVES THE POOR, WHY DOES HE NOT SUPPORT THEM?' HE REPLIED, 'SO THAT WE MAY BE SAVED THROUGH THEM FROM THE PUNISHMENT OF GEHINNOM.' 'On the contrary,' said Turnus Rufus, 'it is this which condemns you to Gehinnom. I will illustrate by a parable. Suppose an earthly king was angry with his servant and put him in prison and ordered that he should be given no food or drink, and a man went and gave him food and drink. If the king heard, would he not be angry with him? And you are called "servants", as it is written, (Lev. 25, 55) "For to me the children of Israel are servants". Rabbi Akiba answered him: 'I will illustrate by another parable. Suppose an earthly king was angry with his son, and put him in prison and ordered that no food or drink should be given to him, and someone went and gave him food and drink. If the king heard of it, would he not send him a present? And we are called "sons", as it is written, (Devarim 14, 1) "Sons are you to Hashem your G-d".' He said to him: 'You are called both sons and servants. When you carry out the desires of the Omnipresent you are called "sons", and when you

do not carry out the desires of the Omnipresent, you are called "servants". At the present time you are not carrying out the desires of the Omnipresent. Rabbi Akiba replied: 'The Scripture says: "Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry and bring the poor that are cast out to your house. When you bring the poor who are cast out to your house"? Now; and it says [at the same time], "Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry?"' Baba Batra 10a

As Rabbi Papa was climbing a ladder, his foot slipped and he narrowly escaped falling. Had that happened, he said, I would have received the same punishment like Shabbat desecrators and idolaters. Rabbi Chiyya Ben Rab from Difti said to him: Perhaps a beggar appealed to you and you did not assist him; for so it has been taught: Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korchah says: Whoever turns away his eyes from Tzedakah is considered as if he were serving idols. It is written in one place, (Devarim 15, 9) "Beware that there be not a base thought in your heart", and in another place (Devarim 13, 14): "Certain base fellows are gone out". Just as in the second case the sin is that of idolatry, so in the first case the sin is equivalent to that of idolatry. Baba Batra 10b

It has been taught: Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabbi Yose said: All the Tzedakah and acts of kindness which Israel perform in this world [help to promote] peace and good understanding between them and their Father in heaven, as it says, (Yirmiyahu 16, 5) "Thus says Hashem, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament, neither bemoan them, for I have taken away My peace from this people . . . even loving kindness and tender mercies", [where] 'loving kindness' refers to acts of kindness, and 'tender mercies' to Tzedakah. Baba Batra 10b

IT HAS BEEN TAUGHT: RABBI YEHUDAH SAYS: GREAT IS TZEDAKAH, FOR IT BRINGS THE REDEMPTION NEARER, AS IT SAYS, (YESHAYAHU 56, 1) "THUS SAYS HASHEM, KEEP JUDGMENT AND DO TZEDAKAH, FOR MY SALVATION IS NEAR TO COME AND MY TZEDAKAH TO BE REVEALED." Baba Batra 10b

He also used to say: Ten strong things have been created in the world. The rock is hard, but the iron cleaves it. The iron is hard, but the fire softens it. The fire is hard, but the water quenches it. The water is strong, but the clouds bear it. The clouds are strong, but the wind scatters them. The wind is strong, but the body bears it. The body is strong, but fear crushes it. Fear is strong, but wine banishes it. Wine is strong, but sleep works it off. Death is stronger than all, and Tzedakah saves from death, as it is written: (Proverbs 10:2) "And Tzedakah saves from death." Baba Batra 10b

Rabbi Dostai son of Rabbi Jannai said: Observe that the ways of G-d are not like the ways of flesh and blood. How does flesh and blood act? If a man brings a present to a king, it may be accepted or it may not be accepted; and even if it is accepted, it is still doubtful whether he will be admitted to the presence of the king or not. Not so G-d. If a man gives but a penny to a beggar, he is deemed worthy to receive the Divine Presence, as It is written: (Psalms 17:15) "I shall behold Your face in Tzedek [Justice], I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness". Rabbi Eleazar used to give a coin to a poor man and straightway say a prayer, because, he said, it is written: (Psalms 17:15) "I shall behold Your face through Tzedek [Tzedakah]". Baba Batra 10b

RABBI CHIYYA BEN ABIN SAID: RABBI YOCHANAN POINTED OUT THAT IT IS WRITTEN, "RICHES PROFIT NOT IN THE DAY OF WRATH, AND TZEDAKAH DELIVERS FROM DEATH" (PROVERBS 11:4) AND IT IS ALSO WRITTEN, TREASURES OF WICKEDNESS PROFIT NOTHING, AND TZEDAKAH DELIVERS FROM DEATH.(PROVERBS 10:2) WHY THIS DOUBLE MENTION OF TZEDAKAH? — ONE THAT DELIVERS HIM FROM AN UNNATURAL DEATH AND ONE THAT DELIVERS HIM FROM THE PUNISHMENT OF GEHINNOM. Baba Batra 10b

TZEDAKAH ANNULS EVIL DECREES

It has been taught: The following incident is related of Benjamin the Righteous who was a supervisor of the Tzedakah fund. One day a woman came to him in a year of scarcity, and said to him: Sir, assist me. He replied, I swear, there is not a penny in the Tzedakah fund.' She said, 'Sir, if you do not assist me, a woman and her seven children will perish.' He accordingly assisted her out of his own pocket. Some time afterwards he became dangerously ill. The angels addressed the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: Sovereign of the Universe, You have said that he who preserves one soul of Israel is considered as if he had preserved the whole world; shall then

Benjamin the Righteous who has preserved a woman and her seven children die at so early an age? Straightway his sentence was torn up. It has been taught that twenty-two years were added to his life. Baba Batra 11a

THE INCREDIBLE REWARD OF TZEDAKAH

Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi Jose ben Kisma was ill, Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion went to visit him. He said to him: Brother Chanina, Don't you know that it is Heaven that has ordained this [Roman] nation to reign? For though she laid waste His House, burnt His Temple, slew His pious ones and caused His best ones to perish, still is she firmly established! Yet, I have heard about you that you sit and occupy yourself with the Torah, publicly gather assemblies, and keep a scroll [of the Law] in your bosom!' He replied, 'Heaven will show mercy.' — 'I am telling you plain facts, and you say "Heaven will show mercy"! It will surprise me if they do not burn both you and the scroll of the Law with fire. Rabbi, said the other: How do I stand with regard to the world to come? Is there any particular act that you have done? he enquired. He replied: I once mistook Purim-money [For the Purim meal] for ordinary Tzedakah money, and I distributed [of my own] to the poor. Well then, he said, I wish that your portion were my portion and your lot my lot. Avodah Zara 18a

TZEDAKAH AND ACTS OF KINDNESS ARE EQUIVALENT TO ALL THE MITZVOT IN THE TORAH. RABBI YOCHANAN SAID: WE ONLY KNOW WHAT IS GREATER, TZEDAKAH OR ACTS OF KINDNESS, FROM THE VERSE (PSALMS 103: 17) "BUT THE KINDNESS OF HASHEM IS FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING UPON THEM THAT FEAR HIM, AND HIS TZEDAKAH TO CHILDREN'S CHILDREN"; WE MUST SAY THAT ACTS OF KINDNESS IS GREATER THAN TZEDAKAH Talmud Yerushalmi Peah Perek 1:1

Rabbi Yehuda teaches in the name of Rabban Gamliel: It is written: (Devarim 13:18) "He will grant you mercy, have compassion on you, and make you flourish." This should serve as a sign for you that AS LONG AS YOU ARE COMPASSIONATE, HASHEM IN TURN WILL SHOW YOU COMPASSION, IF YOU ARE NOT COMPASSIONATE THEN HASHEM DOES NOT SHOW YOU COMPASSION Talmud Yerushalmi Baba Kama, Perek ha Chovel, Halacha 7

CHAPTER 3

SELECTIONS FROM THE MIDRASH DEALING WITH TZEDAKAH AND CHESED

IF MEN SHOW COMPASSION TO EACH OTHER, THEN THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, WILL ALSO BE FILLED WITH COMPASSION FOR THEM

"Hashem is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145, 9). Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi translated: "Hashem is good to all, and His mercies are over all," because they are "His works". Rabbi Samuel ben Nachman interpreted: Hashem is good to all, and His mercies are over all, for it is His nature to be compassionate. Rabbi Yehoshua interpreted in Rabbi Levi's name: Hashem is good to all, and He inspires mankind with His [spirit of] compassion. Rabbi Abba said: Should a year of famine commence tomorrow and men show compassion to each other, then the Holy One, blessed be He, will also be filled with compassion for them. In the days of Rabbi Tanchuma Israel had need of a fast, so they went to him and requested: ' Master, proclaim a fast.' He proclaimed a fast, for one day, then a second day, and then a third, yet no rain fell. Thereupon he ascended [the pulpit] and preached to them, saying: 'My sons! Be filled with compassion for each other, and then the Holy One, blessed be He, will be filled with compassion for you.' Now while they were distributing relief to the poor they saw a man give money to his divorced wife, whereupon they went to him [Rabbi Tanchuma] and exclaimed, ' Why do we sit here while such misdeeds are perpetrated! ' What then have you seen? ' He inquired. ' We saw so and so give his divorced wife money.' He summoned them and asked him, 'Why did you give money to your divorced wife?' 'I saw her in great distress,' replied he, 'and I was filled with compassion for her.' Upon this Rabbi Tanchuma turned his face upward and exclaimed: 'Sovereign of the Universe! This man, upon whom this woman has no claim for sustenance, yet saw her in distress and was filled with pity for her. Seeing then that of You it is written, Hashem is full of compassion and gracious (Psalms 103, 8), while we are Your children, the children of Your beloved ones,

the children of Abraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, how much more should You be filled with compassion for us! immediately the rain descended and the world enjoyed relief. Rabbi Yehuda ha Nassi was sitting and studying the Torah in front of the Synagogue in Sepphoris, when a calf passed before him on its way to the slaughter and began to cry out, as though pleading, 'Save me!' Said he to it, 'What can I do for you? For this you were created.' [As a punishment for his heartlessness] our Teacher suffered toothache for thirteen years. During these thirteen years no woman miscarried in Eretz Israel, and none suffered pain in childbirth. After this period a creeping thing ran past his daughter. She was about to kill it, when he said to her, 'My daughter, let it live, for it is written: "And His mercies are over all his works." (Psalms 145, 9) Bereshit Rabba 33:3

"In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand" (Kohelet 11, 6). Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua discussed this. Rabbi Eliezer said: If you have sown in the early season, sow in the late season, for you do not know which will be successful, whether the early sowing or the late sowing, as Scripture continues, "For you know not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (ibid.). RABBI YEHOSHUA SAID: IF A POOR MAN COMES TO YOU IN THE MORNING, HELP HIM OUT; IF IN THE EVENING, HELP HIM OUT AS WELL, BECAUSE YOU DO NOT KNOW WHICH OF THEM THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, HAS ALLOTTED TO YOU Bereshit Rabba 61:3

And Yaakov sent messengers [or, angels] before him (Bereshit 32, 4). Rabbi Pinchas commenced his discourse in Rabbi Reuben's name: Arise, O Hashem, confront him, etc. (Tehillim 17, 13). Said Rabbi Pinchas: Five times in the first Book of Psalms does David petition the Holy One, blessed be He, to rise: Arise, O Hashem; save me, O my G-d (3, 8); Arise, O Hashem, in Your anger (7, 7); Arise, O Hashem; O G-d, lift up your hand (10, 12); Arise, O Hashem, let not man prevail (9, 20); ' Arise, O Hashem, confront him.' SAID G-D TO HIM: 'MY SON DAVID, EVEN IF YOU PETITION ME TO RISE MANY TIMES, I WILL NOT RISE. BUT WHEN WILL I ARISE? WHEN YOU SEE THE POOR OPPRESSED AND THE NEEDY SIGHING,' AS IT SAYS, "FOR THE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR, FOR THE SIGHING OF THE NEEDY, NOW WILL I ARISE, SAYS HASHEM" (PSALMS 12, 6). Bereshit Rabba 75:1

Rabbi Berechiah and Rabbi Yonah said in the name of Resh Lakish who spoke in the name of Rabbi Yehudah ha Nassi: It is written, "So the days of weeping in the mourning for Moshe were ended" (Devarim 34, 8): days implies two, weeping seven, and mourning thirty. Others reverse it: days implies seven, weeping two, and mourning thirty. Now seven and thirty we understand, but is there a law prescribing two days [Of mourning]? [Yes], for if the mourner is extremely poor, he must not work on the first and the second days [of his mourning], while on the third day [and until the end of the seven] he may work in private; but THE SAGES SAID: A CURSE ON HIS NEIGHBORS WHO BROUGHT HIM TO THIS! [HIS NEIGHBORS WHO DID NOT TAKE CARE OF HIS NEEDS, SO THAT HE WOULD NOT NEED TO WORK SO SOON AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS RELATIVE] Bereshit Rabba 100:7

"AND HASHEM SAID TO MOSHE IN MIDIAN: ALL THE MEN ARE DEAD THAT SOUGHT YOUR LIFE" (SHEMOT 4:19). WERE THEY DEAD? WERE NOT THESE PEOPLE DATAN AND ABIRAM, WHO AFTERWARDS SIDED WITH KORACH IN HIS REBELLION? NO, IT ONLY MEANS THAT THEY HAD BECOME IMPOVERISHED; FOR FOUR KINDS OF PEOPLE ARE DEEMED AS DEAD: THE BLIND, THE LEPPER, THE POOR, AND HE WHO HAS NO CHILDREN. (ALL ARE DERIVED FROM THE BIBLE, SEE TRACTATE AVODAH ZARA, 5A. NED. 64) Shemot Rabba 5:4

DANIEL SAW THE ISRAELITES LEAVING JERUSALEM DESTITUTE, WITH NOT A CENT IN THEIR HAND, AND FOR THIS REASON DID HE COUNSEL NEBUCHADNEZZAR TO PRACTICE TZEDAKAH

Nebuchadnezzar said to Daniel: "I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth... and in it was food for all ' (Daniel 4:7). This symbolizes the king: if he makes a decree to close the sea, then all die; to open the sea, then all live--hence 'And in it was food for all'. When Daniel told him the dream, he asked: 'What shall I do: how do you advise me?' Daniel replied: ' "O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and break off your sins by Tzedakah, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor' (ib 24). Hashem said to Daniel: ' I handed over Tzedakah to Abraham, for it says, "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after

him that they may keep the way of Hashem, to do Tzedakah and justice” (Bereshit 18, 19), yet you say to this wicked man [Nebuchadnezzar]: “And break off your sins by giving Tzedakah?” This, however, is what Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: ‘Do Tzedakah and fling open your treasury’; for Daniel saw the Israelites leaving Jerusalem destitute, with not a cent in their hand, and for this reason did he counsel him to practice Tzedakah. Nebuchadnezzar opened his treasures and supported Israel for twelve months.’ At the end of twelve months, etc. (Dan. 4, 26), Nebuchadnezzar heard the murmur of voices, and when he inquired where the sound came, he was told: ‘ This is from the poor whom you have ordered to receive a portion and to whom we have granted assistance for the last twelve months, as you have ordered us to do.’ He then said: ‘Were it not for the wealth I had, how could I have built all this country for my glory?’-for it says, “The king spoke and said: Is not this great Babylon,” etc. (ib. 27). ‘Now if I squander all my wealth, there will be no glory left.’ So he locked his coffers. When he said this, a voice from heaven answered him, as it says, “While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven” (ibid 28). What enabled him to dwell securely for twelve months? Tzedakah. Well, if this is what it does for the wicked, then how much more does it do for Israel? Hence ‘ Keep justice and do Tzedakah’ (Yeshayahu 56, 1). Shemot Rabba 30:24

WHEN A MAN FULFILS THE MITZVOT, AND STUDIES THE TORAH AND PRACTICES TZEDAKAH, THEN WHILE THE SATAN STANDS ACCUSING HIM BEFORE HASHEM, HIS GOOD FRIENDS STAND OPPOSITE POINTING OUT HIS GOOD DEEDS, as it says, “A man's gift makes room for him” (Proverbs 18, 16). His treatment of the poor helps towards this; hence does it say, Fortunate is he that considers the poor (Psalms 41, 2). Shemot Rabba 31:2

HASHEM TESTS EVERYONE, THE RICH AND THE POOR

It is written: There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt; and those riches perish by evil adventure (Kohelet 5, 12). Fortunate the man who can withstand the test, for there is none whom G-d does not test. He tries the rich man to see if his hand will be opened to the poor, and the poor man He tries in order to see whether he will accept chastisement without complaining, as it says, “And that you bring the poor that are humbled to your house” (Yeshayahu 58, 7). If the rich man withstands his test and practices Tzedakah, then he will enjoy his wealth in this world, while the capital will be preserved for him in the World to Come, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will, moreover, redeem him from the punishment of Gehinnom, as it says, Fortunate is he that considers the poor; Hashem will deliver him in the day of evil (Psalms 41, 2). If the poor man withstands his test without rebelling he takes a double portion in the World to Come, as it says, For You do save the afflicted people (Psalms 18, 28). Where can you learn this? From Job, who suffered in this world and whom G-d repaid in double measure, as it says, “And Hashem gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42, 10). Shemot Rabba 31:3

THE RICH WHO DOES NOT GIVE WILL BECOME POOR

The rich man, however, who grudges to give, perishes with his wealth from this world, as it says, “And those riches perish by evil adventure,” for he is mean towards those who collect Tzedakah. Why so? Because there is an ever-rotating wheel in this world, and he who is rich today may not be so tomorrow, and also he who is poor today may not be so tomorrow. One He casts down, and the other He raises up, as it says, “For G-d is judge; He puts down one, and lifts up another” (Psalms 75, 8). You will find that there are riches that harm their possessors and other riches that stand them in good stead. As an example of riches that do harm, take the case of Korach who was richer than all Israel and of whom it is written, So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit (Num. 16, 33). Another example: Such was the wealth of the wicked Haman of whom it says, And Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches (Ester 5, 11), and of whom it is written, “And that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows”(ibid 9, 25). Riches that benefit their owners are like those of Jehoshaphat of whom it says, “Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance” (II Chronicles 18, 1). What happened to him? -But Jehoshaphat cried out, and Hashem helped him (ib. 31). Shemot Rabba 31:3

COME AND SEE: ANYONE WHO HAS RICHES AND GIVES TZEDAKAH TO THE POOR, AND DOES NOT
LEND ON INTEREST IS REGARDED AS IF HE
OBSERVED ALL THE MITZVOT,

for it says (Tehillim 15) "He that puts not out his money on interest" nor takes a bribe against the innocent. He that does these things shall never be moved". Who was this? Obadiah, who was a wealthy man and the administrator of Ahab, for it says, "And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household" (I Kings 18, 3). He was extraordinarily wealthy but spent his wealth in Tzedakah, for it was he who fed all the prophets. When that great trouble came [The Famine], he borrowed on interest from Yoram son of Ahab in order to support the prophets. He fulfilled the verse, 'He that puts not out his money on interest.'

Of Yoram, however, who lent on interest, G-d said: ' This man still lives! Let Yehu come and slay him,' as it says, "And Yehu drew his bow with his full strength, and smote Yoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart" (II Kings 9, 24). Why 'between his arms' and 'at his heart'? --Because he hardened his heart and stretched out his hand to receive usury, so as to fulfill that which is said, "He has given forth upon interest, and has taken increase; shall he then live?" (Ezekiel 18, 13). For this reason does he warn them: IF YOU LEND MONEY TO ANY OF MY PEOPLE. Shemot Rabba 31:4

IN THIS WORLD, THE WICKED ARE RICH AND PROSPEROUS AND SECURE, WHILE THE RIGHTEOUS ARE POOR; BUT IN THE WORLD TO COME, WHEN G-D WILL OPEN FOR THE RIGHTEOUS THE TREASURES OF GAN EDEN, THEN WILL THE WICKED WHO HAVE EATEN THE FRUITS OF INTEREST AND USURY BITE THEIR FLESH WITH THEIR TEETH, as it says, "The fool folds his hands together, and eats his own flesh" (Kohelet 4, 5). They will then wail: 'We would rather have been workmen and carried burdens on our shoulders, or slaves, than that this should happen to us,' as it says, "Better is a handful of quietness, than both the hands full of labor and striving after wind" (ib. 6). Hence does it say: "If you lend money to any of my people". Shemot Rabba 31:5

WHEN ISRAEL ASKED G-D: 'WHO ARE YOUR PEOPLE?' THE REPLY WAS: 'THE POOR,' FOR IT SAYS, FOR HASHEM HAS COMFORTED HIS PEOPLE, AND HAS COMPASSION UPON HIS POOR (YESHAYAHU 49, 13). It is human nature that when a man has poor relatives, he does not acknowledge them if he is wealthy, as it says, "All the brethren of the poor do hate him" (Proverbs 19, 7); but the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so, for it says, "Both riches and honor come of You (I Chronicles 29, 12), yet He protects none but the poor, as it says, "That Hashem has founded Zion, and in her shall the poor of His people take refuge" (Yeshayahu 14, 32). For this reason does it say, IF YOU LEND MONEY TO ANY OF MY PEOPLE. David said: 'Master of the Universe, make Your world evenly balanced'; as it says, Let the world be made equal (yesheb) before G-d (PSALMS 61, 8): G-d replied: 'If I balance My world, then Love and truth, who will practice them?' (ib.). Shemot Rabba 31:5

THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WORLD MORE GRIEVOUS THAN POVERTY THE MOST TERRIBLE OF ALL SUFFERINGS

If you lend money to any of My people, to the poor with you...(Shemot 22, 24) There is nothing in the world more grievous than poverty the most terrible of all sufferings. Our sages said: All sufferings are on one side, and poverty is on the other. Do you require a proof? Well see; when Satan was slandering Job before G-d, saying, 'You have given him wealth and children and You do protect them,' as it says, Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has, on every side? (Job I, 10), and Does Job fear G-d for nothing? (ib. 9). But put forth Your hand now (ib. 11); the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him [Job]: ' What do you wish, poverty or suffering? ' Job replied: 'Master of the Universe! I am ready to accept all the troubles in the world, but not poverty; for if I go into the market without a penny for buying, what shall I eat' When suffering came upon him, he began to complain-we are told-against G-d's stern justice, as it says, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him" (ib. 23, 3). Elihu said to him: ' Why do you complain? Did you not say that you preferred all kinds of suffering to poverty? Did you not yourself choose suffering?--as it says, Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this have you chosen rather than affliction (ib. 36, 21). Because poverty is more grievous than all other troubles does it say: 'Even To The Poor With You'. For G-d said: 'Is not his poverty bad enough, that you must even exact interest from him?' Shemot Rabba 31:12

ALL WHO TAKE INTEREST ARE CONSIDERED AS IF THEY HAD COMMITTED ALL THE EVIL DEEDS IN THE WORLD....HE WHO LENDS WITHOUT INTEREST IS REGARDED BY G-D AS IF HE HAD FULFILLED ALL THE MITZVOT.

NEITHER SHALL YOU LAY UPON HIM INTEREST (22, 24). Do not bite the poor man as the serpent bit Adam and uprooted him and his descendants. Neither shall you see a poor man possessing houses, or fields, or vineyards, or

a slave, or maid-servant, and then seek an occasion to snatch them from him; therefore does it say, YOU SHALL NOT BE TO HIM AS A CREDITOR. Do not take interest from him-be not like the serpent, cunning to do evil. Take no interest of him or increase; but fear your G-d (Lev. 25, 36). Say not to him: 'You borrow and I will lend you,' and on the morrow the interest will mount up, and you will take away his belongings and I will regard you as having inflicted a wound upon him, as it says, IF [HABOL TAHBOL] YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GARMENT (22, 25). From here you can derive that one who takes interest from an Israelite has no fear of G-d. It can be compared to one who committed a murder and who was brought before the ruler, who, when he read the indictment against him, exclaimed, 'And he lives yet?' Similarly, does the Scripture regard all who take interest as if they had committed all the evil deeds in the world....He who lends without interest is regarded by G-d as if he had fulfilled all the Mitzvot. Shemot Rabba 31:13

**HAPPY IS HE WHOSE HAND IS STRETCHED
OUT TO THE POOR**

Happy is he whose hand is stretched out to the poor, for see what it says: "The rich and poor meet together-Hashem is the maker of them all" (Proverbs 22, 2), and also, "The poor man and the man of means meet together; Hashem gives light to the eyes of them both" (ib. 29, 13). The poor man acquires earthly life and the rich man acquires the life of the World to Come. And if the rich man refuses to give him anything, then, He who made this one rich will yet make him poor, and He who made this one poor will yet make him rich.

NOTHING IS HARDER TO BEAR THAN POVERTY; FOR HE WHO IS CRUSHED BY POVERTY IS LIKE ONE TO WHOM ALL THE TROUBLES OF THE WORLD CLING AND UPON WHOM ALL THE CURSES IN DEVARIM (DEVARIM 28, 15-65) HAVE DESCENDED. OUR SAGES HAVE SAID: IF ALL TROUBLES WERE ASSEMBLED ON ONE SIDE AND POVERTY ON THE OTHER, POVERTY WOULD OUTWEIGH THEM ALL.

"You shall not be to him as a creditor". Come and see: Anyone who lends on interest transgresses every prohibition in the Torah and finds none to plead in his favor. For when a man transgresses any of the prohibitions and then stands before the Holy One, blessed be He, in judgment, some of the angels plead on his behalf and others accuse him, as it says, I saw Hashem sitting upon His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and on His left (II Chronicles 18, 18); but when one lends to an Israelite on interest, then not one of the angels pleads in his favor, as it says, ' He has given forth upon interest, and has taken increase; shall he then live? He shall not live' (Ezekiel 18, 13). An Israelite, however, who lends money to his neighbor without taking interest is regarded as if he had fulfilled all the Mitzvot, for this is what David said, Hashem, who shall sojourn in Your tabernacle? (Psalms 15, 1), and the answer is, He that puts not out his money on interest, etc. (ib. 5). Shemot Rabba 31:14

ALL OF G-D'S CREATURES BORROW ONE FROM THE OTHER, YET MAKE PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT ARGUMENTS; BUT IF A MAN BORROWS FROM HIS FRIEND, HIS FRIEND SEEKS TO SWALLOW HIM UP WITH USURY AND ROBBERY.

Moreover, those who exact usury say to G-d: "Why do You not take payment from the world in which Your creatures are? Payment for the earth to which You give drink; for the flowers which You make grow; for the lights which You make shine; for the soul which You have breathed into them; for the body which You guard? ' G-d says to them: ' See how much I have lent, yet I have not taken interest, and how much the earth has lent and has not taken interest; but I take the capital only which I have lent, and she takes hers,' as it says, And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to G-d who gave it (Kohelet 12, 7). Woe to him who takes interest; for what does it say of him?--' He has given forth upon interest and has taken increase; shall he then live? he shall not live' (Ezekiel 18, 13). It can be compared to a king who opened his treasures to a certain man, and the latter began to oppress the poor therewith, to kill widows, insult the needy, flay people and leave them destitute, commit violence and robbery, to fill himself with falsehood, and generally squander the king's treasures. G-d, likewise, opens treasure stores and gives to men of His gold and silver, as it says, Mine is the silver, and Mine the gold (Hag. II, 8); but man begins to take interest from the poor man who has borrowed from him; he slays thereby widows, by forcing a widow who has borrowed from him to pay him interest, and insults the needy by being very strict with them when they apply to him for Tzedakah, whereas G-d has said: Whoever mocks the poor blasphemes his Maker (Proverbs 17, 5). He strips them naked; for if one of them owes him a hundred zuz or more, he takes away his cloak from him and leaves him destitute and ashamed; and he perpetrates robbery and violence with his wealth, for they entrust

into his hands their pledge and he destroys them. G-d then says: Woe to you that spoil, and you were not spoiled (Yeshayahu 33, 1). G-d gave him riches of truth which he has converted into falsehood, as it says, You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity (Hoshea 10, 13); for this reason shall you pass away from this world, as it says, When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more (Proverbs 10, 25). It is on this account that He warns us in the Torah: IF YOU LEND MONEY TO ANY OF MY PEOPLE. It should suffice you that I call him wicked if he does not pay you back, as it says, The wicked borrows, and pays not; but the righteous deals graciously, and gives (Psalms 37, 21). This is why G-d warns Israel, saying: IF YOU AT ALL TAKE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GARMENT TO PLEDGE, then return it to him before he begins to cry to Me; for it says, AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, WHEN HE CRIES TO ME THAT I WILL HEAR David also says: Happy is he that considers the poor (Psalms 41, 2), and Shlomo says: Rob not the weak, because he is weak (Proverbs 22, 22). Why? For Hashem will plead their cause, and despoil of life those that despoil them (Proverbs 22, 23). Shemot Rabba 31:15

IF YOU LEND MONEY TO ANY OF MY PEOPLE. G-D SAID: IF YOU LEND MONEY WITHOUT TAKING INTEREST, THEN YOU WILL BE WITH ME; JUST AS I CAN NEVER BE MOVED, SO WILL YOU NEVER BE MOVED,-AS IT SAYS, 'HE THAT PUTS NOT OUT HIS MONEY ON INTEREST' (PSALMS 15, 5), AFTER WHICH IT IS WRITTEN, 'HE THAT DOES THESE THINGS SHALL NEVER BE MOVED' (IB.). Shemot Rabba 31:17

RABBI TANCHUMA BEN ABBA BEGAN THUS: "TO YOU, O HASHEM, BELONGS TZEDAKAH, BUT TO US SHAMEFACEDNESS" (DANIEL 9, 7). WHY IS THIS SO? RABBI NEHEMIAH SAID: BECAUSE EVEN WHEN WE PERFORM TZEDAKAH, WE ANALYZE OUR ACTIONS AND ARE FILLED WITH SHAME...

Why is this so? Ordinarily, one gives over his field to a tenant, and the latter supplies the seed and the labor, yet he [the owner] receives an equal share [of the crops]; but the Holy One, blessed be He--His name be exalted and His mention extolled-is not so, for though the world and all that is therein is His, as it says, The earth is Hashem's and the fullness thereof, etc. (Psalms 24, 1), and though the earth and the fruit thereof are His, and He also causes the rains to descend and the dews to spring forth in order to make the fruits to grow, as well as preserving them and doing everything else for them, yet G-d said to them: 'I have only commanded you to give Me one-tenth as tithe, and one-fiftieth as terumah. This is why it says, "To You, O Hashem, belongs Tzedakah, but to us shamefacedness." Rabbi Yehudah said: Only shame is ours, but Tzedakah is Yours. Shemot Rabba 41:1

"FORTUNATE IS HE THAT CONSIDERS THE POOR; HASHEM WILL DELIVER HIM IN THE DAY OF EVIL" (PSALMS 41, 1)

...Rabbi Yonah remarked: It is not written in the verse under discussion, "Fortunate is he that gives to the poor" but "Fortunate is he that considers the poor", which signifies: Consider closely how to benefit him. Rabbi Yonah, when he saw a person of respectable family who had lost his money and was ashamed to take Tzedakah, used to go to him and say to him: 'As I have heard that you have come into an inheritance somewhere abroad, I offer you this article, and when you are in better circumstances you will give it back to me.' At the same time when he gave it to him he would say to him: 'I have given it to you as a gift.' Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Chama son of Rabbi Chanina said: The expression 'Fortunate' [ASHREI] is recorded twenty-two times, and in the case of none of them is recompense mentioned except in this one. What recompense is offered? "Hashem will deliver him in the day of evil." Vayikra Rabba 34:1

RABBI PINCHAS SAID IN THE NAME OF RABBI REUBEN: WHOSO GIVES A SMALL COIN TO A POOR MAN, TO HIM WILL THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, GIVE LIFE. For does he only give him a small coin? No, he gives him his life! How is this explained? If a loaf costs ten small coins and a poor man standing in the market-place has only nine, then if someone comes and gives him a small coin so that he buys the loaf and, having eaten it, feels revived, the Holy One, blessed be He, says to the donor: 'In your case too, when your soul presses to break loose from your body, I shall return it to you.' Vayikra Rabba 34:2

"THE MERCIFUL MAN DOES GOOD TO HIS OWN SOUL; BUT HE THAT IS CRUEL TROUBLES HIS OWN FLESH (PROVERBS 11, 17). RABBI ALEXANDRI EXPLAINED THAT THIS APPLIES TO ONE WHO HAS A FESTIVITY AND DOES NOT ASSOCIATE HIS RELATIVES WITH HIM BECAUSE OF THEIR POVERTY. Vayikra Rabba 34:3

IF THE POOR MAN STANDS IN THE COMPANY OF THE WELL TO DO MAN AND SAYS TO HIM: ' GIVE ME TZEDAKAH ' AND HE GIVES IT TO HIM, THEN HASHEM GIVES LIGHT TO THE EYES OF THEM BOTH'; THE ONE OBTAINS TEMPORAL LIFE AND THE OTHER THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME.

'The rich and the poor.' 'Rich' applies to one who is rich in property and 'poor' to one who is poor in property. If the poor man stood in the company of the rich and said to him: ' Give me Tzedakah' and he did not give it to him, then 'Hashem is the maker of them all'; He who made this one poor can make him rich and He who made the other rich can make him poor. If the rich man says to this same poor man: 'Why do you not go and work and get food? Look at those hips! Look at those legs! Look at that fat body! Look at those lumps of flesh!'. THEN THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, SAYS TO THE RICH MAN: ' IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT YOU HAVE NOT GIVEN HIM ANYTHING OF YOURS, BUT YOU MUST SET AN EVIL EYE UPON WHAT I HAVE GIVEN HIM?' Consequently, If he has begotten a son, there is nothing in his hand (Kohelet 5, 13). Of all that he possessed he will not leave for his son, nor take to himself, anything! Accordingly Moshe exhorts Israel, saying: "And if your brother has become poor, and his means fail with you; then you shall relieve him; though he may be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with you" (Vayikra 25: 35) Vayikra Rabba 34:4

Eight designations were given to the poor man: "ANI, EYON, MISKEN, RASH, DAL, DAK, MAK, HELEK. ' Ani means literally, poor. ' He is called evyon because he longs (meta'ev) for everything; misken because he is despised by all, as it says, The poor man's (misken) wisdom is despised (Kohelet 9, 16); 'rash' because he is dispossessed (mithroshesh) of property; 'dal' because he is detached (meduldal) from property; 'dak' because he is crushed (medukdak)--he sees a thing and cannot eat it, he sees a thing and cannot taste it, he sees a thing and cannot drink it; 'mak' because he is lowly (mak) before every one, the lowest threshold... Vayikra Rabba 34:6

Rabbi Shimon in the name of Rabbi Eliezer said: Who was it, he asks, that showed kindness to those who did not need it? Abraham to the angels. It is written: And he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat (Bereshit 18, 8). How did they really eat? Rabbi Yudan explained that they seemed to be eating and drinking, the courses disappearing in order of arrival. What recompense did the Holy One, blessed be He, give to his [Abraham's] children? The manna fell for them, the well came up for them in the desert, the quails were provided for them, the clouds of glory encircled them, and the pillar of cloud journeyed before them. Now does not this afford a deduction from lighter to graver [Kal va Chomer]? IF IN THE CASE OF ONE WHO SHOWED KINDNESS TO THOSE WHO DID NOT NEED KINDNESS, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, PAID HIS CHILDREN, HOW MUCH MORE IN THE CASE OF ONE WHO SHOWS KINDNESS TO ONE WHO REALLY NEEDS IT? Vayikra Rabba 34:7

RABBI YEHOSHUA TAUGHT: THE POOR MAN DOES MORE FOR THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE [BAAL HA BAYIT] THAN THE LATTER DOES FOR HIM, AS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT RUTH SAYS TO NAOMI: THE MAN'S NAME WITH WHOM I WROUGHT TODAY IS BOAZ (RUTH II, 19). IT IS NOT WRITTEN, 'WHO WROUGHT WITH ME ' BUT 'WITH WHOM I WROUGHT' BY WHICH SHE INTIMATED TO HER: I HAVE WROUGHT MANY SERVICES AND FAVORS WITH HIM TODAY FOR THE MORSEL WHICH HE GAVE ME. Vayikra Rabba 34:8

Rabbi Abin observed: The poor man stands at your door and the Holy One, blessed be He, stands at his right; as it is written, "Because He stands at the right hand of the needy" (Psalms 109, 31). If you give him something, reflect who stands at his right, that will give you reward, and if you do not give him anything, reflect that He who stands at his right will punish you; as it is written, "To save him from them that judge his soul" (ib.). Rabbi Aibu said: It is written: You shall surely give him (Devarim 15: 10). Rabbi Nachman said: Because for (bigelal) this thing (ib.). Bigelal' implies that this world is like a wheel (galgela) through which the full is emptied and the empty filled. It was taught in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: Vengeance on Israel comes through the hands of the poor, as is proved by the verse, And he cry to Hashem against you, and it be sin against you (ib. 9) Vayikra Rabba 34:9

RABBI ABBAHU IN THE NAME OF RABBI ELIEZER SAID: WE OUGHT TO BE GRATEFUL TO THE IMPOSTERS, SINCE WERE IT NOT FOR THE IMPOSTERS AMONG THE POOR, THEN IF ANY OF THEM BEGGED FROM A PERSON AND THIS PERSON REFUSED TO HELP THE POOR, THIS PERSON WOULD

IMMEDIATELY INCUR THE PENALTY OF DEATH; FOR IT SAYS, 'AND HE CRY TO HASHEM AGAINST YOU, AND IT BE SIN,' AND IT FURTHER SAYS, THE SOUL THAT SINS, IT SHALL DIE (EZEKIEL 18, 4) Vayikra Rabba 34:10

Rabbi Shimon said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: Let not the Mitzvah to help the poor ever seem unimportant in your eyes, for the loss of it entails twenty-four curses and the reward given for performing it entails twenty four blessings. Vayikra Rabba 34:11

"Surely if you deal your bread to the hungry" (Yeshayahu 58, 7). This means that if you are worthy then you will give your bread to the hungry of Yaakov, but if not, then You shall bring the poor of them that are dominant (merudim) to your house (ib.), i.e. you will give it for the satisfaction of the appetite of Esav Vayikra Rabba 34:13

"AND IF YOU DRAW OUT YOUR SOUL TO THE HUNGRY" (YESHAYAHU 58:10). RABBI LEVI EXPLAINED THIS TO MEAN THAT IF YOU HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE HIM, CONSOLE HIM WITH KIND WORDS. Say to him: ' My soul goes out to you, for I have nothing to give you.' "And satisfy the afflicted soul" (Yeshayahu 58:10). If you have done this, "Then shall your light rise in darkness and your gloom be as the noon-day; and Hashem will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought and make strong your bones (ib. 10f). Rabbi Tabyumi explained: If you have done this you will be like your Creator Vayikra Rabba 34:15

RABBI YEHUDAH SON OF RABBI SHIMON EXPOUNDED: THE POOR MAN SITS AND COMPLAINS, SAYING: HOW AM I DIFFERENT FROM SO-AND-SO? YET, HE SLEEPS IN HIS BED AND I SLEEP HERE! HE SLEEPS IN HIS OWN HOUSE AND I SLEEP HERE! NOW YOU COME FORWARD AND GIVE HIM TZEDAKAH. BY YOUR LIFE! I [HASHEM] SHALL CONSIDER IT AS IF YOU HAD MADE PEACE BETWEEN HIM AND ME! ' HENCE IT IS WRITTEN, "HE WILL TAKE HOLD OF MY STRENGTH, HE WILL MAKE PEACE WITH ME; YEA, HE WILL MAKE PEACE WITH ME" (YESHAYAHU. 27, 5). Vayikra Rabba 34:16

THE PEOPLE OF SODOM ONLY GREW HAUGHTY BEFORE THE OMNIPRESENT ON ACCOUNT OF THE FAVORS THAT HE LAVISHED UPON THEM.

What does it say of their land? A land from which bread comes out... The stones thereof are the place of sapphires... That path no bird of prey knows... The proud beasts have not trodden it, etc. (Job 28, 5). The Sodomites said: ' Since food can be had from our land, and silver and gold can be obtained from our land, and precious stones and pearls can be obtained from our land, we do not require any outsiders to come to us, for such only come to us to deprive us. Let us rise and obliterate all memory of the alien foot from our midst.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: 'Do you, in return for the favors I have conferred upon you, seek to obliterate all memory of the alien foot from your midst? I shall obliterate all memory of you from the world!'

And it says: As I live, says Hashem G-d, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, etc. (Ezekiel 16, 48 f.). WHY WAS HER PUNISHMENT [SODOM'S] SO GREAT? BECAUSE SHE DID NOT STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE POOR AND NEEDY, ETC. (IB. 16: 49). Bamidbar Rabba 9:24

For What Great Nation Is There, That Has G-d so close to them (Devarim 4, 7) If a man has a rich relative he acknowledges him, but if he is poor, he disowns him and disclaims any relationship with him; but the Holy One, blessed be He, if one may say so, when Israel found themselves in Egyptian bondage said: 'I am their relative.' How do we know this? For it is said, Even for the children of Israel, a people close to Him (Psalms 148, 14). Further, if a man has a poor relative he considers that he himself comes first and his relative is of secondary importance. What does he say? ' So-and-so claims relationship with me.' But G-d, if one may say so, gives Israel the first place. For Scripture does not say here, That has a nation so close to Him, but "That has a G-d so close to them". Devarim Rabba 2:15

RABBI ZEIRA SAID: THIS SCROLL [OF RUTH] TELLS US NOTHING EITHER OF CLEANLINESS OR OF UNCLEANLINESS, EITHER OF PROHIBITION OR PERMISSION. FOR WHAT PURPOSE THEN WAS IT

WRITTEN? TO TEACH HOW GREAT IS THE REWARD OF THOSE WHO DO ACTS OF KINDNESS. Ruth Rabba 2:14

RABBI SHILOH OF NOVEH SAID: YOUR WEALTH DEPENDS ON THE POOR MAN. Ruth Rabba 5:9

THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE SAID: "MORE DEAR TO ME IS THE HANDFUL OF FLOUR BROUGHT BY A POOR MAN AS A VOLUNTARY MEAL-OFFERING THAN THE TWO HANDFULS OF INCENSE OFFERED BY THE HIGH PRIEST." Why? Because the latter is brought to secure atonement but not the former; as it is written, "And when any one brings a meal-offering to Hashem, etc. (Lev. II, 1)" Kohelet Rabba 4:5

Rabbi Yudan said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: Three things annul decrees: Prayer, Tzedakah, and Repentance Kohelet Rabba 7:21

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; Hashem has made even the one as well as the other, so that man should find nothing after him" (Kohelet 7: 14) Rabbi Tanchum Ben Chiya interpreted the verse of the poor and rich. [IN THE DAY OF PROSPERITY:] i.e. in the day when your fellowman is fortunate rejoice with him. AND IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER: consider how to support the poor so that you may receive a reward on account of them. The following was the practice of Rabbi Tanchum: if he was accustomed to buy a pound of meat, he would buy two pounds, one for his own portion and one for the poor; or two bundles of vegetables, one for himself and the other for the poor. EVEN THE ONE AS WELL AS THE OTHER: i.e. the poor and rich, that the latter may earn merit through the former. Kohelet Rabba 7:22

AND MONEY ANSWERS ALL THINGS: R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: Sometimes [a man's prayer] is answered, and at other times [his prayer] is not answered. At those times when he uses his money for Tzedakah he is answered, as it is said, So shall my Tzedakah answer for me (Gen. 30, 33); but at those times when he does not use it for Tzedakah, it accuses him, as it is stated, To have perverted witness against him (Devarim 19, 16). Kohelet Rabba 10:19

CAST YOUR BREAD UPON THE WATERS, FOR YOU SHALL FIND IT AFTER MANY DAYS (KOHLET 11, 1). RABBI BIBI SAID: IF IT IS YOUR DESIRE TO PRACTICE TZEDAKAH, BESTOW IT UPON THOSE WHO LABOR IN THE TORAH, BECAUSE THE WATERS MEANS NOTHING ELSE THAN WORDS OF TORAH, AS IT IS SAID, EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTS, COME TO THE WATER (YESHAYAHU 55, 1). Rabbi Akiba said: When I was traveling at sea, I saw a ship which had been wrecked, and I was greatly concerned about a Scholar who had been on board and went down with the ship. On arriving at the province of Cappadocia, however, I noticed him sitting before me and asking questions. I said to him, 'My son, how did you come up out of the sea?' He replied, ' Rabbi, through your prayer on my behalf one wave tossed me to another, and so on until they brought me ashore.' I asked him, 'My son, what good deeds do you possess [which rescued you from drowning]?' He answered, ' When I went aboard the ship, a poor man accosted me and cried, "Help me," and I gave him a loaf. He then said to me, " As you have restored my life to me by your gift, so will your life be restored to you." ' [Rabbi Akiba added:] I applied to him the verse: Cast your bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days (Kohelet 11, 1). Kohelet Rabba 11:1

THE POOR ARE DEAREST TO HASHEM

YOUR HEAD UPON YOU IS LIKE CARMEL. (Shir ha Shirim 7: 6) Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel: Your head (roshecha) is upon you like Carmel: the poor (rashim) among you are as dear to Me as Eliyahu who went up to Mount Carmel, as it says, "And Eliyahu went up to the top of Carmel... and put his face between his knees" (I Kings 18, 42). Why did he 'Put his face between his knees'? He said before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'There is no merit in us; look to the [sign of the] covenant.' AND THE HAIR (DALLATH) OF YOUR HEAD LIKE PURPLE (Shir ha Shirim 7: 6). Said the Holy One, blessed be He: 'The poor (dallim) and the needy in Israel are as dear to Me as David,' as it says, And he that stumbles among them at that day shall be as David (Zecharia 12: 8). Shir ha Shirim Rabba 7:12

ACTS OF KINDNESS ARE GREATER THAN THE SACRIFICES AS IT IS WRITTEN (HOSHEA 6: 6) "FOR I DESIRED KINDNESS AND NOT SACRIFICES" Yalkut Shimoni Chelek Beit Siman 522

Abraham asked Malki Tzeddek (Shem the son of Noach): On what merit did you exit the ark? And he replied: "On the merit of Tzedakah that we did. Then Abraham asked: "And what Tzedakah could you do in the ark? Were there any poor people there? Were not only Noach and his sons there? Then with whom did you perform Tzedakah? Malki Tzeddek replied: "To the beast and the birds, and we did not sleep all night long, and we would put the food in front of this animal and that animal, and when we once were delayed my father was injured. AT THAT MOMENT ABRAHAM SAID: "IF THESE PEOPLE HAD NOT DONE TZEDAKAH TO THE BIRDS AND THE ANIMALS, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE COME OUT OF THE ARK, AND WHEN THEY DELAYED IN FEEDING THE ANIMALS NOACH GOT PUNISHED AND ALMOST PASSED AWAY, AND REGARDING MYSELF, IF I WILL DO TZEDAKAH WITH MEN, WHO ARE CREATED IN THE FORM AND LIKENESS OF THE ANGELS, HOW MUCH MORE CERTAIN THAT I WILL BE SPARED FROM INJURIES AND DAMAGE. Then immediately Abraham started doing kindness and opened an inn for wayfarers, giving them food, drink and escort. Yalkut Reuveni, Parashat Noach

A man does not leave behind orphans unless he is stingy with his money Yalkut Rut Siman 600

"Hashem is close to them that are of a broken heart, and saves those of a contrite spirit". (Psalms 34:19). For all those who have a contrite spirit are more beloved to The Holy One Blessed be He than the ministering Angels Otyot de Rabbi Akiva, Chet

CHAPTER 4

SELECTIONS FROM THE ZOHAR HA KADDOSH DEALING WITH TZEDAKAH AND CHESED

RABBI SHIMON FURTHER SAID: HE WHO REJOICES ON THE FESTIVALS BUT DOES NOT GIVE TO THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, HIS DUE SHARE, IS SELFISH. THE SATAN TRIES TO INJURE HIM AND ACCUSES HIM BEFORE HEAVEN, PLANS HIS DOWNFALL, AND CAUSES HIM ENDLESS TROUBLE. TO GIVE THE PORTION OF THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, MEANS TO GLADDEN THE POOR, ACCORDING TO ONE'S ABILITY. For on these days [Festivals] the Holy One, blessed be He, goes to look at those broken vessels of His: He comes to them, and, seeing that they have nothing with which to rejoice on the festival, He weeps over them and reascends on high with intent to destroy the world. The members of the heavenly Yeshiva then present themselves before Him and plead: "O Master of the universe, You are called gracious and merciful, let Your compassion be moved upon Your children." Hashem answers: "Verily I have made the world only on the foundation of kindness, as it is written: "I have said, the world is built on kindness" (Psalms 89: 3), and the world is established on it." Then the heavenly angels proceed: "O Master of the universe, behold so-and-so, who eats and drinks and is in a position to give Tzedakah but neglects to do so." Then the Accuser comes and, having claimed and obtained permission, sets out in pursuit of that man. Whom have we in the world greater than Abraham, whose kindness extended to all creatures? Once, we are told, he prepared a feast, as it is written: "And the child grew, and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Yitzchak was weaned" (Gen 21, 8). To that feast Abraham invited all the great men of the age. NOW WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THAT WHENEVER A BANQUET IS GIVEN, THE ACCUSER [THE SATAN] COMES TO SPY OUT WHETHER THE OWNER HAS FIRST DISPENSED TZEDAKAH AND INVITED POOR PEOPLE TO HIS HOUSE. IF HE FINDS THAT IT IS SO, HE DEPARTS WITHOUT ENTERING THE HOUSE. BUT IF NOT, HE GOES IN AND SURVEYS THE MERRY-MAKING, AND HAVING TAKEN NOTE THAT NO TZEDAKAH HAD BEEN SENT TO THE POOR NOR HAD ANY BEEN INVITED TO THE FEAST, HE ASCENDS ABOVE AND BRINGS ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE OWNER. Thus, when Abraham invited to his feast the great men of the age, the Accuser came and appeared at the door in the guise of a poor man, but no one took notice of him. Abraham was attending on the kings and magnates; Sarah was giving suck to all their babes; for people did not believe that she had born a child, and said that it was only a

foundling from the street, and so all the guests brought their infants with them, and Sarah suckled them in the presence of all, as it is written, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah should give children suck?" (Ibid. 7) (note the plural "children"). The Accusing Angel was still standing at the door when Sarah said: "G-d has made laughter for me" (Ibid. 6). The Accusing Angel then presented himself before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him: "O Master of the world, You have said 'Abraham is my friend'; behold, he has made a feast and has not given anything to You nor to the poor, nor has he offered up to You so much as one pigeon; and further, Sarah said that You have made mock of her." HASHEM ANSWERED: "WHO IN THIS WORLD CAN BE COMPARED TO ABRAHAM?" NEVERTHELESS THE ACCUSING ANGEL DID NOT STIR FROM THERE UNTIL HE HAD SPOILT ALL THE FESTIVITY; AND HASHEM AFTER THAT COMMANDED ABRAHAM TO OFFER UP YITZCHAK AS AN OFFERING, AND IT WAS DECREED THAT SARAH SHOULD DIE FROM ANGUISH ON ACCOUNT OF HER SON'S DANGER. ALL THIS BECAUSE ABRAHAM DID NOT THEN GIVE ANYTHING TO THE POOR.' Zohar ha Kaddosh I 10b-11a

THE NINTH MITZVAH IS TO SHOW KINDNESS TO THE POOR AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THEIR NEEDS, AS IT IS WRITTEN: LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS; THAT IS, "LET US MAKE MAN", AS A COMPOUND BEING, INCLUDING THE MALE AND FEMALE, "IN OUR IMAGE": THE RICH; "AFTER OUR LIKENESS": THE POOR. FOR THE RICH ARE FROM THE MALE SIDE AND THE POOR FROM THE FEMALE. FOR AS THE MALE AND THE FEMALE ACT IN COOPERATION, SHOWING COMPASSION TO EACH OTHER AND MUTUALLY EXCHANGING BENEFITS AND KINDNESSES, SO MUST MAN HERE BELOW ACT RICH AND POOR IN COOPERATION, BESTOWING GIFTS UPON EACH OTHER AND SHOWING KINDNESS TO EACH OTHER. We have seen the following in the Book of King Shlomo. He who of his own shows mercy to the poor will retain forever unchanged the original form of the first man, and by that impress of the likeness of Adam he will exercise dominion over all creatures of the world. This is implied in the words: "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, etc." (Bereshit 9, 2), that is, all and every one will be in fear and in dread of that image which characterizes man. For this is a noble Mitzvah, by means of which man can rise in the image of Adam above all other creatures. This we know from Nebuchadnezzar who, in spite of the dream that he had seen, as long as he showed mercy to the poor suffered no evil effects; but as soon as he selfishly neglected the poor, what do we read about him? "While the word was in the King's mouth, etc." (Dan. 4, 28), his image changed and he was driven from men... Zohar ha Kaddosh I 13b

ABRAHAM WAS CLOSE TO HASHEM BY VIRTUE OF THE TZEDAKAH HE PERFORMED

Rabbi Abba introduced this portion with a discourse on the verse: Hearken to me, you obstinate of heart who are far from Tzedakah (Yeshayahu 46, 12). He said: 'How obstinate is the heart of sinners who see the paths and ways of the Torah and pay no heed to them, but harden their hearts and do not return in repentance to their Master, therefore they are called obstinate of heart. Also "far from Tzedakah", because they keep themselves far from the Torah. Rabbi Chizkiah says, that it is because they keep themselves far from G-d; they refuse to draw near to G-d and therefore they are far from Tzedakah. And because they are far from Tzedakah, therefore they are far from peace, and they have no peace, as it is written. There is no peace, says Hashem, to the wicked" (Yeshayahu 48, 22). The reason is that they are far from Tzedakah. See now, Abraham sought to draw near to G-d, and he succeeded. So it is written: "You did love Tzedakah and hated wickedness" (Psalms 45, 8), and it is further written: "Abraham who loves me" (Yeshayahu 41, 8), i.e. Abraham is said to have "loved G-d" because he loved Tzedakah; this was Abraham's love of G-d, in which he excelled
Zohar ha Kaddosh I 76b

RABBI ELEAZAR SAID: OBSERVE HOW MERCIFUL THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, SHOWS HIMSELF TOWARDS ALL BEINGS, AND ESPECIALLY TOWARDS THOSE WHO WALK IN HIS PATHS. FOR WHEN HE IS ABOUT TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT ON THE WORLD, BEFORE DOING SO HE PUTS IN THE WAY OF HIS BELOVED THE OCCASION OF PERFORMING A GOOD ACT. WE HAVE THUS BEEN TAUGHT THAT WHEN THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE LOVES A MAN, HE SENDS HIM A PRESENT IN THE SHAPE OF A POOR MAN, SO THAT HE SHOULD PERFORM SOME GOOD DEED TO HIM, THROUGH THE MERIT OF WHICH HE SHALL DRAW TO HIMSELF A CORD OF KINDNESS FROM THE RIGHT SIDE WHICH SHALL WIND ROUND HIS HEAD AND IMPRINT A MARK ON HIM, SO THAT, WHEN PUNISHMENT FALLS ON THE WORLD, THE

DESTROYER, RAISING HIS EYES AND NOTICING THE MARK, WILL BE CAREFUL TO AVOID HIM AND LEAVE HIM ALONE. So when the Holy One, blessed be He was about to execute judgment on Sodom, He first led Abraham to do a meritorious action by the present which He sent him, so as thereby to save Lot his brother's son from destruction. It is therefore written, "And G-d remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" (Bereshit 19, 29). It does not say that G-d remembered Lot, since he was saved through the merit of Abraham. What G-d remembered was the kindness which Abraham had shown to those three angels. Similarly, the acts of Tzedakah which a man performs are remembered by the Holy One, blessed be He at the time when punishment impends upon the world, for every meritorious action is recorded on high, and when chastisement impends over that man the Holy One, blessed be He remembers the kindness he had performed with other men, as we read: "And Tzedakah delivers from death" (Proverbs 11, 4). The Holy One, blessed be He thus afforded Abraham in advance the occasion of a good action, so that by his merit he should deliver Lot from destruction.' Zohar ha Kaddosh I 104a

Rabbi Yitzchak then said to Rabbi Yehuda: 'Observe that just as the soil of their land [Sodom] was destroyed for all eternity, so were the inhabitants themselves destroyed for all eternity. And observe further how the justice of the Holy One, blessed be He works out measure for measure: AS THEY DID NOT RESTORE THE SOUL OF THE POOR WITH FOOD OR DRINK, JUST SO WILL THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE NOT RESTORE THEM THEIR SOULS IN THE WORLD TO COME. AND FURTHER, JUST AS THEY NEGLECTED THE EXERCISE OF TZEDAKAH WHICH IS CALLED LIFE, SO HAS THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE WITHHELD FROM THEM LIFE IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE WORLD TO COME. And as they closed their roads and paths to their fellowmen, so has the Holy One, blessed be He closed to them the roads and paths of mercy in this world and in the world to come.' Zohar ha Kaddosh I 108a

Of Sodom it is written that it was well watered everywhere (Bereshit 13, 10); it possessed all the luxuries of the world, and its inhabitants were unwilling that other people should share them. Rabbi Chiya said: They deserved punishment both for their immorality and their uncharitableness. FOR WHOEVER GRUDGES ASSISTANCE TO THE POOR DOES NOT DESERVE TO EXIST IN THIS WORLD, AND HE ALSO FORFEITS THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME. ON THE OTHER HAND, WHOEVER IS GENEROUS TOWARDS THE POOR DESERVES TO EXIST IN THE WORLD, AND IT IS FOR HIS SAKE THAT THE WORLD EXISTS, AND THE FULLNESS OF LIFE IS RESERVED FOR HIM IN THE WORLD TO COME.' Zohar ha Kaddosh I 109a

Observe now the verse previously cited (Psalms 106: 3): "Happy are they that keep justice", to wit, they who keep the faith of the Holy One, blessed be He, since G-d is justice, so that a man should be on his guard not to turn aside but to keep to the way of justice, as G-d is justice and all His ways are justice. THE VERSE PROCEEDS: "THAT EXERCISE TZEDAKAH AT ALL TIMES". THE WORDS "AT ALL TIMES" CANNOT BE TAKEN QUITE LITERALLY, BUT REFER TO THOSE WHO ENDEAVOR TO FOLLOW THE WAYS OF THE TORAH AND DISPENSE TZEDAKAH TO THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED OF IT. FOR WHEN TZEDAKAH IS GIVEN TO THE POOR, ITS EFFECT IS FELT BOTH ON HIGH AND HERE BELOW. For that Tzedakah ascends on high and reaches to the region of Yaakov [Tiferet], who is the supernal chariot, and causes blessings to flow toward that region from the very fountain of fountains; and from that Tzedakah he causes blessings to flow in abundance to all the lower beings and to all chariots and hosts. Zohar ha Kaddosh I 153a

Rabbi Yossi discoursed on the verse: A prayer of the poor, when he faints (ya'atof) and pours out his complaint before Hashem (Psalms 102, 1). He said: 'As has been laid down in many places, this psalm was composed by King David when he contemplated the plight of the poor man, and that was when he fled from his father-in-law [Shaul]. It was then that he composed a "prayer of the poor", as much as to say: "Behold, this is the prayer a poor man offers up to the Almighty, and one which should ascend in advance of all other prayers...Observe that the prayer of other people is just a prayer, but the prayer of a poor man breaks through all barriers and storms its way to the presence of the Almighty. So Scripture says: And it shall come to pass, when he cries to me, that I will hear; for I am gracious (Ex. 22, 26); also: "I will surely hear their cry" (Ibid. 22). Zohar ha Kaddosh I 168b

THERE WERE TWO WOMEN FROM WHOM THE SEED OF YEHUDAH WAS TO BE BUILT UP, FROM WHOM WERE TO DESCEND KING DAVID, KING SHLOMO, AND THE MASHIACH: TAMAR AND RUTH. These two women had much in common. Both lost their first husbands, and both took similar steps to replace them. Tamar enticed Yehudah because he was the next-of-kin to her sons who had died, and “she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she was not given to him for wife”. Ruth similarly enticed Boaz, as it says, “and she uncovered his feet and laid her down” (Ruth 3, 7), and afterwards she bore him Obed. Now we do not ask why Obed was not born from another woman, for assuredly Ruth was necessary for that purpose to the exclusion of any other woman. FROM THESE TWO WOMEN, THEN, THE SEED OF YEHUDAH WAS BUILT UP AND BROUGHT TO COMPLETION, AND BOTH OF THEM ACTED PIOUSLY, AND HAD FOR THEIR AIM TO DO KINDNESS TOWARD THE DEAD, FOR THE PROPER ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORLD SUBSEQUENTLY. Zohar ha Kaddosh I 188b

Rabbi Yose once rose in the night to study the Torah, when there happened to be a certain Judean with him in the house. Rabbi Yose began to expound the verse: Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; and Tzedakah delivers from death (Prov. 10, 2). There is no profit, he said, to those men who do not occupy themselves with the study of the Torah and follow only worldly affairs in order to amass treasures of wickedness, of which it is written: And those riches perish by evil adventure (Eccl. 5, 2). “And Tzedakah delivers from death”, those who occupy themselves with the study of the Torah and know its ways; FOR THE TORAH IS CALLED THE TREE OF LIFE AND IS ALSO CALLED TZEDAKAH, AS WE READ: AND IT SHALL BE TZEDAKAH UNTO US (DEVARIM 6, 25). THE WORD TZEDAKAH HERE MAY ALSO HAVE ITS LITERAL MEANING OF CHARITY. THE TWO MEANINGS, TORAH AND TZEDAKAH, ARE IN ESSENCE IDENTICAL. Zohar ha Kaddosh I 199a

Rabbi Shimon said: When the soul leaves this world it has to pass through many trials before it reaches its place. And, finally, there is the ever-flowing river of fire which all souls have to pass and to bathe in, and who is he that can face it and pass through it without fear? The soul of the righteous passes without fear and stands in His holy place; and the man who has performed Tzedakah in this world, having given of his money to Tzedakah, of such a one it is written, and he shall pass over, that is, he shall pass through that region without fear; and a herald will proclaim before that soul, “and though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more (Nachum I, 12). For, whoever is worthy to pass through that region is exempt from any further ordeal whatever. Zohar ha Kaddosh I 201a

Rabbi Chiya discoursed on the verse: He has scattered abroad; he has given to the needy; his Tzedakah endures for ever (Psalms 112, 9). Observe, he said, that G-d created the world and set man to be king over all. Now from the first man there have branched out different classes of men, righteous and wicked, foolish and wise, rich and poor; and among these each class can win credit for itself through the other, that is, the righteous through the wicked, the wise through the foolish, the rich through the poor. For it is by these means that a man becomes worthy of being joined to the tree of life; and what is more, the Tzedakah that he dispenses stands him for ever in good stead, as it says (Psalms 111): “his Tzedakah endures for ever”. Zohar ha Kaddosh I 208a

How great is the reward that the Holy One Blessed be He will give to the poor Zohar ha Kaddosh II 61a

RABBI CHIYA SAID: ‘I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED AT THE WORDS, “FOR HASHEM HEARS THE POOR” (PSALMS 69, 34). DOES HE THEN HEAR ONLY THE POOR?’ RABBI SHIMON REPLIED: ‘THESE WORDS SIGNIFY THAT THE POOR ARE INDEED NEARER TO THE KING THAN ALL OTHERS, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, “A BROKEN AND A CONTRITE HEART, O G-D, YOU WILL NOT DESPISE” (PSALMS 51, 18) AND NO ONE IN THE WORLD IS SO BROKEN IN HEART AS THE POOR MAN. MOST HUMAN BEINGS APPEAR BEFORE THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE IN BODY AND IN SOUL, BUT THE POOR MAN PRESENTS HIMSELF BEFORE THE THRONE OF THE MOST HIGH IN SOUL ONLY, AND THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE IS NEARER TO THE SOUL THAN TO THE BODY.’ Zohar ha Kaddosh II 61a

At one time there lived in the neighborhood of Rabbi Jesse a poor man of whom no one took any notice; and to beg he was ashamed. One day he fell ill, and Rabbi Jesse went to visit him. And as he sat by the sick man's bedside the Rabbi heard a voice saying: “Wheel, wheel, a soul is flying to me before its rightful time has come! WOE TO HIS FELLOW TOWNSMEN THAT NONE WERE FOUND AMONG THEM TO SUSTAIN HIM, THAT HE

MIGHT LIVE!" RABBI JESSE, HAVING HEARD THESE WORDS, STOOD UP AND PUT INTO THE MOUTH OF THE SICK MAN THE WATER OF A CERTAIN HERB, BIDDING HIM TO DRINK IT; AND THIS MADE HIM SWEAT SO THAT THE ILLNESS LEFT HIM AND HE RECOVERED. WHEN RABBI JESSE CAME AGAIN TO THE HOUSE OF THAT POOR MAN THE LATTER SAID: "BY YOUR LIFE, RABBI! MY SOUL HAD ACTUALLY LEFT MY BODY AND WAS CONDUCTED TO THE PALACE OF THE KING AND BROUGHT BEFORE HIS THRONE; AND IT WOULD HAVE REMAINED THERE FOREVER, ONLY G-D DESIRED TO GIVE YOU THE MERIT OF RESTORING ME TO LIFE. I heard them proclaim in the highest courts of Heaven: "Rabbi Jesse's spirit shall have its abode in a holy chamber which the members of the Fellowship will occupy at their awakening", and three thrones were prepared for you and for your friends.' From that time the neighbors of the poor man looked after him. A similar tale is told of Rabbi Yitzchak. One day he was walking along the highway when a poor man passed him, having in his hand half a mea (small coin) in silver. He said to Rabbi Yitzchak: 'Save, I pray you, my life and the life of my sons and daughters.' Said Rabbi Yitzchak: 'How can I do this, seeing that I possess no more than half a mea?' 'Nevertheless,' the poor man replied, 'two half meas are better than one.' So Rabbi Yitzchak took out his coin and gave it to the man. Later, Rabbi Yitzchak dreamt that he was walking by the sea in a strange place, and some persons wanted to throw him into it, and then he saw Rabbi Shimon stretching out his hand to him, and the poor man whom he had assisted came up and pulled him out, and brought him safe and sound to Rabbi Shimon. When he awoke, the verse: "Fortunate is he who considers the poor: Hashem will deliver him in time of trouble" came automatically to his lips. Zohar ha Kaddosh II 61a

RABBI ABBA DISCOURSED ON THE VERSE: "THERE IS A SORE EVIL WHICH I HAVE SEEN UNDER THE SUN", NAMELY, "RICHES KEPT FOR THE OWNERS THEREOF TO THEIR HURT" (KOHOLET 5, 13). "There is a sore evil" Are there then two kinds of evil, one that is sore, and another that is not sore? Yes, indeed! There is a particularly sore evil, for we have a tradition that from the Side of the Left emanate many emissaries of punishment who go down to the hollow of the great Sea, and then emerge in a body and, cleaving the air, advance upon the sons of men. Each one of them is called "evil", and it is to this that the words "there shall no evil befall you" (Psalms 110, 10) refer. When a certain one of these "evils" befalls a man, it makes him miserly with his money, so that when a collector of Tzedakah or a poor man comes to him it strikes his hand saying, "do not impoverish yourself". It will not even let him buy food for himself. In fact, from the moment that that "evil" comes upon the man, he is "sore" like a sick man who can neither eat nor drink. King Shlomo proclaimed in his wisdom: "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun... A man to whom G-d has given riches, wealth, and honor, so that he wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires, yet G-d gives him no power to eat thereof, but a stranger eats it" (Kohélet 6, 1-2). On the surface, the end of this verse would appear to contradict the beginning: if G-d has given him riches, etc., how can we say that he has no power over it? The meaning, however, is that he has no power over that "evil" to which he clings and entrusts himself, and therefore he is like a sick man who does not eat, nor drink, and he keeps his money tight until he leaves this world and another man comes and takes possession of it, and becomes its master.' Zohar ha Kaddosh II 65a

They walked on until they reached the place where Rabbi Shimon was dwelling at the time. They found him absorbed in the study of the Torah. He was meditating aloud upon the verse: "A prayer of the afflicted (poor) when he is wrapped in darkness (languishing), and pours out his complaint before Hashem" (Psalms 102, 1). He said: 'All prayers of Israel are effective, but the prayer of the poor man more so than all others. Why? Because it reaches the Crown of the King's Glory and becomes, as it were, a garland for His Head, and the Holy One, blessed be He clothes Himself with this prayer as with a garment. "When he is wrapped..." He is not wrapped in garments, for he has none, being needy, but the word ya'atof has the same significance here as in the words, "the life of the young children that faint ('atuphim) for hunger" (Lam. II, 19). HE "POURS OUT HIS COMPLAINT BEFORE HASHEM". THIS IS PLEASING TO HASHEM, FOR THE WORLD IS SUSTAINED BY SUCH. WOE TO HIM AGAINST WHOM A POOR MAN COMPLAINS TO HIS MASTER! FOR THE POOR ARE NEAREST TO THE KING. CONCERNING HIM HASHEM SAYS: "WHEN HE CRIES TO ME I WILL HEAR, FOR I AM GRACIOUS" (EX. 22, 26), WHICH SIGNIFIES THAT THE PRAYERS OF OTHERS ARE SOMETIMES ACCEPTED AND SOMETIMES REJECTED, BUT THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER IS ALWAYS ANSWERED. AND WHY? BECAUSE THE KING DWELLS IN BROKEN VESSELS: "TO THIS MAN WILL I LOOK, EVEN TO HIM THAT IS POOR AND OF A CONTRITE SPIRIT" (YESHAYAHU 56, 2). "HASHEM IS NEAR TO THOSE WHO ARE OF A BROKEN HEART" (PSALMS 34,

19): "A BROKEN AND A CONTRITE HEART, O G-D, YOU WILL NOT DESPISE" (IBID. 51, 19). HENCE WE HAVE LEARNT THAT WHOSOEVER WRONGS A POOR MAN WRONGS THE SHECHINAH. "For Hashem will plead their cause" (Proverbs 22, 23): their Protector is omnipotent; He needs no witnesses, no other judge, no pledge does he accept, except that of the soul: "and spoil the soul of those who spoil them (the poor) (Ibid.). Zohar ha Kaddosh II 86b

ON ALL FESTIVALS AND HOLY DAYS A MAN MUST BOTH REJOICE HIMSELF AND GIVE JOY TO THE POOR. SHOULD HE REJOICE HIMSELF ONLY AND NOT GIVE A SHARE TO THE POOR, HIS PUNISHMENT WILL BE GREAT. CONCERNING SUCH A ONE IT IS WRITTEN: "BEHOLD, I WILL REPROVE YOUR SEED AND SPREAD DUNG UPON YOUR FACE, THE DUNG OF YOUR SOLEMN FEASTS" (MAL. 2, 3). Zohar ha Kaddosh II 88b

A MAN'S TABLE CAN PURIFY HIM OF ALL HIS SINS. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE TABLE EXHIBITS THESE TWO QUALITIES-THAT FROM IT WORDS OF THE TORAH ASCEND TO THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, AND FOOD GOES FORTH TO THE POOR.

At the moment when such a table as this is being removed after the meal two angels appear, one at the right and one at the left. The one says: "This is a table belonging to the Holy King upon which this one ordered his meal in His presence. May this table be continually full of supernal blessings, and may the Holy One, blessed be He pour upon it the richness of His bounty." And the other says: "This is a table of the Holy King which such an one had ordered before Him. It is blessed by those above and by those below. May it be set before the Ancient of Days both in this world and in the world to come." ...Through what does a man merit participation in that supernal joy? Through his table: when at his table he has satisfied the wants of the poor; as it is written: "If you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul... then shall you delight yourself in Hashem...." (Yeshayahu 58: 10-14). Such a man will the Holy One, blessed be He satisfy; he will anoint him with holy supernal ointment, which ever streams upon that Supernal Glory. Zohar ha Kaddosh II 154a - 155ab

And when man is privileged to eat in the presence of his Master, he must show his appreciation of this privilege by giving Tzedakah to the poor, feeding them, as his Master in His bounty feeds him. Zohar ha Kaddosh II 168b

RABBI YEHUDAH DISCOURSED ON THE VERSE: "IS IT NOT TO DEAL [PAROS] YOUR BREAD TO THE HUNGRY...?" (YESHAYAHU 58, 7). 'HAPPY, HE SAID, 'IS THE LOT OF HIM WHO HAPPENS TO MEET WITH A POOR MAN, AS THE POOR MAN IS A PRESENT THAT G-D HAS SENT HIM. WHOEVER RECEIVES THAT PRESENT WITH A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE, HAPPY IS HIS PORTION. SEE NOW. WHOEVER TAKES COMPASSION ON A POOR MAN AND RESTORES HIS SOUL, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE COUNTS IT TO HIM AS THOUGH HE HAD CREATED HIS SOUL. HENCE, BECAUSE ABRAHAM TOOK COMPASSION ON ALL MEN, G-D COUNTED IT TO HIM AS THOUGH HE HAD CREATED THEM, AS IT IS WRITTEN, "AND THE SOULS THAT THEY HAD MADE ('ASU) IN HARAN" (BERESHIT 12, 5). The term "paros" (breaking) has also the significance of "spreading", it being incumbent on the host to spread for the poor man a tablecloth for the bread and other food offered. Again, the term "paros", in its significance of "breaking", teaches that it is the proper thing to cut the bread for the poor man into slices, so that he should not feel ashamed.' Zohar ha Kaddosh II 198a

When an evil man dies, the proclamation runs: Woe to that man, it would have been better for him had he never been born! Regarding such a man it is written, "and they cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging", that is, only after they have placed him in the grave, which is the place of judgment, does the judgment summons cease from its raging. For the fish that swallowed him is, in fact, the grave; and so "Yonah was in the belly of the fish", which is identified with "the belly of the underworld" (Sheol), as is proved by the passage, "Out of the belly of the underworld (sheol) I cried". "Three days and three nights": these are the three days that a man lies in his grave before his belly splits open. AFTER THREE DAYS IT EJECTS THE PUTRID MATTER ON HIS FACE, SAYING: "TAKE BACK WHAT YOU GAVE ME; YOU DID EAT AND DRINK ALL DAY AND NEVER DID YOU GIVE ANYTHING TO THE POOR; ALL YOUR DAYS WERE LIKE FEASTS AND HOLIDAYS, WHILE THE POOR REMAINED HUNGRY WITHOUT PARTAKING OF ANY OF YOUR FOOD. Take back what you gave me." In regard to this it is written: "and I will spread dung upon your faces", etc. (Malachi II, 3). Zohar ha Kaddosh II 199b

Rabbi Yossi asked: "Why should there be three kinds of burnt offerings?: from the herd, from the flock, and from the fowl? Why is not one sufficient? The reason is that if a man can afford he brings an ox, and if he cannot afford an ox he brings a sheep, and if he cannot afford a sheep he brings a fowl; for G-d does not demand of a man more than he can perform.' Rabbi Eleazar said: 'His offering was to correspond to his sin. A rich man puffed up with his wealth was to bring an ox, because his thoughts were likely to be the most sinful. A man of moderate means brought a sheep because he was not so prone to sin; while a poor man, who was the most timid of all, brought the smallest offering of all. And the offering of each was appraised by G-d at its true value.'

Rabbi Eleazar asked Rabbi Shimon, his father, the following question: 'We have learnt that famine comes to the world for three sins which are only found among the rich, because they are puffed up with their wealth, but not among the poor; how is it fair, then, that G-d should slay the poor (by famine) and not the rich, for now they will sin still more?' He replied: 'This is a good question, and the Companions have answered as follows. OF ALL THE SONS OF MAN, NONE ARE SO NEAR TO THE SUPREME KING AS THOSE VESSELS THAT HE USES, TO WIT, "A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART" (PSALMS 51, 18), "HE THAT IS OF A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT" (YESHAYAHU 58, 15). NOW, WHEN THERE IS A FAMINE AND THE POOR ARE PUNISHED AND SUFFER, AND THEY WEEP AND CRY BEFORE THE KING, AND G-D DRAWS THEM NEARER THAN EVER, AS IT IS WRITTEN, "FOR HE HAS NOT DESPISED NOR ABHORRED THE AFFLICTION OF THE AFFLICTED" (PSALMS 22, 25), G-d then visits the sin for which famine has come on the world. Woe, then, to the sinners who have caused this, when the King bestirs himself to take note of the voice of the poor. Heaven protect us from them and their vengeance, for so it is written, "I will surely hear his cry" (Shemot 22, 23), "and My wrath shall wax hot, etc." (Ibid.). Zohar ha Kaddosh III 8b

'THE OFFERING OF THE POOR MAN IS A SMALL ONE, BECAUSE HIS HEART IS DOWNCAST, AND THEREFORE EVEN IF HE HARBORS SINFUL THOUGHTS HE IS FORGIVEN BECAUSE HE IS SUFFICIENTLY PUNISHED BY HIS OWN DISTRESS AND THAT OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. Zohar ha Kaddosh III 9a

IF ONE RESTORES THE SOUL OF A POOR MAN, EVEN IF HIS TIME HAS ARRIVED TO DEPART FROM THE WORLD, G-D RESTORES HIS SOUL AND GIVES HIM A FURTHER LEASE ON LIFE. TO WITHHOLD THE WAGE OF A POOR MAN IS LIKE TAKING HIS LIFE AND THE LIFE OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. AS HE DIMINISHES THEIR SOULS, SO G-D DIMINISHES HIS DAYS, AND CUTS OFF HIS SOUL FROM THE OTHER WORLD Zohar ha Kaddosh III 84b – 85a

IF A MAN DOES KINDNESS ON EARTH, HE AWAKENS KINDNESS ABOVE, AND IT RESTS UPON THAT DAY WHICH IS CROWNED THEREWITH THROUGH HIM. SIMILARLY IF HE PERFORMS AN ACT OF MERCY, HE CROWNS THAT DAY WITH MERCY AND IT BECOMES HIS PROTECTOR IN THE HOUR OF NEED. SO, TOO, IF HE PERFORMS A CRUEL ACTION, HE HAS A CORRESPONDING EFFECT ON THAT DAY AND IMPAIRS IT, SO THAT SUBSEQUENTLY IT BECOMES CRUEL TO HIM AND TRIES TO DESTROY HIM, GIVING HIM MEASURE FOR MEASURE. Zohar ha Kaddosh III 92b

HE THAT LOVES THE POOR BRINGS PEACE TO THE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL AND INCREASES BLESSING IN THE WORLD, AND BRINGS JOY AND STRENGTH TO THE PLACE WHICH IS CALLED TZEDAKAH THAT IT MAY POUR DOWN BLESSING ON THE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL. Zohar ha Kaddosh III 108b

Rabbi Yossi then quoted the verse: "Trust in Hashem and do good, dwell in the land and follow after faithfulness" (Psalms 37, 3). Happy, he said, is the man who does good with what he has, because he arouses good for the Community of Israel, and this is Tzedakah. Hence it is written, "Tzedakah delivers from death" (Proverbs 10, 2). Why so? Because Tzedakah is the tree of life, and it rouses itself against the tree of death and takes those who are attached to it and delivers them from death. And what rouses it to do so? You must say, the Tzedakah which that man does; as it were, he performs it above also. Zohar ha Kaddosh III 110b - 111a

RABBI SHIMON HERE WEPT AND EXCLAIMED: WOE FOR MANKIND THAT THEY KNOW NOT AND HEED NOT THE HONOR OF THEIR MASTER!. WHO IS IT THAT MAKES THE HOLY NAME EVERY DAY? IT IS HE THAT GIVES TZEDAKAH TO THE POOR.

As we know, the poor man takes hold of judgment and all his food is judgment, the place that is called Tzedek. Hence he that gives Tzedakah to the poor makes the Holy Name complete as it should be above, since Tzedakah is the tree of life, and when it gives to Tzedek the Holy Name becomes complete. Hence he who sets this activity in motion from below, as it were, fully makes the Holy Name. It has been stated elsewhere which is the place of the poor man: [the Shechinah] Why is it so? Because the poor man has nothing of his own [Like the Shechinah], save what is given him, and the moon has no light save what is given her by the sun. Why is a poor man counted as dead? Because he is found in the place of death [Malchut]. Therefore, if one has pity on him and gives him Tzedakah, the tree of life rests upon him, as it says, "Tzedakah delivers from death" (Proverbs 10, 2). This applies only to Tzedakah done for its own sake, for then the doer links together Tzedakah with Tzedek so that the whole forms the Holy Name, since Tzedek is not established without Tzedakah.' Zohar ha Kaddosh III 113b

Rabbi Chiya cited here the verse: "He has scattered abroad, he has given to the needy, his Tzedakah stands for ever" (Psalms 112, 9). 'The term "scattered" here', he said, 'is to be interpreted in the light of the saying: "There is one that scatters, and increases all the more" (Proverbs 11: 24), that is, increases in riches, increases in life. Besides, the term nosaf (increases) has the secondary meaning of "gathering in", thus pointing to the region of death. The verse thus says that such a man draws to himself, where death would otherwise have been, an increase of life from on high.' Rabbi Yehudah said, in the name of Rabbi Chiya: 'This verse testifies that WHOEVER GIVES TO THE POOR INDUCES THE TREE OF LIFE TO ADD OF ITSELF TO THE TREE OF DEATH [MALCHUT] SO THAT LIFE AND JOY PREVAIL ON HIGH, AND SO THAT MAN, WHENEVER IN NEED, HAS THE TREE OF LIFE TO STAND BY HIM AND THE TREE OF DEATH TO SHIELD HIM. The verse continues, "and his Tzedakah [Tzidkato = his righteousness] stands for ever", that is, it stands by him to provide him with life and strength; as he has awakened life, so will the two Trees stand by him to shield him and grant him an increase of life.' Zohar ha Kaddosh III 153b

Rabbi Abba discoursed on the verse: "A prayer of the poor when he is overwhelmed" (Psalms 102, 1). He said:The prayer of the poor man is the most excellent of all, and takes precedence of the prayer of Moshe or of David, or of any other man. The reason is that the poor man is heartbroken, and it is written, "G-d is near to the broken of heart" (Psalms 34, 19). THE POOR MAN ALWAYS COMPLAINS TO G-D, YET G-D LISTENS AND HEARS HIS WORDS. WHEN HE PRAYS HE OPENS ALL THE WINDOWS OF THE FIRMAMENT, AND ALL OTHER PRAYERS WHICH ASCEND ALOFT HAVE TO MAKE WAY FOR THAT OF THE BROKEN-HEARTED POOR MAN. G-D SAYS, AS IT WERE: LET ALL OTHER PRAYERS WAIT, AND LET THIS ONE ENTER BEFORE ME. I REQUIRE HERE NO COURT TO JUDGE BETWEEN US, LET HIS COMPLAINT COME BEFORE ME AND I AND HE WILL BE ALONE. AND SO G-D ALONE ATTENDS TO THOSE COMPLAINTS, AS IT IS WRITTEN, "AND POURS OUT HIS COMPLAINT BEFORE HASHEM". TRULY, "BEFORE HASHEM". All the hosts of heaven ask one another: With what is the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged? They answer: He is engaged eagerly with His own vessels. None of them know what is done with that prayer of the poor man and with all his complaints. But when he pours out his tears with complaints before the Almighty, G-d desires nothing so much as to receive them. Zohar ha Kaddosh III 195a

"And Hashem made the two great luminaries: the great luminary to rule the day, and the small luminary to rule the night; and the stars" (Bereshit 1:16). Herein lies the Mitzvah to give Tzedakah, the great luminary is the secret of the rich and the small luminary is the secret of the poor, who just like the moon, has no light of her own, but only what it receives from the sun. Therefore Hashem said: "Lend to Me and I will surely repay you" Therefore a person needs to lend to the poor

Tikkune Zohar 21

CHAPTER 5

SELECTIONS DEALING WITH TZEDAKAH
FROM TANNA DEBE ELIYAHU

Tanna debe Eliyahu Zutha, Chapter 1

They stated in the name of the Academy of Eliyahu: "Great is the power of Tzedakah since, from the day of the creation until now, the world has been sustained by Tzedakah. Everyone who gives much Tzedakah is praiseworthy and rescues himself from the punishment of Gehinom, as it is said (Kohelet 11. 10): 'Therefore remove vexation from your heart and put away evil from your flesh' and (Psalms 41.1): 'Fortunate is he that considers the poor, G-d will deliver him from the day of evil.' 'Evil' here refers to the day of the judgment, to Gehinom, as it is said, 'And the wicked for the day of evil,'

WHY DID OUR FOREFATHERS EARN THE RIGHT TO THIS WORLD, TO THE MESSIANIC ERA, AND TO THE WORLD TO COME? -BECAUSE THEY HABITUATED THEMSELVES TO GIVING TZEDAKAH. ABRAHAM, YITZCHAK AND YAAKOV, MOSHE, AHARON, DAVID AND HIS SON, SHLOMO, WERE PRAISED ONLY FOR THEIR TZEDAKAH...HASHEM, ALSO, IS PRAISED THROUGH TZEDAKAH, AS IT IS SAID (IS. 5.16): 'AND G-D WHO IS HOLY IS SANCTIFIED THROUGH TZEDAKAH.' EVEN THE THRONE OF GLORY (PSALMS 89.15) 'TZEDAKAH AND JUSTICE ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOUR THRONE.'

GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE IT SAVES MEN FROM THE WAY OF DEATH. GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE IT LENGTHENS A MAN'S DAYS AND YEARS. GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE IT BRINGS MAN TO LIFE IN THE WORLD-TO-COME. GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE IT IS EQUALED TO THE TORAH. GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE TORAH IS COMPARED WITH IT. GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE IT BRINGS MORE SPEEDILY THE DAYS OF THE SON OF DAVID [MASHIACH] AND THE DAYS OF OUR REDEMPTION. GREAT IS TZEDAKAH BECAUSE IT LIFTS UP THE NESHAMA AND SEATS IT OVER AGAINST THE THRONE OF GLORY.

AND HOW DO WE KNOW THAT TZEDAKAH SAVES MEN FROM THE WAY OF DEATH? FROM THE VERSE: 'RICHES PROFIT NOT IN THE DAY OF WRATH,' AND TZEDAKAH DELIVERS FROM DEATH (PROVERBS 11:4). COME AND SEE THAT AS A MAN MEASURES, SO IT IS MEASURED OUT TO HIM. WHEN A MAN GIVES TZEDAKAH TO HIS FELLOW IN THIS WORLD, SEEING TO IT THAT HE LIVES, NOT DIES, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE LIKEWISE SEES TO IT THAT THE GIVER LIVES, NOT DIES. And the proof that he who has the means to exercise Tzedakah yet does not exercise it in order to sustain lives, and that he who has the means to maintain lives yet does not maintain them, brings death upon himself? The verse "Naval answered David's servants, and said, 'Who is David?. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men of whom I know not whence they are? (1 Sam. 25:10-11). He was punished soon afterwards, as it is said (Ibid. 26.38): 'And G-d smote Nabal, so that he died.' (1 Sam. 25:38).

"AND HOW DO WE KNOW THAT TZEDAKAH PROLONGS THE DAYS AND YEARS OF MAN?, AS IT IS SAID (DEVARIM 30.20): 'FOR THAT IS YOUR LIFE AND THE LENGTH OF YOUR DAYS.' AND IT IS STATED TOO (PROVERBS 3. 18): 'IT IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THEM THAT GRASP IT'. Now we may argue from premise to conclusion (Kal Vachomer): If for the very lightest of all Mitzvot it is promised (Devarim 22.27) 'So that it should be well with you that you may prolong your days,' how much more so is this true of Tzedakah, one of the most important Mitzvot of the Torah. Great is Tzedakah for it leads man to the world to come, as it is said (Psalms I.I): '(Ashrei) Fortunate is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked...', and also (Psalms 106.3)) Fortunate are they that keep justice, that give Tzedakah at all times. Ashrei (Fortunate) is used in connection with Torah, and also in connection with Tzedakah. Just as the Ashrei referring to Torah assures life in the world to come, so does the Ashrei referring to Tzedakah."

AND HOW DO WE KNOW THAT TZEDAKAH IS EQUAL TO TORAH?. Of Torah it is said (Lev. 26.8): 'If you will walk in My statutes,' and of Tzedakah (Proverbs 8.22): 'Hashem has made me as the beginning of His way.' Concerning Torah it is said (Lev. 26.6 ff.): 'And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.' And of Tzedakah it is said (Yeshayahu 32.17): 'And the work of Tzedakah shall be peace and the effect of Tzedakah quietness and confidence for ever. And My people shall abide in a peaceful habitation and in secure dwellings and in quiet resting-places.'

AND HOW DO WE KNOW THAT TORAH HAS BEEN COMPARED AND IS EQUAL TO TZEDAKAH? FOR THERE IS NO BETTER CREATION IN THE WORLD THAN TORAH, AS IT IS SAID (PROVERBS 4.8): 'EXTOL HER AND SHE WILL EXALT YOU. SHE WILL BRING YOU HONOR WHEN YOU EMBRACE HER. SHE WILL GIVE YOUR HEAD A CHAPLET OF GRACE. A CROWN OF GLORY SHE WILL BESTOW ON YOU.' AND TORAH IS COMPARED TO NONE OTHER THAN TZEDAKAH, AS IT IS SAID (DEVARIM 6.25): 'AND IT SHALL BE A TZEDAKAH TO US IF WE OBSERVE TO DO ALL THIS COMMANDMENT.'

"AND HOW DO WE KNOW THAT TZEDAKAH HASTENS THE ADVENT OF THE MESSIANIC ERA AND THE ULTIMATE REDEMPTION? AS IT IS SAID (YESHAYAHU 56.1): 'KEEP JUSTICE AND DO TZEDAKAH, FOR MY SALVATION IS NEAR TO COME AND MY TZEDAKAH TO BE REVEALED.' " AND HOW DO WE KNOW THAT TZEDAKAH EXALTS THE SOUL AND PLACES IT UNDER THE THRONE OF GLORY, AS IT IS SAID (YESHAYAHU 33.15): 'HE THAT WALKS IN TZEDAKAH AND SPEAKS UPRIGHTLY... SHALL DWELL ON HIGH, HIS PLACE OF DEFENSE SHALL BE ON THE MUNITIONS OF ROCKS, HIS BREAD SHALL BE GIVEN, HIS WATER SAFE. YOUR EYES SHALL SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.' –

The only elixir of life for the angel of death is Tzedakah. As it is written “ I was in dread of the Anger and the Fury” (Devarim 9:19) And the sages taught (Sanhedrin 37) “If any one preserves a single soul, it is as if he had preserved the entire world” And it further says: “A gift in private, pacifies Anger” (Proverbs 21: 14) Tanna de be Eliyahu Perek 10

Tanna debe Eliyahu Rabba, 53

Consider the story of two families of priests who came before Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and said to him: Master, our sons die at the age of eighteen, at the age of fifteen, and even at the age of twelve. He replied: Such premature death can only mean that you are of the family of Eli's descendants to whom it was said, “All the increase of Your house shall die young men”. (1 Sam. 2:33). They asked: Master, what are we to do? He replied: When any son [of yours] reaches puberty, estimate his worth in goods and money and then give all to Tzedakah, keeping in mind the verse “Tzedakah delivers from death” (Proverbs 10:2). You will thus be saved from death. So the families did as they were advised and thus delivered themselves from death.

EVEN MORE, OF HIM WHO ACTS JUSTLY, [GIVES] TZEDAKAH, AND THUS PRESERVES MANY LIVES, SCRIPTURE SAYS, HE HAS REDEEMED MY SOUL [THROUGH SUCH ACTS WHICH LEAD TO] PEACE (PSALMS 55:19). WHEN SUCH ACTS ARE PERFORMED, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE SAYS: WHO IS THE MAN WHO RANSOMS ME FROM WHATEVER PLACE OF EXILE <MY> PRESENCE ABIDES IN, AND RANSOMS ISRAEL FROM EXILE AMONG THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD? IT IS THE MAN GIVING TZEDAKAH AND EXERCISING JUSTICE WHO BRINGS ABOUT [HARMONY]. WHEN ISRAEL ACT JUSTLY AND [GIVE] TZEDAKAH, WHAT VERSE OF SCRIPTURE APPLIES TO THEM? WHEN A MAN LOVES TZEDAKAH AND JUSTICE, THE EARTH IS FULL OF THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF HASHEM' (PSALMS 33:5). BUT WHEN ISRAEL DO NOT ACT JUSTLY AND [DO NOT GIVE] TZEDAKAH, WHAT IS SAID OF THEM? TRUTH IS LACKING [IN THEM] (YESHAYAHU 59:15).

CHAPTER 6

SELECTIONS DEALING WITH TZEDAKAH

FROM THE SEFER MEIL TZEDAKAH WRITTEN BY RABBI ELIYAHU HA KOHEN ZTKL, AUTHOR OF MIDRASH TALPIOT, SHEVET MUSSAR, AND MANY OTHER SEFORIM

EXCERPTS FROM THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

EVEN CONSIDERING ALL THAT WE HAVE SAID, THE WEALTHY STILL DISREGARD THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH. AND EVEN WHEN THEY GIVE SOME COINS TO THE POOR, THEY DENIGRATE ABOUT THE POOR AND THEY TURN THEIR EYES AWAY FROM TZEDAKAH, FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF THEIR OWN YETZER HARA WHO HATES THEM AND WANTS TO BRING THEM DOWN TO GEHINOM, for the Yetzer haRa makes the wealthy say:

"The poor don't behave appropriately, they are cheaters, they have no manners, they are like beasts, they are not civilized" ...and many other descriptions through which the wealthy want to discharge their obligation to give Tzedakah. But in reality they are wrong when they say: "Hashem didn't command us to have pity on these kinds of poor people. On the other hand if there were poor people who were proper and civilized, we would provide them with all their needs, day by day, for regarding these decent poor people we were commanded in the Torah (Devarim 15:10): "You shall surely give him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him", But regarding those poor people that do not act properly, we do not give them Tzedakah, and if we supported them it would be counted for us as a sin and not a Mitzvah"

ALL THESE ARGUMENTS ARE THE ENTREATIES OF THE YETZER HA RA, WHO PUTS IN THEIR HEARTS ALL THESE FALSE WORDS IN ORDER TO REMOVE THEM FROM THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH FOR IT IS A GREAT MITZVAH THAT BRINGS THE FINAL REDEMPTION CLOSER, FOR AT THAT TIME THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE WILL SLAUGHTER THE YETZER HA RA. THEREFORE THE YETZER HARA TRIES VERY HARD TO ANNUL THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH AND TO CONDUCT THE WELL TO DO PERSON ALONG THE PATH OF THE NONBELIEVER WHO THINKS: 'IF THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE LOVES THE POOR, WHY DOES HE NOT SUPPORT THEM?' (BABA BATRA 10) AND MANY OTHER REASONINGS LIKE THESE. YET ALL THESE WORDS ARE FALSEHOOD AND VAIN UTTERINGS AGAINST HASHEM AND HIS ANOINTED....FOR WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO GIVE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT, WHETHER THEY LOOK TO US AS GOOD OR BAD. AND INDEED, WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO CRITICIZE ANY OF THE ACTIONS OF THE POOR PERSON FOR HE IS CONSIDERED LIKE A DEAD PERSON (TALMUD NEDARIM 64) AND THE FLESH OF THE DEAD PERSON DOESN'T FEEL ANYTHING (TALMUD SHABBAT 13). AND REGARDING WHAT OUR RABBIS OF BLESSED MEMORY HAVE SAID (TALMUD YEVAMOT 102): "HE GIRDS THE AFFLICTED IN HIS AFFLICTION!" (JOB 36:15) THIS IS: "AS A REWARD FOR HIS [THE POOR PERSON'S] AFFLICTION HASHEM WILL DELIVER HIM FROM THE JUDGMENT OF GEHINOM". THUS WE SEE THAT HIS POVERTY WASHES AWAY HIS SINS. AND SOMETHING EVEN GREATER OUR SAGES HAVE DECLARED IN THE ZOHAR HA KADDOSH (ZOHAR CHADASH, ACHARE, P. 49) THAT THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE DOESN'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE SINS OF THE POOR PERSON.

We are obviously referring to a poor person that has numerous sins and has very few good actions. Regarding him it says: "As a reward for his affliction Hashem will deliver him from the judgment of Gehinom" (Talmud Yevamot 102). Now regarding a Tzaddik: what need is there to say that his poverty cleanses him from his sins if he is a Tzaddik? In this case, it is obvious that the fires of Gehinom do not afflict the Tzaddik.

AND GIVEN ALL THAT IT IS WRITTEN HERE: ON WHAT GROUNDS CAN A PERSON ABSOLVE HIMSELF FROM THE DUTY OF GIVING TZEDAKAH? WHAT CAN THE YETZER HA RA POSSIBLY SAY?

THEREFORE MY INNARDS HAVE GIVEN ME COUNSEL AND I HAVE GIRDED MY LOINS FOR "IT IS A TIME TO DO FOR HASHEM", IT IS A TIME TO MAKE KNOWN AND TO PUBLICIZE THE GREAT WORDS OF TRUTH, REGARDING THE GREAT POWER OF TZEDAKAH. ITS LOFTY LEVEL AND ITS BENEFITS TO THE LOWER

AND UPPER SPHERES. FOR THROUGH TZEDAKAH REDEMPTION NEARS AND THROUGH TZEDAKAH THE NAME OF HASHEM IS COMPLETED.

Through Tzedakah comes perfection for the person, fullness of body and soul, and through Tzedakah a person merits 310 worlds [Reserved for the Tzaddikim] even if he lacks in the performance of many other Mitzvot as your eyes will surely see inside this work...And there is no measuring and there is no end to the reward for the performance of Tzedakah, more so than all other Mitzvot in the Torah.

Therefore regarding this Mitzvah there is no room to say as is the case with all other Mitzvot (Iyov 35:7): "If you behaved righteously what have you given to Him [To Hashem]?" For this Mitzvah concerns Hashem directly as it is written "He that has pity on the poor lends to Hashem" (Mishlei - Proverbs 19:17). And being that it is written: "Rabbi Assi further said: Tzedakah is equivalent to all the other Mitzvot combined (Talmud Baba Batra 9a) therefore through Tzedakah a person can complete immediately the coat with which to cover himself [Referred to as Chaluka de Rabbanan] in the world to Come and the person can merit to dwell in the section of heaven where no creature can enter.

THEREFORE I HAVE CALLED THIS BOOK MEIL TZEDAKAH "COAT OF TZEDAKAH" ON ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT THROUGH TZEDAKAH A PERSON CAN QUICKLY MAKE THE CLOTHING THAT HE WILL WEAR IN THE WORLD OF SOULS, THE WORLD WHERE EVERYTHING IS GOOD...

Sefer Meil Tzedakah Introduction

"My master would give Tzedakah with great happiness and with a good heart and with hands open wide. And sometimes he did not care to look if he had any money left, and he would give Tzedakah while standing up". (Kitve ha Ari ha Kaddosh) And the reason why the Ari ha Kaddosh would give Tzedakah with great happiness and standing up, is that the Tzedakah that a person does with a poor person is considered as if he had done it directly with the Holy One Blessed be He as our Sages of Blessed memory have said (Baba Batra 10) on the verse (Proverbs 19:17) "He that is gracious to the poor lends to Hashem". NOW, IS THERE ANY HAPPINESS GREATER THAN THIS? THAT WHEN GIVING TO A POOR PERSON, IT IS CONSIDERED AS IF WE WERE GIVING TO THE ONE TO WHOM EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD BELONGS TO? And being that the Holy One Blessed be He stands to the right of the poor person as it is written (Psalms 109:31): "Because He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from them that judge his soul", then it is appropriate to give Tzedakah while standing up because the Shechinah is in front of him, at the right hand of the poor Sefer Meil Tzedakah 687

IT IS CLEAR AS THE LIGHT OF DAY THAT WHEN SOMEONE HAS EMUNAH [FAITH], HE GIVES OUT TZEDAKAH FROM WHAT HE HAS AT HAND, WITH THE EMUNAH THAT THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE WILL REPLACE FOR HIM THE MONEY HE NOW LACKS. AND IF THERE IS NO EMUNAH THEN THERE IS NO TZEDAKAH, AND IF THERE IS NO TZEDAKAH THERE'S NO EMUNAH. AND THEN WE FIND THAT WHEN SOMEONE REFRAINS FROM GIVING TZADAKAH IT IS AS THOUGH HE HAD TRANSGRESSED ALL THE TORAH Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 230

What is EMUNAH? That a man will trust in Hashem and will not be afraid of anything, and he will sacrifice himself and his money for Hashem's sake, and his business will be faithful, and he will say the truth always, and he will not be desperate to become wealthy but he will (Tehillim 37) "Trust in Hashem, dwell in the land and sow EMUNAH" Luchot ha Brit brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1186

UNDERSTAND HOW GREAT IS THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH AND HOW BELOVED IT IS FOR THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE. FOR YOU CAN SEE HOW MANY TIMES AND WITH HOW MANY DEVICES AND EXCUSES THE SATAN TRIES TO DISCOURAGE YOU FROM PERFORMING TZEDAKAH, MORE SO THAN REGARDING OTHER MITZVOT. FOR THE SATAN USES MANY EXCUSES LIKE "YOUR LIFE COMES BEFORE, DO NOT GIVE WHAT BELONGS TO YOUR SONS TO OTHERS, SAVE YOUR MONEY FOR YOUR OLD AGE" AND MANY OTHER EXCUSES LIKE THESE Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1267

WHEN A PERSON GIVES TZEDAKAH, THIS TZEDAKAH HAS THE POWER TO FORGIVE HIM FOR ALL HIS SINS...EVEN WHEN A PERSON HAS MANY SINS, WHEN HE GIVES TZEDAKAH PROPERLY HE IS FORGIVEN Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1271

HOW MANY EVIL THINGS WILL COME TO THOSE WHO ARE FAR FROM TZEDAKAH AND OF WHAT BENEFIT WILL THEIR RICHES BE TO THEM IN THE DAY OF WRATH? Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1129

THE WAY OF THE WICKED IS AN ABOMINATION TO HASHEM; BUT HE WHO FOLLOWS AFTER TZEDAKAH, IS BELOVED. (MISHLE 15:9) AND WHAT DOES THIS VERSE COME TO TEACH US? WE INDEED CAN LEARN A NOVEL IDEA FROM THIS VERSE AND THAT IS THAT EVEN IF THE WAY OF THE EVILDOER IS AN ABOMINATION TO HASHEM, BUT IF THIS SAME EVILDOER FOLLOWS AFTER AND DOES TZEDAKAH, THEN HE IS BELOVED, EVEN THOUGH HE IS OTHERWISE AN EVILDOER. THIS IS THE POWER OF TZEDAKAH... Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1008

And I said: 'Surely these are poor, they are foolish, for they know not the way of Hashem, nor the ordinance of their G-d; I will go to the great men, and will speak to them; for they know the way of Hashem, and the ordinance of their G-d.' (Yirmiyahu 5:4). See how poverty and need, liberate a person from carrying the guilt of sin upon him even if he commits grave sins, because poverty takes away his understanding and he is then considered like a fool...therefore it says: "I will go talk to the great, wealthy men" for regarding the poor people, their poverty saved them from punishment Sefer Meil Tzedakah 957

"Hashem protects the simple; I became needy [DALOTI], and He saved me". (Psalms 116: 6) The meaning is: The Holy One Blessed be He protects the simple, for they do not know between good and evil due to their being simple. And therefore it says: "I became needy [DALOTI], and He saved me", because of the poverty in me, because my poverty confounded me and made me simple, that is why "He saved me" Sefer Meil Tzedakah 902

"Rabban Shimon Be Rabbi said: "And He shall give you mercy, and have compassion upon you, and multiply you" (Devarim 13: 18) he who is merciful to others, mercy is shown to him by Heaven, while he who is not merciful to others, mercy is not shown to him by Heaven". (Talmud Masechet Shabbat 151b) Given that sometimes a person shows mercy to the poor and yet something evil befalls him, like losing his money, and based on what is written: "Tzaddik and evil befalls him", You must know that this is also a great kindness that the Holy One Blessed be He did to you, because you were determined to die or to suffer from a terrible disease, and because you had mercy on the poor person, a minor evil came to you to save you from a greater evil. Then, as long as you are merciful, Hashem has mercy on you, and even if something evil befalls you, know that truthfully that evil is for your benefit Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1226

WHOEVER IS TOGETHER WITH A SICK PERSON SHOULD REMIND HIM TO GIVE SOME TZEDAKAH... And the sick person should be reminded that there is no Mitzvah that precedes the person when he dies like Tzedakah as it is written: "And his Tzedakah shall go before him". And the Rekanati wrote in his commentary to the Torah Parashat Ree, that many times death is decreed on a person and only Tzedakah saves him from death as it is written: "And Tzedakah saves from death" Sefer Bekorim brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1133

Our Rabbis taught: Formerly they used to convey [Meals] to the house of mourning, the rich in silver and gold baskets and the poor in baskets of peeled willow twigs, and the poor felt shamed: they therefore instituted that all should convey [Meals] in baskets of peeled willow twigs out of deference to the poor. Our Rabbis taught: Formerly, they used to serve drinks in a house of mourning, the rich in white glass vessels and the poor in colored glass, and the poor felt shamed: they instituted therefore that all should serve drinks in colored glass, out of deference to the poor. Formerly they used to uncover the face of the rich and cover the face of the poor, because their faces turned livid in years of drought and the poor felt shamed; they therefore instituted that everybody's face should be covered, out of deference for the poor. Formerly. they used to bring out the rich [for burial] on a luxurious bed and the poor

on a plain bier, and the poor felt shamed: they instituted therefore that all should be brought out on a plain bier, out of deference for the poor. (Talmud Moed katan 27)

SEE AND REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT IS THE HONOR OF THE POOR THAT ENTIRE CUSTOMS WERE ANNULLED SO THAT THE POOR WOULD NOT FEEL ASHAMED. FROM HERE THE PERSON WILL LEARN HOW CAREFUL HE MUST BE WHEN GIVING TZEDAKAH TO THE POOR, SO THAT HE WILL NOT SHAME THE POOR NOR DIMINISH THEIR HONOR Sefer Meil Tzedakah 460

I AM AMAZED AT THE WEALTHY PEOPLE WHOM THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE HAS PLACED AS ADMINISTRATORS OVER THE POOR PEOPLE, BECAUSE THE WEALTHY PEOPLE'S MONEY IS NOT THEIRS, YET THEY SPEND IT AS THEY WISH AND WHEN THEY DO GIVE A FEW COINS TO THE POOR, IT IS AS DIFFICULT AS DEATH TO THESE RICH PEOPLE. AND THEY DO NOT REALIZE THAT ALL THE MONEY THEY SPEND, THIS MONEY IS THE MONEY OF THE POOR THAT THEY WERE GIVEN TO MANAGE... Sefer Meil Tzedakah 366

The ones who pursue after riches in order to accumulate great capital to fulfill all their desires, have taken from them one worry which is the suffering of making a living and have caused to themselves many other worries. Like the worry of earning great riches, the worry of keeping them, the worry of dying before fulfilling not even half of their desires, and he will not even be at peace with what he leaves to his son as an inheritance. Therefore we see the confirmation of what is written (Avot 2: 7) "The one who increases properties increases worry"
Based on the sefer Baal Akedah Parashat Metzora

The wise man said: I have seen many sufferings, many diseases, many evil plagues and blows and poverty and I have withstood them all. But an evil woman I have not been able to bear. (Reshit Chochma, Derech Eretz Perek Beit, Saif Beit). MOST OF THE WIVES OF THE POOR TURN EVIL BECAUSE OF THEIR LACKING MOST THINGS, FOR POVERTY DOES NOT LEAVE ROOM FOR GOOD TRAITS. THEREFORE, SEE HOW MUCH PAIN AND SUFFERING DOES THE POOR PERSON PUT UP WITH. HE PUTS UP WITH POVERTY AND WITH AN EVIL WOMAN. AND FROM THIS YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE GREAT REWARD FROM THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE TO THE PERSON WHO SUSTAINS THE POOR. Sefer Meil Tzedakah 341

See and realize how great is Tzedakah, for he who gives to the poor annuls the fights between the poor person and his wife, and fighting within the house of a person is harder than the war of Gog and Magog [See similar in Shemot Rabba 1] and then the one who gives the Tzedakah as it were, annuls the war of Gog and Magog... And not only does he nullify fighting but he brings peace between the poor person and his wife... Sefer Meil Tzedakah 398
Rabbi Pinchas Ben Chama said: Poverty in one's home is worse than fifty plagues, for it is written (Job 19:21) "Have Pity upon me, have pity upon me, O you my friends; for the hand of G-d has touched me" (Talmud Baba Batra 116) Rashi comments there: The Hand of G-d: meaning fifty plagues. For regarding Mitzrayim it is written (Shemot 8: 15) "It is the finger of G-d" and there were 10 plagues in Mitzrayim, therefore a hand [The Hand of G-d] that has 5 fingers means 50 plagues. Sefer Meil Tzedakah 625

I have pondered in my heart what can make the highly honored lighter, and what can break arrogance and can bring down the elevated, and I said: this is poverty. Reshit Chochma, Derech Eretz Perek Beit, Saif Beit

The general rule is that when a person needs other human beings, it does not bring honor to the person, therefore if the poor person does not do something proper, we should not hate him nor humiliate him, for this poor person is in a position of great need, he is fallen down and broken in spirit and his understanding is not with him Sefer Meil Tzedakah 342

Our Rabbis learned: Three things deprive a man of his senses and of a knowledge of his Creator: idolaters, an evil spirit and oppressive poverty. In what respect could this matter? In respect to invoking heavenly mercy to be delivered from them. (Talmud Masechet Eruvin 41) THEREFORE SEE HOW GREAT IS THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH FOR IT PREVENTS THE POOR FROM TURNING INTO IDOLATRY, THEREFORE TZEDAKAH IS

EQUIVALENT TO ALL OTHER MITZVOT, FOR IT CAUSES THAT THE POOR WILL NOT TURN TO IDOLATRY AND TRANSGRESS ALL THE MITZVOT Sefer Meil Tzedakah 337

The reason for what our Sages declared (Baba Batra 9): "Greater is he who leads others to give Tzedakah than the giver himself" is that the giver can not do more than what his means allow him, but the one who leads others to give, can talk to many more people so that they give Tzedakah. Therefore a person should give Tzedakah according to his means, and it should be his way to talk to the hearts of other people, in order to make them give a lot to whatever cause will be at hand, and then his reward shall be great. And this is the case when he makes the rich give, but when he forces one who can not give it is considered as if he had robbed him... Sefer Meil Tzedakah 297

Whoever does Tzedakah during his lifetime to the students of the Torah and does kindness to them, even though he is ignorant of the Torah, when he dies, they teach him the Torah
Sode Raza brought in Yalkut Reuveni Parashat Ree

The one who loses money, should constrict himself further and give Tzedakah. And the merit of the Tzedakah will become a messenger who will tell him where the money that he lost is to be found and he will recover it. For the angel created from the Tzedakah that he gave, will lead and guide him so that he earns the money he previously lost, with the help of the Creator who will hand it to the hands of the Angel of Tzedakah Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1754

If a person has money for Tzedakah he should give it to many poor people, even if a small amount reaches each one of them, and he should not give all the money exclusively to one poor person...for in this way it is impossible not to find a proper receiver and through him the giver will gain merit through his Tzedakah. Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1265

A third of the day Ha Kaddosh Baruch Hu reads and learns, a third of the day He judges and a third of the day He does Tzedakah, He feeds and provides all the world (Leket Shmuel, Erech Torah Page 36b from Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel or Yerushalmi) AND IT IS APPARENT THAT THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE ACTS IN THIS MANNER SO THAT MEN LEARN FROM HIS WAYS, THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY A PERSON SHALL INCREASE IN TZEDAKAH TO THE POOR, for the wife and the children of the poor person even though they did not receive food in the morning, they wait until evening to see if the father will bring some food from what he earned as a hired day laborer on that day, and this hope gives them happiness during the day and actually revives them. And if they see that at night the father brings nothing home, then they are like dead people. Therefore a man must be careful to give Tzedakah towards the end of the day, and he should learn from the Holy One Blessed be He who gives Tzedakah in the final third of the day. Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1267

"HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE MY BELOVED" (SHIR HA SHIRIM 1:15) WHEN YOU GIVE TZEDAKAH, AND THERE IS NO BELOVED BUT HE WHO PROVIDES FOR ME, AND WHEN ISRAEL FEEDS THE POOR, I [HASHEM] CONSIDER IT AS IF YOU HAD PROVIDED FOR ME (YALKUT SHIR HA SHIRIM 1) HASHEM DECREED POVERTY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE RICH SO THAT THROUGH THE TZEDAKAH THAT THEY GIVE TO THE POOR THEY WILL BE SAVED FROM GEHINOM, AS OUR SAGES HAVE DECLARED (BABA BATRA 9)...THEREFORE HASHEM AS IT WERE SUFFERS BECAUSE OF THE SUFFERING HE DECREED ON THE POOR, FOR HE WITHDREW FROM THEIR HANDS IN ORDER TO BENEFIT OTHERS THROUGH THEM. THEREFORE IT SAYS THAT WHEN ISRAEL SUSTAINS POOR PEOPLE, IT IS AS IF THEY ARE PROVIDING HASHEM HIMSELF, FOR THROUGH THIS HASHEM IS BEING SAVED FROM SUFFERING, FOR JUST AS THE POOR ARE SPARED FROM THE PAIN AND SUFFERING OF HUNGER WHEN YOU FEED THEM, JUST THE SAME HASHEM IS SPARED FROM THE SUFFERING HE HAS WHEN HE SEES THE POOR SUFFERING. Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1362

Poor in hebrew is spelled ALEF NUN YUD, which are also the letters of the word eye, AYIN YUD NUN. This insinuates that the poor will receive the reward prepared for the Tzadikim that no eye has ever seen [AYN LO RAATA...] Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1409

THERE IS AN EVIL PERSON WHO BEING ABLE TO BE GOOD TO THE POOR WITH HIS MONEY YET DOESN'T, AND EVEN THOUGH HE LACKS NOTHING, HE REFRAINS FROM DOING GOOD TO THE POOR AND HE LOSES HIS WORLD. IS THERE FORGIVENESS FOR THOSE WEALTHY PEOPLE WHO CLOSE THEIR HAND FROM TZEDAKAH? Sefer Meil Tzedakah 1473

"I am a friend to all those who fear You and who guard Your statutes" (Tehillim 119:63) A person should always befriend wise men and pious men. And he should befriend poor and sick people who are suffering troubles. And he should distance himself from the opposite people. For those other people who are the opposite to those mentioned above will destroy a man's faith [Emunah] Rabbenu Tam Sefer haYashar, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1489

It is proper to associate oneself in the suffering of his friend, as they said regarding Yosef ha Tzaddik peace be upon him: Why did he starve himself during the years of famine? For he said: "I fear for myself, that if I eat and satisfy myself, then I will forget about those who are hungry". For he wanted to afflict himself in order to feel the pain of those suffering from hunger Sefer Maamatz Koach 9, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1523

ALSO THE PERSON WHO HAS MORE THAN WHAT HE NEEDS, EVEN IF HE WILL BECOME WEALTHIER YET, NOTHING WILL REMAIN WITH HIM WHEN HIS TIME TO LEAVE THE WORLD COMES. AND FROM THIS A PERSON SHOULD LEARN TO GET BY WITH LITTLE, TO BE CONTENT WITH LESS, BECAUSE THE EXCESS IS SOMETHING EVIL WHICH G-D GAVE TO THE SONS OF MEN TO MAKE THEM WORRY AND TO MAKE THE BLOOD BOIL AND TO BRING SUFFERING TO THE SOUL. Sefer Akedah Parashat Beshalach, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1527

JUST AS MANY BLOOD DISEASES ARE CURED BY LETTING OUT BLOOD, JUST THE SAME A MAN'S CURE FOR THE SICKNESS OF HIS SOUL CAN BE ACHIEVED BY GIVING OUT MONEY TO HASHEM MAY HE BE BLESSED, TO HAVE COMPASSION ON THE POOR, ETC Sefer Bina La Itim, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1528

HE WHO GIVES TO THE POOR IS CALLED "ONE WHO SANCTIFIES THE NAME OF HASHEM" BECAUSE HE PREVENTS THE POOR PERSON FROM COMPLAINING ABOUT G-D, FOR WHEN HE IS IN NEED AND THERE IS NO WAY FOR HIM TO FULFILL HIS NEEDS HE COMPLAINS AND PROTESTS AND THE PROOF IS FROM IYOV WHO COMPLAINED WHEN THINGS TURNED BAD FOR HIM EVEN THOUGH HE WAS STRICKEN WITH SUFFERING AND NOT WITH POVERTY WHICH IS WORSE THAN SUFFERINGS Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1539

And I heard in the name of the Masters of kabbalah that there is no shield as effective as Tzedakah against transgressions, even idolatry or adultery. And it acts like an armor which protects the person against the accusers and the destroyers, and Ha Kaddosh Baruch Hu shields and hides him in His secret wings from the aspect of severe judgment. Sefer Hakaneh 80, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1541

"He who performs one Mitzvah is well rewarded, his days are prolonged, and he inherits the land, but he who does not perform one Mitzvah, good is not done to him, his days are not prolonged, and he does not inherit the land". (Kiddushin 39b) The Mitzvah of Tzedakah is equivalent to all the Mitzvot (Baba Batra 9), Tzedakah is a unique Mitzvah there is none more elevated in all the Torah, and it is a Mitzvah that has no pair. And to this Mitzvah of Tzedakah refers the Mishna: "He who performs one Mitzvah" which is Tzedakah that is equivalent to all the Mitzvot. And measure for measure, just as he is good to the poor, they are good to him from heaven and his days are prolonged for "Tzedakah saves from death" (Mishlei 10: 2). Just as he gives life to the poor, they give him life and prolong his days. And this will not diminish his reward for the world to Come, as it is written (Yeshayahu 60: 21) "And Your people are all Tzaddikim, they will forever inherit the Land", which is the World to Come. However if "he does not perform one Mitzvah" which is Tzedakah, even though he fulfills all other Mitzvot, given that he doesn't do

good to the poor, just the same they are not good to him from heaven, and just as he does not revive the poor, his days are not prolonged... Sefer Yad Yosef 120, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1552

“Let the poor be members of your household and do not increase in conversation with a woman” (Avot 1: 5). Even though I command you that the poor should be welcomed into your house, and poor women are included in this exhortation, when a poor woman comes to your house, do not increase your conversation with her, for it is regarding one’s wife that they said in the Mishna not to increase conversation with her, then how much more so does this apply to the wife of your friend. “AND I THE AUTHOR, ELIYAHU HAKOHEN SAY: THAT IN ORDER TO SAVE MAN FROM STUMBLING, IT IS GOOD CONDUCT THAT HIS WIFE SHOULD GIVE TZEDAKAH TO POOR WOMEN WHO COME INTO HIS HOUSE [SO THAT HE WILL NOT LOOK AT HER], AND HE WILL GIVE TO POOR MEN, SO THAT THEY WILL NOT STUMBLE BY LOOKING AT HIS WIFE. AND IF THERE ARISES THE NEED TO TAKE THE TZEDAKAH TO THE HOUSE OF A POOR WOMAN, A MAN SHOULD SEND IT THROUGH HIS MAID OR THROUGH HIS YOUNG SON” Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1567

When Hashem sends a person plenty of blessings, he should not inflate himself, on the contrary he should be humble and he should say: “What am I that I have been brought to this?” And he should fear greatly for maybe Hashem is clearing him out of his merits in this world, or maybe Hashem is testing him to see how he will conduct himself with his money. Therefore a wise person will ponder the situation, and he will give much Tzedakah with his money and he will do many acts of kindness according to the blessings Hashem sent him Sefer Kitzur Luchot ha Brit 41d, brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1591

In one of two ways Hashem tests the person, either with wealth or with poverty (See Shemot rabba 31). And because of this, the poor think that they would rather be tried with the test of wealth and not with poverty. And they do not realize that the test of wealth is more difficult than that of poverty. “Remove far from me falsehood and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with my allotted bread; Lest I be full, and deny, and say: ‘Who is Hashem? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my G-d. (Mishle 30: 8- 10) For the poor can sin by swearing in vain and by stealing while the wealthy can sin by denying Hashem which is a cardinal sin equivalent to transgressing all of the Torah Based on Rabbi Moshe Alshich on the Torah Parashat Behar

How great is the level of the poor person: First: The Holy One Blessed be He does not take into account the sins of the poor as it is brought in the Zohar ha Kaddosh, Second: The Holy One Blessed be He is with the poor constantly as it is written in Massechet Sotah 5, Third: Hashem stands at the right hand of the needy (Tehillim 109: 31) Fourth: The eyes of the poor are always focused on Hashem regarding his food for he has nothing stored away, and this was the reason for the Mana falling each day in the desert so that the eyes of the people would be towards heaven (See Yoma 75) Fifth: In all his troubles he only puts his trust on Hashem. Sixth: He constantly thinks about death for he is surrounded by the pains of death because of his hunger, and the thought of death keeps him away from sin. Seventh: His humility keeps him away from anger, and anyone who gets angry is dominated by all types of Gehinom, as our Sages have declared (Nedarim 22) and one who breaks an utensil in his anger is considered as if he had served idols (Shabbat 105) and this poor man is saved from all this because of his submission and penury. Eighth: The name of the Holy One Blessed be He is always in the mouth of the poor, asking Him for salvation, and by mentioning Hashem’s name he becomes sanctified, and through this he causes his soul to be closer to Hashem. Ninth: The poor is prone to bring salvation to Israel for through three things decrees are annulled and one of these things is Tzedakah. Tenth: Through the poor the redemption is brought closer as it is written in (Bereshit Rabba 75:1). Eleventh: The greatest aspect is that the poor will not abandon his faith even while suffering incredible pain. Twelfth: Even though he’s in great pain because of his poverty he doesn’t miss Shachrit or Mincha for he has great desire to fulfill those Mitzvot that do not require any expenditure. Thirteenth: Since his heart is downcast and broken, he has mercy on other poor people like him, and he will give what he can and if not at least he will console them with kind words. Fourteenth: The poor man constantly awaits the final redemption and therefore he keeps the Mitzvah to wait for it (Shabbat 31)

However the nature of wealth is to cancel all these things we have mentioned, and it is very difficult for the wealthy to keep all these things. And if he did fulfill all these things, how fortunate he is for his reward will be twofold.

Nevertheless it is a great trial that a person has to go through and he is more likely to fail than to succeed. Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1608

REAL GENEROSITY IS ONLY REGARDING THINGS RELATED TO HASHEM. LIKE ACTS OF KINDNESS AND TZEDAKAH. BECAUSE GENEROSITY REGARDING SUPERFICIAL THINGS, LIKE BANQUETS AND PLEASURES AND THE GIFTS OF DECEIVERS, THESE ARE CALLED STINGINESS TO THE SOUL, FOR ALL THOSE WHO ARE STINGY REGARDING WORLDLY PLEASURES IN ORDER TO INCREASE IN ACTS OF KINDNESS AND TZEDAKAH, THEY ARE GENEROUS TO THEIR SOUL AND THEY ARE THE REAL GENEROUS PEOPLE. Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1670

AND ALL THOSE WHO STUMP THEIR EARS FROM LISTENING TO THE CRY OF THE NEEDY AND DO NOT ANSWER THEM, WHEN THEY CRY TO ME WITH A BITTER AND DEEP CRY, THEY WILL CRY AND I [HASHEM] WILL NOT ANSWER THEM Midrash Otyot de Rabbi Akiva, Letter Gimel

Why does the letter Dalet faces the letter He? To show that whoever is needy [DAL] in this world is wealthy in the World to Come...If there is a Jewish person who has been born with a good Mazal, and he acknowledges His Maker, and he conducts himself with humility, and he doesn't think that he is great, and does not answer rudely to the poor, and he will not curse a person smaller than him, and he will do Tzedakah to the poor out of his wealth, and will do acts of kindness to the rich by lending them money, and he constantly thinks about Hashem and he says: What am I? What is my kindness? What is my Tzedakah before My Creator? Then this person eats the fruit of his actions in this world and the principal remains with him for the World to Come. Midrash Otyot de Rabbi Akiva, Letter Dalet

WE LEARN FROM THIS DISCOURSE THAT IF A PERSON GIVES TZEDAKAH SO THAT HE WILL BE PRAISED, HE LOSES HIS MERIT AND IT IS EVIL FOR HIM FOR HE IS REPAID IN THIS WORLD AND IS DRIVEN AWAY FROM THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME. And this depends on the intentions of the person. For if he gives Tzedakah publicly so that others will learn and follow his example and will also give Tzedakah, even though he gains fame with other people he does not lose his merit in this world nor in the world to come. And how do we know if the intention of the person is to acquire fame or to teach others to do Tzedakah? If you see that he has relatives who are poor and does not help them and yet he does Tzedakah to strangers, it is for sure that his intention is to gain reputation so that he will be praised. And especially those who are prone to buy Mitzvot in front of the congregation, yet when any poor relative comes to him for help, he does not even help him with a small amount...Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1676

"Not on merit [ZECHUTA] depends this thing". And ZECHUTA we have said refers to Tzedakah because the translation of Tzedakah in Aramaic is ZECHUTA. (Zohar ha Kaddosh Vayikra 25) Given that the translation of the word Tzedakah into Aramaic is Zechuta [Merit] we can say that there is no greater merit than he who does Tzedakah, for anyone who does any Mitzvah of all the Mitzvot does not connect directly to the Holy One Blessed be He as it is written (Iyov 35: 7) "If you were righteous, what have you given Him?" but the one who does Tzedakah does it with Hashem as it were as it is written (Mishle 19: 17) "He who is gracious to the needy lends to Hashem". Also the translation of Tzedakah is Zechuta [Merit] because he who has in his hand this Mitzvah of Tzedakah does not need another merit to dissipate the accusers who try to block his prayers and requests to the Holy One Blessed be He. Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1725

THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH IS SO GREAT THAT THE YETZER HE RA TRIES AS HARD AS IT CAN TO ANNUL IT...AND THEREFORE WE SEE MANY WEALTHY PEOPLE SPENDING GREAT AMOUNTS OF MONEY ON VANITIES YET REGARDING TZEDAKAH THEY ARE STINGY Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1744

And we have heard with our ears the stories about the great men of SEFARAD, those who would welcome the poor into their homes, that THEIR TABLE WHERE THEY USED TO PARTAKE OF THEIR FOOD WITH THE POOR PEOPLE, WHEN THEY WOULD PASS AWAY, THEY USED THE WOOD OF THE TABLE TO MAKE THEIR COFFIN. And this with the purpose of awakening the people and fixing in their hearts the fact that even if a man

becomes as wealthy as King Shlomo, he will not take anything with him of all his labor that he performed under the sun. He will only be able to take with him the good and the Tzedakah that he performs and the compassion he shows through it to the poor people as the verse says (Yeshayahu 58: 8) "And your Tzedakah will go before you" Rabbenu Bachye in the Sefer Shulchan Arba, brought in Sefer Shne Luchot ha Brit 146, and also brought in Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1736

When there is plenty and abundance then there is peace in the world, but when there is no abundance then there is conflict and arguments in the world. How is this so? A man enters the field of his friend. The other says to him: What are you doing in my field? And then they start arguing. However when there is plenty everyone has a good disposition and there is peace in the world as it is written (Zecharya 3:10) "In that day, says Hashem of hosts, shall you call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig-tree" (Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim 72) See and contemplate the suffering of the poor person for even in times of plenty, for him there is no plenty for he has no money with which to acquire goods. And how much more is this so in times of scarcity when even the well to do have no peace. For when there is plenty in the world, the poor person enters the field of someone else and because this person lacks so many things, he would want to take with him all that he can find. And when there is scarcity, then, everyone argues with this poor person when he enters someone's field. **THUS, WE SEE THAT FOR HIM, THERE IS NEVER PEACE. THEREFORE WHOEVER DESIRES TO ACT PLEASANTLY TOWARDS HA KADDOSH BARUCH HU, SHOULD NOT GET ANGRY AT THE POOR PERSON, EVEN AT TIMES WHEN HE SEES THAT THE POOR PERSON IS DOING THINGS THAT ARE NOT PROPER, BECAUSE IT IS DUE TO HIS LACKING EVERYTHING THAT SOMETIMES THE POOR PERSON ACTS UNSEEMLY.** Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 469

CHAPTER 7

SELECTIONS DEALING WITH TZEDAKAH IGGERET HA KODESH AND OTHERS BY THE ALTER REBBE LIKUTE ETZOT BY REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESSLOV

Many of the letters that together constitute Iggeret HaKodesh were written in order to rouse Jewry to contribute generously to Tzedakah in general and in particular for the Holy Land. Every year, the Alter Rebbe declares, it should be given with more vitality and in greater volume, thus echoing the rhythm of the annually-renewed life-force that emanates from On High to the Holy Land

EXCERPTS IGGERET 32

ALL THE ACTS OF TZEDAKAH AND KINDNESS THAT JEWS PERFORM IN THIS WORLD, OUT OF THE GENEROSITY OF THEIR PURE HEARTS, ARE ALIVE AND THEY ENDURE IN THIS PHYSICAL WORLD UNTIL THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION. ...

EXCERPTS IGGERET 16

It is written, (Vayikra 25:36) "...so that your brother may live with you!" As to the ruling of the Sages that (Baba Metzia 62a) "Your own life takes precedence," this applies only in a case "when one has a pitcher of water in hand..."; that is, when it is equally essential that both drink in order to save their lives from thirst. **BUT IF A PAUPER NEEDS BREAD FOR THE MOUTHS OF BABES, AND FIREWOOD AND CLOTHES AGAINST THE COLD, AND THE LIKE, THEN ALL THESE TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER ANY FINE APPAREL AND FAMILY FEASTS, WITH MEAT AND FISH AND ALL KINDS OF DELICACIES, FOR ONESELF AND ALL OF ONE'S HOUSEHOLD. THE RULE THAT "YOUR OWN LIFE TAKES PRECEDENCE" DOES NOT APPLY IN SUCH A CASE, BECAUSE THESE ARE NOT REALLY ESSENTIAL TO LIFE, AS ARE [THE NEEDS] OF THE POOR, IN TRUE EQUALITY, AS IS DISCUSSED IN NEDARIM, PAGE 80[B]. NOW, THE ABOVE FOLLOWS THE EXACT REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW. IN FACT, HOWEVER, EVEN IN A CASE WHERE SUCH REASONING DOES NOT SO FULLY APPLY,**

IT IS NOT PROPER THAT ANY MAN INSIST ON THE LETTER OF THE LAW; RATHER, HE SHOULD IMPOSE AUSTERITY ON HIS OWN LIFE AND GO FAR BEYOND THE [DEMANDS OF THE] LETTER OF THE LAW.

EXCERPTS IGGERET 21

Having first duly inquired after the welfare of those who love [G-d's] Name, those among the people who willingly volunteer to practice the righteous Tzedakah of Hashem towards His Holy Land by giving every year a set sum of money for [the inhabitants of] our Holy Land (May it be rebuilt and established speedily, in our days!), "may my word [call]" (Iyov 29:22) to them and "my speech trickle like dew" (Devarim 32:2) in order to bestir those who are [naturally] swift, and to strengthen weak hands, (Yeshayahu 35:3) so that they should contribute moneys for the Land of Israel every week, or at least every month, from the amount assigned for the year, proportionately, as well as all the "dedicated money" that each individual was inspired to donate annually (without a vow) for the support of our brethren who live in the Holy Land.

...INDEED, IT WAS FROM [THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM], THAT OUR SAGES (OF BLESSED MEMORY) (PESACHIM 4A) LEARNED [THAT ALACRITY IS REQUIRED] IN THE FULFILLMENT OF ALL THE MITZVOT IN GENERAL, AND IN PARTICULAR WITH RESPECT TO THE ACT OF TZEDAKAH WHICH IS SUPERIOR TO THEM ALL, IN THAT IT PROTECTS AND SAVES ONE — BY ITS (PEAH 1:1) "FRUITS [THAT ARE REPAID] IN THIS WORLD" — FROM ALL KINDS OF CALAMITIES THAT MAY COME ABOUT, AS IT IS WRITTEN, (MISHLEI 10:2) "AND TZEDAKAH SAVES FROM DEATH," AND HOW MUCH MORE SO, FROM OTHER KINDS OF SUFFERING THAT ARE MILDER THAN DEATH. IT IS THUS CERTAINLY TO OUR BENEFIT, EVEN IN THIS WORLD, TO BE AS EXPEDITIOUS AS POSSIBLE IN [THE GIVING OF TZEDAKAH], FOR, AFTER ALL, (ROSH HASHANA 16A) "A MAN IS JUDGED EVERY DAY,"

Indeed, in the service of Tzedakah we have also found and noted a particularly great and incomparably wondrous virtue, when the act of Tzedakah is performed numerous times, and whoever does so frequently is praiseworthy, rather than at one time and all at once, even when the total sum is the same.

EXCERPTS IGGERET 9

THEREFORE, MY BELOVED ONES, MY BRETHREN: DIRECT YOUR HEARTS TO THESE WORDS WHICH ARE EXPRESSED VERY BRIEFLY, (AND FACE TO FACE, PLEASE G-D, I WILL SPEAK OF THEM AT LENGTH) —HOW IN THESE TIMES, WHEN THE APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS OF MASHIACH ARE CLOSE UPON US, THE PRINCIPAL SERVICE OF G-D IS THE SERVICE OF TZEDAKAH. As our Sages, of blessed memory, said: (See Rambam, Hilchot Matnot Aniyim, beginning of ch. 10; quoted in Tur, Yoreh Deah, beginning of sec. 247) "Israel will be redeemed only through Tzedakah." OUR SAGES, OF BLESSED MEMORY, DID NOT SAY THAT THE STUDY OF TORAH IS EQUIVALENT TO THE PERFORMANCE OF ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS, EXCEPT IN THEIR OWN DAYS. FOR WITH THEM THE PRINCIPAL AREA OF DIVINE SERVICE WAS THE STUDY OF THE TORAH, WHICH IS WHY AT THAT TIME THERE WERE GREAT SCHOLARS: TANNAIM AND AMORAIM. HOWEVER, IN A TIME WHEN THE APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS OF MASHIACH ARE CLOSE UPON US, AS "THE SUKKAH OF DAVID HAS FALLEN" TO A LEVEL OF "FEET" AND "HEELS", I.E., TO THE LEVEL OF ASIYAH, THERE IS NO WAY OF TRULY CLEAVING TO IT, I.E., TO THE SHECHINAH, AND TRANSFORMING THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD INTO ITS LIGHT, EXCEPT THROUGH A CORRESPONDING CATEGORY OF ACTION, NAMELY, THE ACT OF TZEDAKAH.

EXCERPTS IGGERET 4

THIS IS ALSO THE REASON FOR WHICH TZEDAKAH IS CALLED "PEACE", BECAUSE ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF OUR SAGES, (TOSEFTA, PEAH, CH. 1) OF BLESSED MEMORY, BY VIRTUE OF TZEDAKAH "PEACE IS MADE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THEIR FATHER IN HEAVEN," THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF THEIR SOULS, WHICH ARE TRULY A PART OF G-D, FROM THE GRIP OF THE FORCES OF EVIL. THIS IS ESPECIALLY THE CASE WITH TZEDAKAH FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL, FOR IT IS TRULY THE TZEDAKAH OF G-D, [TO A LAND OF WHICH] IT IS WRITTEN, (DEVARIM 11:12) "THE EYES OF HASHEM YOUR G-D ARE CONSTANTLY UPON IT."

[In this vein it is also written,] (I Melachim 9:3) "And My eyes and My heart will be there at all times." It is this [Tzedakah for the Holy Land] that has stood by us to redeem the life of our souls from the counsel of those who seek to repel our steps, i.e., those who desire to harm us. And this [Tzedakah] will stand by us forever — to set our

souls in the true life of the Fountainhead of Life, so that we will be (Iyov 33:30) “enlightened with the light of life” which G-d (Tehillim 67:2) “will make His Face radiate with us, Selah.” Amen, may this be His will.

EXCERPTS IGGERET 14

To arouse the old love and fondness for the Holy Land, so that it burn like fiery flames from the inwardness of man and from the depths of his heart, as if this very day G-d had set His spirit upon us, a spirit of generosity, so that people volunteer to consecrate themselves to G-d with a full and generous hand, with one increase after another, from year to year, continually rising and excelling themselves....

EXCERPTS TANYA CHAPTER 34

EVEN DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY, WHEN HE IS ENGAGED IN BUSINESS, HE WILL BE AN ABODE FOR G-D BY GIVING TZEDAKAH OUT OF HIS LABOR. TZEDAKAH IS ONE OF G-D'S ATTRIBUTES THAT WE ARE ENJOINED TO EMULATE, AS OUR SAGES SAY, (SHABBAT 133B) “AS HE IS COMPASSIONATE... [SO MUST YOU BE]”; AND AS IT IS WRITTEN IN TIKKUNEI ZOHAR, (INTRODUCTION, 17A) “KINDNESS IS THE RIGHT ARM OF G-D,” EVEN THOUGH ONE DISTRIBUTES NO MORE THAN ONE FIFTH, YET THAT FIFTH ELEVATES WITH IT ALL THE OTHER FOUR PARTS TO G-D, SO THAT THEY TOO BECOME AN ABODE FOR HIM.

IN TRUTH, ONE SHOULD FEEL MORE ANGUISH AT SOMEONE ELSE'S SUFFERING THAN AT ONE'S OWN (HEAVEN FORBID). IN ONE'S OWN CASE, ONE CAN ALWAYS EXPLAIN THAT ONE DESERVES SUFFERING BECAUSE OF ONE'S MISDEEDS...HOWEVER, THESE ASSUMPTIONS CANNOT BE MADE CONCERNING ANOTHER'S SUFFERING Hechaletzu Maamar by Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch, Chapter 9

LIKUTE ETZOT REBBE NACHMAN MI BRESLOV

Tzedakah given for the [Poor of the] Land of Israel is greater than Tzedakah for other causes. When you give Tzedakah for the Land of Israel you become included in the air of the Land of Israel, which is holy breath without the taint of sin. Harsh judgments, darkness, forgetfulness and folly are banished from the world (4). Tzedakah for the Land of Israel can save you from distracting thoughts while you are praying. Your mind and thoughts are clarified and purified. This is tikkun habrit

YOU MUST AIM TO BE CONTENTED. YOU MUST BE CONTENTED WITH JUST AS MUCH AS IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOU TO TAKE FROM THIS WORLD. AND EVEN OUT OF THAT YOU MUST STILL DEVOTE A PORTION TO TZEDAKAH. THE EFFECT OF THIS IN THE UPPER WORLDS IS TO BRING ABOUT A GREAT UNIFICATION, AND ABUNDANT BLESSINGS ARE BROUGHT INTO THE WORLD (54:2).

Acts of Tzedakah bring blessings of love into the world. The honor and majesty of the forces of holiness are released from the husks and the Other Side. The lust for food is broken. The prestige and power of those who are arrogant and self-assertive is broken, and honor is returned to the true leaders (67).

Any act of Tzedakah is very hard and heavy at the beginning. But the effects of Tzedakah are great beyond measure. The body has many needs — even the essentials, like food, drink, clothing and shelter are very demanding. They are all a distraction from one's religious devotions. But Tzedakah has the power to break all these obstacles because it opens up the channels of G-d's blessing and love to the point where one has no need to work at all in order to have what he needs to live: All his work will be done by others, leaving him free to devote himself to the service of G-d (Ibid. 3).

TZEDAKAH IS THE REMEDY FOR THE DAMAGE CAUSED WHEN THE ELDERS OF THE GENERATION DO NOT LEAD THEIR LIVES AS THEY SHOULD. THROUGH REMEDYING THIS, IT IS POSSIBLE TO STRIKE AT THE VERY ROOTS OF MATERIALISM — THE IDEA THAT EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD IS DOMINATED BY THE LAWS OF NATURE. Then we can hear the message of the three festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Succot: that everything takes place only through the will of G-d. Each of the festivals recalls the miracles that were brought about for us — miracles transcending nature. To be aware that G-d's will transcends the laws of nature, is to

experience the joy of the festivals and attain to the fear of Heaven. Fear of Heaven is the channel for receiving blessings so abundant that you will not have to work at all, to have what you need to live (Ibid. 9).

THE ONE WHO GETS ANGRY AT A POOR PERSON IS AS IF HE INSULTED THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE AND HE IS CONSIDERED AS A LEPER Sefer ha Middot

CHAPTER 8

BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU GIVE YOUR TZEDAKAH THE EREV RAV EXPLAINED

TZEDAKAH SHOULD BE GIVEN TO POOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR EXTRAVAGANT BUILDINGS THAT ARE NOT NEEDED

IF A PERSON IS WEALTHY, INSTEAD OF BUILDING A SYNAGOGUE OR BET MIDRASH, HE RATHER SHOULD GIVE HIS MONEY TO RESPECTED SCHOLARS TO ENABLE THEM TO STUDY TORAH

If a person is wealthy, instead of building a synagogue or bet Midrash (study hall) he rather should give his money to respected scholars to enable them to study Torah. But he should not donate it to those fake scholars who spout questions and answers, posing as intellectuals who know the entire Talmud, but in reality who have never studied the Talmud. All they are doing is quoting questions and answers they read in books, in an effort to impress people with their brilliant minds." Let the rich people give their donations to G-d fearing men who study in order to fulfill the Mitzvot properly. Sefer Chassidim 1039

JUST AS THE EREV RAV (THE MIXED MULTITUDE) WERE PRESENT AT THE TIME WHEN THE JEWS LEFT EGYPT, SO IN OUR TIMES MOST OF OUR LEADERS BELONG TO THE SAME CATEGORY

In the book Divrei Chaim written by the Holy Rebbe Chaim mi Tzantz ZTKL in the omissions of Parashat Vayakhel it is written: "Before the coming of the Mashiach most of the Rabbanim will be from the Erev Rav etc. Because Israel in themselves are holy, but the Erev Rav work only for their own benefit as we can clearly see that the Rabbanim and the Chassidim and many regular Jews of the generation are, due to our many sins, mostly from the Erev Rav and want to rule over the public, and all their actions are only for their own sake, to acquire honor and money, and one should therefore only join with those who truly serve Hashem, who sacrifice themselves to Hashem not in order to receive any benefit".

FIVE TYPES OF LEADERS OF THE EREV RAV

This is what the Holy Zohar (1, 25-26) says about the types of Erev Rav: There are five types among the Erev Rav "mixed multitude", Nefilim, Gibborim, Anakim, Refaim, and Amalekites.

...The Gibborim (mighty ones) are those of whom it is written: "They are the mighty ones...men of name" (Bereshit 6, 4). THEY COME FROM THE SIDE OF THOSE WHO SAID: "COME, LET US BUILD A CITY AND MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES" (BERESHIT 11, 4). THESE MEN BUILD SYNAGOGUES AND YESHIVOT AND PLACE IN THEM TORAH SCROLLS WITH RICH ORNAMENTS, BUT THEY DO IT NOT FOR THE SAKE OF G-D, BUT ONLY TO MAKE THEMSELVES A NAME, AND AS A RESULT OF THIS THE POWERS OF EVIL RULE OVER ISRAEL (WHO MUST BE HUMBLE LIKE THE DUST OF THE EARTH), ACCORDING TO THE VERSE "AND THE WATERS PREVAILED GREATLY UPON THE EARTH" (BERESHIT 7:19).

THE HOLY RABBI CHAIM VITAL ZT'L WARNS US ABOUT THE CATEGORY OF RABBIS WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE IS HONOR AND TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES

We read in the introduction to the Holy book Etz Chaim what the Holy Rabbi Chaim Vital, may his merit shield us, (who was the student of the Holy ARI zt'l) wrote concerning the Erev Rav: All those that do kindness and toil in the Torah, all they do, they do for themselves, and in particular through our many sins, in our times, the Torah has been made into a hammer with which to achieve their own goals for many baale Torah, who occupy themselves in

the Torah in order to receive their reward and other benefits and luxuries, and in order to be in the group of heads of Yeshivot, and judges (dayanim) in their courts, so that their names and fame are spread throughout the land, and the actions of these Rabbis resemble those of the generation of the Dispersion, those who built the Tower of Babel, with its top reaching the heavens, and the main motivation for their actions is what is written there in the Torah: "Let us make a name for ourselves" as it is written in the Zohar (Bereshit 25b) on the verse : "These are the generations of the Heavens and earth..." that there are five types of Erev Rav and the third type is called Gibborim (powerful ones) and on them it is written: "These are the Gibborim of old, men of name" and they belong to the side of those about whom it is written: "Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower..." and let us make a name for ourselves by building Synagogues and Houses of Study and putting in them Torah Scrolls with crowns on their heads but not for G-d's sake they do thus but for their own benefit.

BETTER FOR THESE RABBIS HAD THEY NOT BEEN BORN

Continues the Holy Rabbi Chaim Vital: And on this type of Erev Rav it was said in the Talmud (Berachot 17): "He who occupies himself with the Torah not for its own sake, it would have been better for him had his fetus overturned and would not have come out to the air of the world"

And indeed these people look humble and righteous, when they say that all their involvement with the Torah is for its own sake, nevertheless the Great and wise, the Tanna Rabbi Meir peace be upon him, testified against them that it is not as they say, when he said (what we just quoted at the beginning of the introduction, Pirke Avot 6:41): "Rabbi Meir said: He who studies the Torah for its own sake (without ulterior motives) deserves many things, and not only that, but the whole world is indebted to him. And he is called beloved friend, loved by G-d and men, he pleases the Creator and humanity. The Torah covers him with modesty and fear, makes him virtuous, merciful, devote, just and faithful, moves him away from sin guiding him by the path of virtue, etc" "The secrets of the Torah are revealed to him and he is turned into an endless fountain of wisdom, and he becomes modest, patient, forgiving offenses, etc"

AS GREAT A MITZVAH AS IT IS TO GLORIFY THE HOUSE OF G-D, IT IS AN EVEN GREATER MITZVAH TO ELEVATE THE DOWNTRODDEN PEOPLE OF HASHEM, THE HUNGRY AND THE POOR

The Talmud (Menachos 28b) states that the original Menorah of the Chashmonaim was made of the most inexpensive material: First they constructed the Menorah from iron rods plated with tin. When they became wealthier, they made a new Menorah for the Temple out of silver. When they became even wealthier, they made the Menorah out of gold. How could it be that the Chashmonaim, with the rich spoils of war, could not afford to make a Menorah out of precious metal? The answer lies in the report of the history book Yosiphon (chapter 20): They did indeed have great wealth, but they decided that it would be better to give it to the poor than to use it for an ornate Menorah! As great a mitzvah as it is to glorify the House of G-d, it is an even greater mitzvah to elevate the downtrodden people of G-d, the hungry and the poor. Thus, when the Talmud says that when they became wealthier they made a finer Menorah, it is not referring to the wealth of the Temple treasury; rather it refers to the wealth of the Jews who were originally at the poverty level. As the fortunes of the paupers improved, and their urgent needs were satisfied, then the Temple treasurers and the sages decided that they could use community funds to embellish the Menorah.

KING DAVID'S MISTAKE: HE PUT THE NEEDS OF THE BEIT HA MIKDASH BEFORE THE NEEDS OF THE POOR

Scripture (I Kings 7:51) relates that after King Shlomo finished construction of his magnificent Beit ha Mikdash in Jerusalem he brought all of the silver and gold and precious vessels which his father, King David, had sanctified in his lifetime and put them into a special treasury in the House of G-d. Rashi cites the Midrash (Yalkul Shimoni ibid.) which explains that although David had spent his entire reign preparing enough money and material to build the entire Beit ha Mikdash and that this was his greatest dream and desire, his son, Shlomo, refused to use these resources. Shlomo said, "There was a terrible famine in the days of my father which devastated the land for three consecutive years; my father should have expended this wealth in order to sustain the poor people of Israel! When David ignored the cries of the starving poor, The Holy One Blessed is He, proclaimed: My beloved children are dying of starvation and you, David, are piling up heaps of silver and gold to build a building! By your life, your own son Shlomo, will not use any of your money for this Mitzvah!"

We can deduce the following: King David was wrong because instead of giving the monies he collected to the poor, he saved the money for the Beit ha Mikdash.

Now there was to be only one Beit ha Mikdash, only one House of Hashem, for the benefit of all the Jewish people and still King David was at fault for not helping the poor. Then when we in our days use incredible sums of money to build unnecessary expensive synagogues in cities where there are already many other synagogues, thereby using resources that could go help the poor: How much greater is our sin? Sefer Tzedakah Tatzil Mi mavet

Rabbi Israel Salanter once became angry at the people of a town for not paying the tuition of a young orphan to enable him to study Torah. He noticed the child roaming the streets and demanded that they provide his tuition. The people excused themselves by saying that the community funds were depleted, and they simply did not have the necessary money. "You must sell the Torah scrolls to pay for his tuition," ordered Rav Israel. (Hameorot Hagdolim, p. 5)

For withholding Tzedakah and kindness he will be among those condemned to Gehinom. So the Gemara (Betza 32b) bears out: "Rav said: The rich of Babylon will go down to Gehinom." Their sin, as related there, was that they refused to perform acts of Tzedakah and kindness. Chafetz Chaim, Ahavat Chesed, Chapter 7

Rabbi Chama bar Chanina and Rabbi Hoshaya were walking by a synagogue in Lod, Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said to Rabbi Hoshaya: "How much money did my fathers invested here! Rabbi Chama then told him: How many souls did your fathers bury here, weren't there people occupied with the Torah? Rabbi Abin built a Beit Midrash and when Rabbi Mane came to him he showed it to him and asked him: Did you see what I did? And Rabbi Mane said "About you speaks the verse that says (Hoshea 8: 14) "And Israel forgot their Maker, and has built Palaces" Weren't there people occupied with the Torah?

Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim 23b

RABBI CHAMA SAID TO RABBI HOSHAYA: "HOW MUCH MONEY DID MY PARENTS PUT INTO THIS BUILDING, INTO THIS SYNAGOGUE, RABBI HOSHAYA SAID: HOW MANY SOULS DID YOUR PARENTS BURY HERE?"

"Raba said: When man is led in for Judgment he is asked, Did you deal faithfully [With EMUNAH]?" (Shabbat 31a) ...In the Zohar ha Kaddosh (Parashat Balak) it is explained that EMUNAH refers to giving money to Tzedakah...And they said in the Talmud (Baba Batra 10) that Tzedakah is equivalent to all other Mitzvot. The prophet Habakuk also resumed all the Torah into EMUNAH (Makot 24). Therefore the first question they ask a person is "Have you dealt with EMUNAH?"

"And one needs great intelligence and understanding to know how to give Tzedakah properly, as it is written in the Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim, halacha 4: "Fortunate he who considers the poor" (Tehillim 41:2) this refers to the person who looks into Tzedakah in order to know how to do it best."

And there is a group of the people of renown that according to the Zohar ha Kaddosh (Bereshit 25a) donate Sifre Torah and put a crown on top of them only to make their name famous.

And also they refer to this in that same chapter [Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim, halacha 4] When Rabbi Chama said to Rabbi Hoshaya: "How much money did my parents put into this building, into this synagogue, Rabbi Hoshaya asked him back: how many souls did your parents bury here? Now were there no people who occupied themselves with Torah? It would have been better to give that money to fulfill the needs of the students of Torah. Also Rabbi Abin built a Beit Midrash and Rabbi Mane said to him: "About you speaks the verse that says (Hoshea 8: 14) "And Israel forgot their Maker, and has built Palaces" and this is what Rav Hamnuna refers to in Sanhedrin (7a) when he says: "The beginning of the judgment of a person is only on Torah" meaning that it is better for this person to give his money for people who are occupied with the Torah and not to other things Sefer Derech Chayim

Chidushe Massechet Shabbat 4:28

THE EREV RAV ARE THE SONS OF LILITH, EVILDOERS WHO HARDEN THEMSELVES AND DO NOT DO GOOD WITH THE POOR OF ISRAEL. DECEIVERS IN ALL THEIR WAYS. THEY ARE THE SONS OF THE SERPENT. THEY ARE THE FILTH THAT THE SERPENT Poured ON EVE. (Zohar Chadash 51a)

I will give you a sign in order to recognize these deceivers so that you do not fall into their deadly trap. For these evildoers start by pretending to have compassion on the poor as these verse say (Mishlei 5: 3): "For the lips of a strange woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on the nether-world". For they hold on to the ways of the serpent for they indeed come from her, for she started talking with Eve pretending that it was for Eve's own good, yet her words were the potion of death. So it is with these people, when they are in front of the community, they begin by praying for the welfare of all the inhabitants, they ask for people to be compassionate, and they start by mentioning the poor, as if they were really concerned about their poverty. And they say that because of our many sins, the number of poor people has greatly increased, and so their needs have increased and their asking for money has increased. At this point the members of the community are distressed for the weight of all those poor people is too heavy on them. And this gives the opportunity to the leaders of the Erev Rav to suggest that only those who are most in need should be helped, like the blind or the maimed and all the rest should go and work, for those who are able to work and yet are poor, it is only because of their fault, for they are lazy, they are slow, they are incompetent (See Vayikra Rabba 34: 4). And if these lazy poor people continue to ask for money then a decree should be promulgated to punish anyone who helps these poor people. Then, according to these leaders of the Erev Rav, the healthy poor will go and procure their food for themselves and the community will be able to help the weaker poor, like the blind, the deaf and the maimed, so that they will lack nothing.

And in reality, these leaders of the Erev Rav don't even care for the poor who are in great distress and who suffer from hunger, what these leaders want is for their listeners to take their advice and accustom themselves to stop giving. And when these leaders see that the members of the community respond to their entreaties, after a day or two, they begin their attack on all the poor people in general and they say: "They have no manners and since we gave them the chance to ask for money, they keep asking for more and more, and when we don't give them immediately then the poor start insulting us. Therefore it will not be considered sinful to stop helping these poor people altogether with our Tzedakah, and let the One who created them sustain them, because the Torah did not require from us to help these poor people, because it is their own fault that they have fallen into poverty" And those listening to them agree and believe that they are doing the right thing by not helping the poor.

Therefore those who want to hold on to life will hear my advice and will cling to life, by not listening to these cursed people. And when they start talking about Tzedakah, you should immediately stop them and oppose them from spreading their ideas. For they are like the primeval serpent, saying sweet things in the beginning only to bring strife and anger afterwards. Because the Holy One Blessed be he loves the poor and He will protect the person who will defend the poor, from those evil men, because the Kelipah immediately is weakened when there is someone who speaks against them with strength, for this is the nature of the kelipah to be subdued when someone attacks it forcefully. And given that the Jews are holy, when they hear this person talking on behalf of the poor people, according to what the Torah has commanded in many places, even if they had previously listened to the advice of the Erev Rav, they immediately do teshuvah for what they did and they help the poor.

Sefer Meil Tzedakah Siman 1565

THE EREV RAV YELL LIKE DOGS FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT AND HAVE NO CONCERN FOR HASHEM

But everyone is on his own way, in their occupations and ways. (Yeshayahu 56, 11) caring only about the unjust gain of this world and to inherit this world. And they are not from the side about whom it is written (Shemot 18:21) "Men of truth, hating unjust gain". But instead, all of them yell like dogs in their Yom Kippur prayers: "Give us, give us our food, our pardon, our expiation and our life". And they are brazen of spirit like dogs, like the nations who yell to their piers and have no shame. For there's no one who calls to Hashem in TESHUVAH, that the Shechinah will return to the Holy One Blessed be He, for it is far from Him. And they resemble dogs, for it is written about them (Tehillim 106: 35) "But they mingled among the nations, and learned to do what they did". And they are the EREV RAV, that all the kindness that they do they do only for themselves. Tikkune Zohar, Tikkun 6

AND THEY ARE THE EREV RAV, THEY ARE THE RICH MEN LIVING IN HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT WITHOUT SUFFERING NOR PAIN, THIEVES AND FULL OF BRIBES, AND THEY ARE THE JUDGES, THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE, ABOUT WHOM IT IS WRITTEN: "AND THE LAND WAS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE BECAUSE OF THEM", ABOUT THEM IT IS WRITTEN: "THEIR ENEMIES BECAME THEIR HEADS", AND I [MOSHE] CONJURE YOU [ELIYAHU HA NAVI] A SECOND TIME IN THE NAME OF HASHEM TZEVAKOT

ELOKE ISRAEL YOSHEV HA KERUVIM, THAT ALL THESE THINGS WILL NOT BE MISSING FROM YOUR MOUTH TO TALK ABOUT THEM IN FRONT OF HA KADDOSH BARUCH HU, AND TO TELL HIM ABOUT OUR SUFFERING. Zohar ha Kaddosh III Parashat Nasso Raaya Mehemna 124A

And not like the Erev Rav, sons of the evil serpent, for they are like snakes, with all the dust of the earth in front of them, and this is what is written: "And the snake the dust is her bread", and she feared not to be satisfied from the dust for she feared that she would be lacking, and thus are the ones who love bribes who are not satisfied with all the money in the world Zohar ha Kaddosh III Parashat Nasso Raaya Mehemna 124^a

And the well was empty (REK) in the masculine, only (RAK) without Torah, but snakes and scorpions are in it, and this is the fourth exile, a generation of RESHAIM evildoers full of snakes and scorpions, deceivers like snakes and scorpions that uproot the laws of the sages and judge in falsehood, and on them it is written "And his enemies became the head". "And he saw to this side and that side and saw that there was no man", among those RESHAIM, the EREV RAV, and this is at the end of the exile, and because of this the end of the redemption pierces until the TEHOM RABBA (Great Abyss), and you faithful shepherd, see that TEHOM (Abyss) are the same letters as HAMAVET (Death) in different order, and there is no death except poverty, you went down there, and it is clear among the Tannaim and the Amoraim, and all of them go down to the TEHOM to help you... Zohar ha Kaddosh III Parashat Ki Tetze Raaya Mehemna 279^a

The general purpose of the two moshiachs, Moshiach Ben Yosef and Moshiach Ben Dovid, throughout all the generations has been to protect and fight against the three 'heads' of the K'lipos, Eisav, Yishmael, and the Erev Rav. The specific role of Moshiach Ben Yosef is against Eisav who is the k'lipah of the left, the main purpose of Moshiach Ben Dovid is against Yishmael, the k'lipah of the right, and together they go against Eisav and Yishmael who are the ox and the donkey from the side of impurity. The joining of Eisav and Yishmael is the result of Armelius, the sar of the Erev Rav, who are able to destroy Israel and the entire world, may G-d have mercy. The main drive of the Erev Rav is to unify Eisav and Yishmael and to separate the two moshiachs. Therefore, our main service and battle is to break and to remove the strength of the Erev Rav, the k'lipah of Armelius the Evil, from Israel; the Erev Rav is our greatest enemy, the one who separates the two moshiachs. THE K'LIPAH OF THE EREV RAV WORKS ONLY THROUGH DECEPTION AND ROUNDABOUT WAYS. THEREFORE, THE WAR AGAINST THE EREV RAV IS THE MOST DIFFICULT AND BITTEREST OF ALL. WE MUST STRENGTHEN OURSELVES FOR THIS WAR, AND ANYONE WHO DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE EREV RAV BECOMES, DE FACTO, A PARTNER WITH THE K'LIPAH OF THE EREV RAV, AND WAS BETTER OFF NOT BEING BORN IN THE FIRST PLACE. Kol HaTor, Chapter 2, Section 2, Letter 'bais'

CHAPTER 9

THE GREATEST TYPE OF CHESED

The main aspect of acts of Kindness [Gemilut Chasadim] that someone can do for his friend is to do Kindness to the soul of his friend. To try and bring merit to him, to teach him, to guide him on the right path, and to reprove and correct him. Pele Yoetz, Chesed

THIS CHAPTER IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE FROM THE ZOHAR HA KADDOSH (PARASHAT TERUMA 129a)

IF ONLY THE SONS OF MEN KNEW THE GREATNESS OF THE REWARD OF HIM WHO FOLLOWS THE ENDEAVORS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND BRINGS EVILDOERS BACK TO THE GOOD PATH, THEY WOULD PURSUE AFTER EVILDOERS LIKE ONE WHO RUNS AFTER LIFE ITSELF. A POOR MAN'S BENEFACTOR GAINS MANY GOOD THINGS, MANY SUPERNAL TREASURES, BECAUSE HE HELPS HIM TO EXIST, BUT EVEN HE CAN'T BE COMPARED TO HIM WHO ENDEAVORS TO SAVE THE SOUL OF A SINNER. FOR THE

LATTER CAUSES THE FORCES OF THE OTHER SIDE (THE EVIL SIDE) TO BREAK AND NOT TO RULE. HE CAUSES THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE TO HIS THRONE OF GLORY. HE CAUSES THE SINNER TO HAVE ANOTHER SOUL. FORTUNATE INDEED IS HIS LOT! (ZOHAR HA KADDOSH TERUMAH 129a)

There is another type of DAL [Poor], the poor in intelligence, and his lot is the worst of all. Our Sages have declared (Nedarim 41a): "No one is poor except the one who lacks wisdom." Here there are many classes. A person has foolish ideas, has strayed from the true path and has become wicked. In this case, one has to think of ways to make him repent, how to restore him to the correct path. The merit for such an act is extremely great. The Zohar Chadash expresses it in these words (Lech Lecha): "Rabbi Eliezer said: How great is the reward of a person who causes another to repent" (Cf. Ibid.). Chafetz Chaim, Ahavat Chesed section III chapter 7

...Then there is the poor in intelligence, in the simplest sense - the person who has no Torah education. The more fortunate person should consider ways to attract him to the Torah. This is certainly of paramount importance. As the Talmud puts it (Baba Metzia 85a): "Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonathan: Whoever teaches his friend's son Torah becomes worthy of sitting in the heavenly Academy.- Our Sages stated further (Sanhedrin 99b): "Resh Lakish said: Whoever teaches his friend's son Torah is regarded by Scripture as if he created him . . ." On this Mishnah (Avot 1.12): "Love people and bring them near to Torah", ONE SHOULD BE AROUSED TO THE SAME DEGREE OF COMPASSION FOR SUCH PEOPLE AS IF HE HAD SEEN SOMEONE NAKED WITHOUT ANYTHING TO WEAR. INDEED HOW SHALL THAT UNFORTUNATE CLOTHE HIS SOUL IN THE UPPER WORLD IF HE IS SO BARE OF TORAH AND MITZVOT'? As it is known, Torah observance creates ornaments for one's soul, and one thereby earns the merit of sitting in the presence of G-d in His holy habitation. So it is written of Yehoshua the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest (Zecharia 3.4): "Take the filthy garments from off him ... and I will clothe you with robes ... and they clothed him with garments." It is also recorded in the Tana debe Eliyahu Rabba (Chap. 27):' -When you see the naked that you cover him' (Yeshayahu 58.7) - How is this? - If you see a person devoid of Torah, take him into your house. Teach him Shema and Tefillah, and teach him one verse of Scripture or a single halachah each day. Stimulate him to perform Mitzvot. There is none more bare in Israel than he who has neither Torah nor Mitzvot. He is like a naked person." One also fulfills the commandment of "And you shall love Hashem your G-d," which also implies that you should make G-d beloved by His creatures, as Our Sages have shown. Chafetz Chaim, Ahavat Chesed section III chapter 7

**WHAT IS THE CHESD AND THE TZEDAKAH THAT A PERSON
NEEDS TO DO TOWARDS HIS FELLOW JEW?
TO SHOW HIM THE RIGHT PATH**

**THE YEAROT DEVASH TZK'L REVEALS SECRETS REGARDING THOSE WHO CAUSED THE BET HA
MIKDASH TO BE DESTROYED**

...Come and see how great is the sin of baseless hatred and how much goodness is withheld because of it, and through our many sins this disease spread among the Holy Jews, that is to say, G-d forbid that we say that a Jew doesn't love the body of another Jew, and if something happens to any Jew: don't the others run to help him with all their strength and means? And when someone becomes ill: don't all the others pray for him and visit him? And when a woman starts feeling the pains of labor: don't all women rush to her home in the middle of the night to help her? Is there any greater love and friendship than this? Fortunate is the portion of the holy people before the Holy One Blessed be He, and this is our glory in front of the Goyyim for they speak of the love that one Jew has for the other.

**THE BASELESS HATRED THAT EXISTED AMONG
JEWS WAS THAT OF THE SOUL**

But all this concerns only the love of the body. But the love of the soul, which is the main part of love, the love which is required and the love that endures forever, due to our many sins, there is only very little of this love present among us. For when a man sees his fellow Jew acting rebelliously doing what his heart desires, he will not correct him, he will not tell him that that is not the holy way that our holy Torah prescribes, on the contrary his heart almost rejoices for he hates his fellow and if he sees his friend talking in the synagogue where it is forbidden to

Speak, he will not rebuke him, or if he sees him talking to women or talking with obscene language or talking LASHON HARA he will not rebuke him at all.

WOE TO US, IS THERE ANY HATER GREATER THAN THIS ONE? HE SEES HIS FELLOW JEW DROWNING IN THE RIVER AND HE DOESN'T HELP HIM? AND THIS IS THE BASELESS HATRED THAT EXISTED AT THE TIME OF THE SECOND BET HA MIKDASH, BECAUSE THE NUMBER OF SINNERS INCREASED BUT NONE WOULD REBUKE THEM, and because of this the number of sects increased including the sects of the TZEDDOKIM, and they contradicted the words of the Oral Torah [TORAH SHE BEAL PE] and rebelled against the Bet Din that was in Yerushalaim, and this is a greater sin than all other sins, because this falls in the category of HERESY [KEFIRAH] and the one who says that there were no great sins at the time of the second Bet ha Mikdash is greatly mistaken, for Is there a greater sin than the APIKORSIM [HERETICS] that reneged on the Oral Torah and the teachings of the Sanhedrin who sat at the seat of Hashem and Hashem was found among them? And thus the number of these sects increased just like the number of TZEDDOKIM and BATHUSIM increased.

And the sect of the Jews of Galilee, and the sect of the Jews who lived in the desert and in caves, all of them went against the will of the Sages of Israel who did follow the TORAH SHE BEALPE [The Perushim], for those Jews belonging to those sects did not observe the festivities, and many of those sects did not marry women at all, and behaved towards the Goyyim like brothers and sisters, and the Goyyim learnt from those sects all the customs that they had, and many of those sects reneged on the eternity of the soul and the resurrection of the dead.

**EVEN THE KOHEN GADOL AT THAT TIME
WAS A HERETIC, G-D SAVE US**

Is there a greater sin than this? And who needs to hear about a greater sickness than this, where even the KOHEN GADOL, that served during the year that the Bet ha Mikdash was destroyed was A TZEDDOKI, as JOSEF BEN GURION [YOSEFUS] wrote in his book to the Romans. May the spirit of that KOHEN OF IDOLATRY ROT, May his name be blotted out that the destruction occurred during his tenure. And how was the day of fasting chosen by Hashem? A time of favor before Hashem for Israel to receive the compassion of Hashem, with a man as hateful as him coming into the Holy of Holies?

Therefore what our Holy Sages said [YOMAH 9b] that in the second Bet ha Mikdash there was the sin of Baseless hatred, the intention is to say that that is the root of the bitterness, for through it came all the bad things, and that is the sickness, that because people were quiet regarding the sins of the others, through this, evil increased exceedingly and the TZEDDOKIM and APPIKORSIM and the MINNIM increased greatly.

**A FRIEND WHO REBUKES IS WORTH TEN
TIMES MORE THAN A RABBI**

And in truth most of the people think that it is incumbent only upon the Rabbis to rebuke but not upon regular people, and this is a lie as I have already mentioned many times, and on the contrary when the Rabbi rebukes, people say: "Oh not everybody can be like a Rabbi and a teacher, and who can act the way he does? And this one will say this and that will say that, and everyone will oppose the Rabbi.

But when a common man, on the same level as his friend, rebukes him, and says to him: I am just the same as you and I am on the same level as you, only that you are not acting according to the ways of Hashem, And why don't you have mercy on your soul? And why will you anger your Creator?

And I know fully well that these things have more effect than all the rebukes that I have given in a very long time, therefore Our Sages have said [AVOT 1:6]: "Make a Rabbi for yourself, and buy a friend for yourself" For a friend is more necessary than a Rabbi, to the point where you have to acquire him with lots of money, and G-d forbid that one befriends a RASHA, for a friend can achieve more than ten Rabbis, and most of the people refrain from rebuking for they think: "Lest they scream at me, and lest they say : "Who made you into a Rabbi? Look at this one, now he thinks he can come and rebuke us" And similar things of jesting and scoffing.

**THE MORE THEY LAUGH AT YOU FOR REBUKING
THE GREATER YOUR REWARD**

But who is the wise man who understands all these things, that the more that they laugh about him the more reward he will receive, and at the end his words will be standing and all the jesting will disappear, and as Akavya said [EDUYOT 5:6] "It is better for a person to be considered a fool all his life than to be an evildoer for one moment

before the Holy One Blessed be He” And the laughs that people can make about him can not compare to the praise and the reward that the Holy One, blessed be He will give him, as it is brought in the Zohar ha Kaddosh, that when the Jews pray in the congregation and they conclude the blessing of the resurrection of the dead, a proclamation goes forth in heaven and says: “Who is the person who rebukes sinners and turns them away from the wrong path, and guides them along the ways of the Holy King? And an angel comes and brings the image of such a person...., See further how they praise and talk about the great reward awaiting him, And if this is so: What importance can the laugh and the shame that he goes through in this world have compared to the reward and the doing of the will of Hashem and bringing Him pleasure, Fortunate the man who acts thus.

YEAROT DEVASH CHELEK RISHON 10

**IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OBSERVE THE COMMANDMENT TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF IF WE
DON'T INFORM HIM OF THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT FOR HIS ACTIONS**

The author of the Holy book KAV HAYASHAR (Chapter 5) writes: “You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Vayikra 19, Parashat Kedoshim), Our Rabbis of Blessed Memory said (Torat cohanim, Kedoshim 4), this verse contains one of the biggest principles of the Torah, and there is no greater love than that of him who sees something wrong (any sin) in his neighbor and he rebukes him for that. Because the souls of Israel are joined and connected to each other. The law requires that if someone knows about the suffering of the soul and the punishments that come to the soul after death when it leaves the body, he shall explain his neighbor, and maybe through this he can bring merit to his neighbor and he may leave the wrong path and “turn around and be healed” (Yeshayahu 6,10). We can thus understand what was said by our Sages of blessed memory, that loving your fellow Jew as you love yourself is a great rule in the Torah, because the greatest love is in correcting and bringing him to the Torah. And he shouldn't only reprimand him for doing something wrong, but should also tell him the punishment for the sin he is committing, so maybe he can leave the wrong path and take good care of not falling back on it.

**WHY THE MITZVAH NOT TO HATE YOUR FELLOW JEW AND THE MITZVAH TO REBUKE HIM APPEAR
ON THE SAME VERSE IN THE TORAH**

And the book Noam ha Mitzvot brings an idea that is very much related to what we just learned from the Kav Ha yashar. The Noam ha Mitzvot refers to the verse in the Torah (Vayikra 19:17): “You shall not hate your neighbor in your heart, You shall certainly rebuke your neighbor and not suffer sin on his account” What is the reason that the Holy Torah put together these two Mitzvot; one: not to hate our neighbor and two: To rebuke our neighbor? Because in reality the Rebuke originates only from the love that a Jew has for his fellow Jew, that is why he has pity on him, in order to save his fellow's soul from the judgment of Gehinom. But on the contrary, if one hates his fellow Jew then he will not rebuke him because what does he care if his fellow whom he hates is punished from heaven?

CHAPTER 10

THE GREATNESS OF TZEDAKAH AND CHESED

“As He is rachum (merciful), [so you be merciful].” (Shabbat 133b) [The word] rachum has the same letters as chomer (matter). The implication is as follows: It cannot be that the Holy One, blessed is He, should show mercy to turbid matter, for how can the thoughts of the Most Refined encompass turbid matter? HE CAN SHOW MERCY TO US ONLY WHEN CONSTRICTING HIMSELF, BLESSED BE HE, SO THAT HIS THOUGHT MAY ENCOMPASS MATTER. HOW DOES SUCH TZIMTZUM (CONSTRICTION) COME ABOUT? WHEN MAN IS MERCIFUL, HE EFFECTS THAT THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, VESTS HIMSELF IN HIS “GARMENT” AND, AS IT WERE, CONSTRICTS HIMSELF, AND ALSO SHOWS MERCY TO HIM. THIS IS THE MEANING OF “AS HE IS MERCIFUL...” [SO YOU BE MERCIFUL]” AND THIS IS HOW ONE EFFECTS MERCY. Tzavaat Ha Rivash The Testament Of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov 112

A PERSON SHOULD ACT AS FATHER TO ALL OF G-D'S CREATURES, PARTICULARLY ISRAEL, FOR ITS HOLY SOULS EMANATE FROM THAT SOURCE. AT ALL TIMES, HE SHOULD PRAY FOR MERCY AND

BLESSING FOR THE WORLD, BEING LIKE OUR FATHER ABOVE, WHO HAS COMPASSION FOR HIS CREATURES. AND REGARDING THOSE AFFLICTED WITH SUFFERING, HE SHOULD CONSTANTLY PRAY FOR THEM AS IF THEY WERE HIS OWN CHILDREN AND HE HAD FORMED THEM HIMSELF, FOR THIS IS WHAT THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, DESIRES...HE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THE DESOLATE, SEEK OUT THE YOUNG, HEAL THE BROKEN, NOURISH THE NEEDY, AND RETURN THE LOST. ONE SHOULD HAVE COMPASSION FOR ISRAEL, BEARING ITS BURDENS CHEERFULLY, JUST AS THE MERCIFUL FATHER BEARS ALL....A PERSON SHOULD SHOW COMPASSION TO ALL THE WORKS OF THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE. THAT'S WHY RABBI YEHUDAH THE PRINCE [HA NASSI] WAS PUNISHED: HE HAD NO PITY ON A CALF THAT TRIED TO EVADE SLAUGHTER BY HIDING BEHIND HIM, AND HE SAID TO IT, "GO! FOR THIS PURPOSE, YOU WERE CREATED". SUFFERING — WHICH DERIVES FROM THE ASPECT OF SEVERITY — CAME UPON HIM, FOR COMPASSION SHIELDS AGAINST SEVERITY. Thus, when Rabbi Yehudah the Prince [Ha Nassi] had mercy on a weasel, quoting the verse "...His mercies extend to all His deeds" (Tehillim 145:9), he was delivered from severity, for the light of chochmah spread over him, and his suffering disappeared. Similarly, one should not disparage any creature, for all of them were created with chochmah. Nor should one uproot plants unless they are needed, nor kill animals unless they are needed. And one should choose a noble death for them, using a carefully inspected knife, in order to maximize his compassion.

Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, Tomer Devorah p 72

**TZEDAKAH HAS THE POWER TO BREAK
ALL THE FORCES OF EVIL**

If you walk into any old-fashioned Shul on the morning of Yom Kippur Eve, you will see people on all sides busily collecting Tzedakah in little bowls for all kinds of worthy causes. Now the congregants of the township where the Baal Shem Tov lived - Mezhibuzh - decided that in the public interest this custom had to be abolished: it caused too much clatter [Noise] and disorder.

Word of this reached the Baal Shem Tov, who did not allow the proposed regulation to be enacted. He explained that one year all the forces of impurity in the universe - the Kelippot - banded together on the eve of Yom Kippur in order to make an impenetrable barrier that would not allow the prayers of Israel to ascend. However, as soon as people in the World Below started rattling their little bowls in solicitation of Tzedakah, and congregants around the globe created a clatter with the coins they threw in energetically, the Kelippot were torn asunder by that very noise. Sippure Chassidim

**THE ONES WHO LIMIT THE POOR FROM ASKING TZEDAKAH FOLLOW THE CUSTOM OF SODOM AND
AMORAH**

When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak accepted the appointment of Rav of Berditchev, he stipulated that the local lay leaders were not to burden him with attendance at communal meetings, unless some new custom was to be ordained.

In due course they called a meeting which was to introduce a new regulation: That paupers would be forbidden henceforth to knock on the doors of householders; instead, they would be given a monthly grant from the community chest. In anticipation of the new statute, they invited Reb Levi Yitzchak and, at the meeting, proceeded to explain their proposition. Reb Levi Yitzchak protested: "My brothers! Did we not agree that I was not to be bothered with discussions over old regulations?" "Begging your pardon, Rabbi, this is a new piece of legislation!" Reb Levi Yitzchak was not convinced: "There is nothing novel in your proposal. In fact it has an ancient history, dating all the way back to Sodom and Amora. They too had a statute forbidding people to give alms to the needy..."

" The proposal was removed from the agenda there and then. Sippure Chassidim

TZEDAKAH HAS A HIGHER LEVEL WHEN GIVEN IN SECRET

"For G-d will judge every deed-even everything hidden whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). This passage is interpreted to refer to a person who gives Tzedakah to a poor man publicly, for all to see. Although he did a good deed, he will be called to account in the World to Come because he embarrassed the recipient. The verse also refers to a person who gives Tzedakah to a woman privately, behind closed doors. He will be taken to task because he exposes himself to suspicion and compromises his reputation. In addition, he causes those who suspect him [without justification] to stumble and be punished, for the Talmud says, "Whoever suspects the innocent will suffer for it on his own body." What's more, other people will not accept his reprimands. They will tell him, "You are doing

such and such, and you are admonishing us!" A treasurer of a Tzedakah fund should be above suspicion, and so the Torah states, "You shall be clean before G-d and Israel" (Numbers 32:22). For this reason he should not ask a poor man to work for him without pay, because the poor man is afraid of him, and also in order that the community should not harbor suspicions about him and say, "He gives a greater portion to this poor man than to the others so that the poor man should perform services for him." Sefer Chassidim 44

THE POOR ARE ALSO REQUIRED TO GIVE TZEDAKAH

...Even a poor man who is supported from Tzedakah must give Tzedakah. Each person according to his means, rich and poor alike, should donate a certain amount to Tzedakah every week as a token of their indebtedness to G-d, even as little as a penny or half a penny. All loose pennies add up to a large sum. A poor man who cannot contribute money should do volunteer work for the community. A treasurer is not permitted to force the poor to donate to Tzedakah, and he who does is guilty of robbing one to give to another.... Sefer Chassidim 61

HASHEM PLANTS THE TZEDAKAH WE GIVE LE SHEM SHAMAIM

If you give Tzedakah for the sake of Heaven, G-d plants it. How is this to be understood? If a person gives money to the needy, Hashem plants in Gan Eden as great a quantity of seeds as you can buy with that money. There the seeds sprout year after year and the fruit they produce is placed into storage to be enjoyed by that person when he comes to Gan Eden. And so it says, "For as the earth brings forth her growth and a garden makes the seeds shoot up, so Hashem G-d will make Tzedakah and renown shoot up in the presence of all nations" (Yeshayahu 61:11). He who gives a coin to a poor man merits to see the Shechinah, and is worthy to be resurrected when the dead are revived. Sefer Chassidim 321

HASHEM CAN BE APPEASED WITH A SMALL PIECE OF BREAD GIVEN TO THE POOR

"Sow righteousness for yourselves; reap the fruits of goodness" (Hosea 10:12). This teaches us that before embarking on a dangerous trip, we should give some bread to a poor man or anything that he can enjoy right away, as in the story of the old man who ate the cake of pressed figs. [The Jerusalem Talmud tells the story of two students who set out on a journey. An astrologer predicted that they would not return alive. As they left town, they ran into a poor old man and gave him half a cake of pressed figs. The old man prayed for them, and they returned safely. Said the astrologer, "What can I do if the G-d of the Jews can be appeased with half a cake of pressed figs?"] But if the poor man is embarrassed to accept food, you should give him money. Sefer Chassidim 326

THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH AND CHESED CREATES DEFENDERS IN TIMES OF NEED

Sometimes an evildoer who has transgressed gravely will have a good advocate who pleads his case before the heavenly Court. This happens because he has shown hospitality to guests or he has helped prepare the dead for burial, and now the souls of the departed ask for mercy on his behalf. Another reason why an evildoer's punishment is suspended is because he interceded before the king or the government for the welfare of the Jewish community, or he donated generously to Tzedakah, or he performed acts of kindness. Sefer Chassidim 696

THE GREAT TZADDIKIM WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HELP THE POOR SO SHOULD YOU

A man who was the most astute buyer of merchandise in town devoted all his spare time to Torah study. One day, a widow asked him to buy a certain article for her. He declined, saying, "I'm sorry, but I simply cannot give up my Torah studies." A venerable old Rabbi interjected, "Do you think that you are better than Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua? The Gemara tells us that they interrupted their Torah studies to go to the market to buy an animal for the wedding feast of Rabban Gamliel's son, and on the way they discussed Torah topics. You should do the same. When you go to buy the article for the widow, keep your mind on Torah issues. And when you buy the merchandise at a favorable price, the money you save her is counted as your Tzedakah, and G-d will repay you for your trouble." Sefer Chassidim 1004

WHOEVER GIVES TZEDAKAH REVIVES THE SOUL OF THE POOR

...Tzedakah is beloved of Hashem. For whoever does Tzedakah with his friend is considered to have "revived" his soul. What is more all who practice Tzedakah merit acquiring life in this world and in the world to come, (Proverbs 12:28): "In the path of Tzedakah there is life; in the way it leads, there is no death." For when one sees a poor man who has nothing to eat, and gives him a coin with which he buys a loaf to revive his soul, he, in essence, has restored life to him. Without this, he might have died of hunger. Thus: "In the path of Tzedakah, there is life." Thus, if one does Tzedakah with his friend, he is considered to have brought him back to life "In the way it leads, there is no death." For if one practices Tzedakah he "forces" the angel of death off him, so that he cannot prevail against him - even if death had been decreed for him, (Proverbs 10:2): "Treasures of wickedness will not avail, and Tzedakah saves from death." What is more, it "stands for him" for the world to come, where there is no death. Thus: "In the way it leads, there is no death." Sefer Maalot ha Midot

**GREATER IS HE WHO GIVES TZEDAKAH
IN SECRET THAN MOSHE RABEINU**

...When one gives Tzedakah, he must give it secretly, so that he not shame the poor man who receives it, (Devarim 15:8): "But open, open your hand to him" - Open your hand "between yourself and him," so that your other hand not be aware of it, [i.e., do it secretly] so that the poor man not be ashamed. And our sages of blessed memory have said (Baba Batra 9b): If one gives Tzedakah in secret, the Holy One Blessed be He "forces off" from him and the members of his family the angel of death, which is called "wrath," viz. (Proverbs 21:14): "A gift in secret quells wrath." Concerning this, our sages of blessed memory have said: Greater is he who gives Tzedakah in secret than Moshe our teacher. For in respect to Moshe our teacher it is written (Devarim 9:19): "Because I feared the wrath and the fury," whereas in respect to one who gives Tzedakah in secret it is written (Proverbs 21:14): "A present in secret quells wrath, and a gift in the bosom, great fury". And our sages of blessed memory have said (Sifre, Re'eh 15:10): "Give shall you give to him" - "Give shall you give," even a hundred times; "to him" - between you and him [i.e., in secret] - whence they said (Shekalim 5:6): There was a "compartment of the discrete" in [the Beit ha Mikdash] in Jerusalem. In it, the fearers of sin would deposit Tzedakah in secret, and the poor, fallen from their estate, would provide themselves there from in secret. Sefer Maalot ha Midot

LET ONE ALWAYS DISTRIBUTE HIS WEALTH TO TZEDAKAH, FOR A MAN GIVES NOTHING OF HIS, AS IT SAYS (CHAGGAI 2:8): "'MINE IS THE SILVER AND MINE IS THE GOLD,' SAYS HASHEM OF HOSTS." AND OUR SAGES OF BLESSED MEMORY HAVE SAID (AVOT 3:7): "GIVE HIM WHAT IS HIS; FOR YOU AND YOURS ARE HIS." THEREFORE, LET ONE NOT BE NIGGARDLY WITH HIS MONEY AND LET HIM GIVE OF IT TO TZEDAKAH. Sefer Maalot ha Midot

THE ONE WHO GIVES TO THE POOR LENDS TO HASHEM

...What is more, Tzedakah is like a loan to Hashem, as one lends money to his friend, which the other is obligated to return to him!, (Proverbs 19:17): "He who is gracious to the poor lends to Hashem, and He will pay him his reward." And our sages of blessed memory have said in the Aggadah (Tanchuma Mishpatim 15): I might think that if one gave a crust to a poor man, the Holy One Blessed be He repays him with a crust. This is not so. Rather, the Holy One Blessed be He says to him: "This poor man was about to expire of hunger; the crust that you gave him saved his life. Upon your life, I shall give you `a life for a life.' If, in time to come, your son or daughter is at the point of illness or death, I shall remember for them this Mitzvah that you did and save them from death!" Sefer Maalot ha Midot

**HAVE MERCY WHEN YOU SEE A POOR
MAN COMING TO ASK TZEDAKAH**

...My sons, if you see a poor man coming to you, be filled with mercy for him, as if he were your brother or your relative. And if you see that he is ashamed, give [Tzedakah] to him as a loan, as it is written (Devarim 15:7): "If there be among you a poor man of one of your brothers in one of your gates in your land that the L-rd your G-d gives to you, do not harden your heart and do not close your hand to your poor brother," followed by: "But open shall you open your hand to him," concerning which our sages of blessed memory have said in the Aggadah:

"Open for him" with words before giving him. So that if he is ashamed, say to him: "Perhaps you would like a loan" (whence it is derived that Tzedakah may be given as a loan). Sefer Maalot ha Midot

DO NOT TURN A POOR MAN AWAY EMPTY HANDED

...My sons, if a poor man comes before you, do not turn him away empty-handed if you can avoid it, so that he not talk against you to the Holy One Blessed be He. For his tear is "close," and his cry ascends before Hashem. ...My sons, when a poor man comes before you, do not avert your eyes from him as if you did not see him, so that blight not prevail over the work of your hands, viz. (Proverbs 28:27): "He who gives to the poor will suffer no lack, but he who averts his eyes [from him] will suffer." And our sages of blessed memory have said (Ketubbot 68a): Averting one's eyes from Tzedakah is tantamount to serving idols. Sefer Maalot ha Midot

**PRAY TO HASHEM TO BE SPARED OF
THE HARDSHIPS OF POVERTY**

...Let one always implore mercy of Hashem to be spared poverty. For if he is not visited by it, his son is. If not his son, his son's son, as it is written (Devarim 15:10): "For in consequence of [biglal] this thing, etc." Poverty is a cycle [galgal] that recurs in the world. Sefer Maalot ha Midot

EACH COIN YOU GIVE TO A POOR MAN ADDS UP TO MUCH

...Great is Tzedakah, for every perutah that a man gives of his money to Tzedakah adds up to a great sum. For thus did our sages of blessed memory say (Baba Batra 9b): (Yeshayahu 59:17): "And he cloaked himself with Tzedakah as with chain mail:" - Just as with chain mail, every scale adds up to a great coat of armor, so with Tzedakah, every perutah adds up to a great sum. Therefore, my sons, whenever you can give Tzedakah, give it, whether it be a large or small amount. Do not say: "What will this poor man do with one perutah that I give him?" For the Holy One Blessed be He will put in his way other people who will likewise give him, and that perutah that you give him [together with all the others] will add up to a great sum. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said (Berachot 5b): "Both he who gives much and he who gives little, so long as his heart be intent on Heaven." Sefer Maalot ha Midot

ALL OF ISRAEL, SHOULD BE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED FOR THE NEEDS OF THE POOR AND THE DESTITUTE, WHO ARE REFERRED TO AS "BROKEN VESSELS", AND HA KADDOSH BARUCH HU IS ALWAYS CLOSE TO THEM, and dwells among them as our Sages (Baba Batra 9a) have said: whoever gives a coin to the poor person earns six blessings, while one who comforts him with his speech earns eleven" For the heart of the poor person is always bitter because his inability to obtain what he needs, for he also wishes good things, but these are far from him. For when the winter time comes, the rich person sits like a prince in his warm house. But the poor has no way of heating himself. For all the days of the poor are full of suffering, day and night and even so, he and his family receive all these sufferings with love. And when Shabbat and Yom Tov come, a time for rejoicing with food and clean dressing, the poor lack all these things and yet they praise and thank their Master. The rich person marries his kids off to whomever he sees fit, and the poor can only marry them to whomever is available, even to an ignorant man, who has no Torah and no fear of heaven, and it is like putting his daughter in front of a lion, and he has no power to save her, and he sees how this ignorant man hits his daughter day by day, and he sees how she suffers; Who can put into paper all that the poor man suffers? And any poor person who accepts his suffering out of love, the fire of Gehinom will not burn on him, and his reward is very great, because the poor person in this world is considered like dead. THEREFORE I AM WARNING YOU: WHOEVER HELPS THE POOR IN HIS TIME OF NEED, HAS TO BE VERY CAREFUL, THAT HE WILL DO SO WITHOUT EMBARRASSING HIM, G-D FORBID, BECAUSE IT IS ENOUGH FOR HIM THE SUFFERINGS OF POVERTY. And whoever receives guests in his house, will do so with a good facial expression, for it is known what our Sages of blessed memory have said: Receiving guests is greater than receiving the Shechina. And it is a very important Mitzvah, for giving bread to the poor person weakens the strength of 480 damagers and Lillith, the mother of demons, who always comes to accuse Israel Sefer Kav ha Yashar Chapter 9

GREAT IS THE QUALITY OF LOVING KINDNESS. FOR WHEN ISRAEL IS COMPASSIONATE, ONE TOWARDS THE OTHER, THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE HAS MERCY UPON THEM AND REDEEMS THEM,

(YESHAYAHU 54:7): "FOR A BRIEF MOMENT I FORSOOK YOU, BUT WITH GREAT MERCIES [TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER], I SHALL GATHER YOU IN." LEST ONE SAY: IF I AM COMPASSIONATE TO OTHERS, MY MONEY WILL DWINDLE AND GO LOST — IT HAS ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN BY SHLOMO (PROVERBS 22:9): "THE 'GOOD OF EYE' — HE WILL BE BLESSED; FOR HE HAS GIVEN OF HIS BREAD TO THE POOR." AND, SIMILARLY, (IBID. 28:27): "HE WHO GIVES TO THE POOR WILL SUFFER NO LACK, ETC." Happy are the merciful, the Holy One Blessed be He not removing His mercies from them, and relating to them always with loving kindness and mercy. And these [loving kindness and mercy] guard them, viz. (Psalms 40:12): "You, O G-d, do not withhold Your mercies from me. Let Your kindness and Your truth always guard me." Sefer Maalot ha Midot, Rachamim, Mercy

**THE QUALITY OF BEING GENEROUS TO
THE POOR IS A MATTER OF HABIT**

Our Sages of blessed memory have stated further that the trait of generosity resides in habit, one not being truly generous until he is accustomed to giving as much as he can at all times. For one who gives a thousand gold pieces to a deserving person at one time is not so generous as one who gives out a thousand gold pieces over a span of a thousand times, each piece in its proper place. For if one gives a thousand pieces at one time, it is because he was suddenly seized with a great impulse to give which afterwards departed from him. And as far as reward is concerned, one who redeems one captive with a hundred dinars or gives a hundred dinars as Tzedakah to one poor man, satisfying all of his needs, cannot be compared to one who redeems ten captives or covers the needs of ten poor men by giving ten dinars to each. About this our Sages have said (Avot 3:15): "All is according to abundance of deed." They did not say "according to greatness of deed." Sefer Orchot Tzaddikim Shaar ha Nedivut

**YOU SHOULD ACCOMPANY YOUR TZEDAKAH
WITH SOME ACT OF KINDNESS**

And when a man gives Tzedakah, he should accompany it with kindness, such as buying with his money something that the poor man needs in order to spare him the bother of buying it himself. Or, finding that a poor man's needs can be cheaply acquired at a certain time, but that he is lacking in means, he should supply him with the necessary funds, making sure to do so at that particular time, thus showing kindness. About this the prophet has said (Hoshea 10:12): "Sow for yourselves with Tzedakah; harvest with kindness." That is, the reward is commensurate with the kindness (Sukkah 49b). Sefer Orchot Tzaddikim Shaar ha Nedivut

THE BEST KINDNESS IS THE ONE DONE LESHEM SHAMAIM [WITH NO ULTERIOR MOTIVES]

A person has to be careful not to boast about the acts of kindness that he performs for the best type of kindness is the one that is done Leshem Shamaim [Without ulterior motives]. This is why you see that many people who perform acts of kindness with selfish motivations, increase continually in the amount of kindness that they do, much more so than the people who are G-d fearing, because the Yetzer hara [The Satan] does not oppose them and does not withhold them from acts of kindness, for their Tzedakah is done with ulterior motives. Chesed le Abraham Siman Beit, Hei

WHENEVER RABBI ISSER ZALMAN MELTZER WOULD HEAR A KNOCK ON HIS DOOR, HE WOULD RUN SWIFTLY TO OPEN IT. WHEN HIS FAMILY ASKED HIM WHY HE TROUBLED HIMSELF SINCE OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD WOULD CERTAINLY ANSWER THE DOOR, HE REPLIED, "IT'S POSSIBLE THAT A POOR PERSON IS STANDING BY THE DOOR AND I MUST RUSH TO MEET HIS NEEDS." (Dmuyos Hod, vol. 3, p. 141)

**PRAYER ON BEHALF OF THE POOR SOMETIMES DOES MORE
THAN THE MONEY THE WEALTHY GIVE TO THEM**

One of the foundations of kindness is to pray constantly to Hashem on behalf of our fellow Jews that all their needs will be met, materially and spiritually, and an upright person can do through his prayer much more than what many wealthy men can do with their money Chesed le Abraham Dalet

A MAN RECEIVES GREAT REWARD FOR SPEAKING MERCIFULLY TO THE HEART OF A POOR MAN. MANY KNOW OF THE MITZVAH OF GIVING TZEDAKAH AND OF ITS REWARD, BUT NOT OF THE GREATNESS OF THE MITZVAH OF WORDS. HAVE OUR RABBIS NOT SAID (BABA BATRA 9B): "ONE WHO GIVES A PENNY TO A POOR MAN IS BLESSED WITH SIX BLESSINGS, BUT ONE WHO CONCILIATES HIM WITH WORDS IS BLESSED WITH ELEVEN." THEREFORE, IN SPEAKING, ONE MUST CLOTHE HIMSELF IN TZEDAKAH TO SPEAK TO THE POOR MAN'S HEART. HIS WORDS MUST BE GENTLE TO THE POOR ONE; HE MUST CONSOLE HIM IN HIS ADVERSITY AND IN HIS ILL FORTUNE, AND HE MUST HONOR AND UPLIFT HIM. Orchot Tzaddikim Shaar ha Rachamim

TO ALLEVIATE SOMEONE IT IS EVEN PERMITTED
TO TALK EMPTY THINGS

To alleviate a person's suffering, the Rav the Gaon Rabbi Israel Salanter ZTK'L would permit to talk empty things because one would accomplish with this the Mitzvah of Kindness Sefer Or Israel

"And draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul" (Yeshayahu 58:10). Rashi explains: "You shall draw out your soul to the hungry with consolations of good words." Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains: "YOU WILL NOT BE SATISFIED BY GIVING BREAD TO THE HUNGRY; YOU ALSO BRING YOUR HEART TO HIM, AND YOUR SOUL COMES PERSONALLY NEAR TO HIS, FOR YOU KNOW HOW TO RECEIVE AND REFRESH THE SOUL THAT IS STARVING FOR COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT, OR FOR INSTRUCTION AND ADVICE."

"For thus said the High and Exalted One, Who abides forever and Whose Name is Holy: I abide in exaltedness and holiness, but I am with the downtrodden and lowly of spirit - to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the downtrodden." (Yeshayahu 57:15)

"GREET EVERY HUMAN BEING WITH A "SEVER PANIM YAFOT" - A WARM, CHEERFUL, AND PLEASANT COUNTENANCE" (PIRKE AVOT 1:15). THIS TEACHES US THAT IF ONE GIVES HIS FELLOW HUMAN BEING ALL OF THE GIFTS IN THE WORLD BUT WITH A DOWNCAST FACE, IT IS CONSIDERED AS IF HE GAVE HIM NOTHING AT ALL. BUT IF ONE WELCOMES HIS FELLOW HUMAN BEING WITH A WARM AND CHEERFUL FACE, EVEN THOUGH HE IS UNABLE TO GIVE HIM ANYTHING, IT IS CONSIDERED AS IF HE GAVE HIM ALL OF THE MOST VALUABLE GIFTS IN THE WORLD. (Avot D'Rabbi Natan 13)

"Receive every human being with gladness" (Pirke Avot 3:16) "When someone is dressed in a manner that shows he is wealthy, people will usually greet him with much respect. If someone else comes along who is dressed in rags, many people just ignore him. Even if someone does greet him, it will usually be in a perfunctory manner, done out of a feeling of obligation. But this is based on falsehood. Who are you greeting - a human being or his style of clothing?" Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian

IT IS BETTER TO DIE THAN TO SHAME SOMEONE ELSE

Whoever shames his fellow is as if he spills blood (Baba Metzia 58) and it is better to be killed than to shame someone else Sefer Chassidim as brought in Sefer Charedim

WHEN THERE ARE HUNGRY PEOPLE ONE HAS TO GIVE EVEN MORE TZEDAKAH THAN THE 20%
STIPULATED BY OUR SAGES

WHEN OUR SAGES SAID THAT GIVING ONE FIFTH TO TZEDAKAH IS A GOOD PRACTICE, THEY REFERRED TO A CASE WHERE THE DONOR IS NOT AWARE THAT THERE ARE NEEDY PEOPLE IN HIS CITY WHO ARE HUNGRY AND WITHOUT CLOTHES, BUT IF HE KNOWS THAT THERE ARE POOR PEOPLE WITHOUT MEANS IN HIS CITY, HE IS OBLIGATED TO GIVE A FIFTH OF HIS INCOME AND IS NOT A GOOD PRACTICE BUT AN OBLIGATION, AND IF HE GIVES ANY LESS HE CONTINUALLY TRANSGRESSES A FEW MITZVOT OF THE TORAH AND HE IS CONSIDERED AS IF HE RENEGED ON THE WHOLE TORAH Ahavat Chesed Part 2, Chapter 19 in the name of the Rambam and the Gra

IF WE GIVE LESS THAN A FIFTH TO TZEDAKAH WE TRANSGRESS A FEW NEGATIVE MITZVOT EVERY DAY
"For the sake of Hashem, give a fifth of all earnings to Tzedakah. Do not give less, as I have already warned you, because that causes the transgression of several positive and negative Mitzvot every minute! It also implies a rejection of the Holy Torah, G-d forbid". Iggeret ha Gra, The Vilna Gaon

WHEN WE DON'T JUDGE THE POOR PERSON HASHEM DOESN'T JUDGE US EITHER
THE ONE WHO GIVES TO THE POOR WITHOUT BEING PARTICULAR IF THAT POOR PERSON IS A SINNER OR NOT, RECEIVES ABUNDANCE FROM HEAVEN AND HE IS NOT EXAMINED TO SEE IF HE DESERVES THIS ABUNDANCE. (Brit Olam al Sefer Chassidim le ha Chida, Chesed Le Abraham)

AND WHEN A PERSON NEEDS SOME KIND OF SALVATION AND HE HAS NO MERITS, FROM HEAVEN THEY SEND TO HIM A POOR PERSON WHO ALSO HAS NO MERITS, SO THAT THROUGH HELPING HIM, HE WILL ALSO BE HELPED FROM HEAVEN (Taken from Tzemach David)

"You shall surely tithe"...(Devarim 14:22) [ASER TAASER which can also be read ASER TAASHIR, meaning give a tenth so that you will become wealthy thereby]. If someone gave a tenth of his earnings and did not become wealthier, he should know that his reward is stored for the future, and instead of earning wealth in this world, he will receive his full reward in the World to Come, the World where everything is good (Sefer Mate Moshe)

Another reason why a person did not become wealthy even though he has faithfully given out a tenth of his earnings, is because there are many sins whose punishment is loss of money, G-d forbid, and this person transgressed these sins, and lost his reward, but instead of losing all his money, this person does not become wealthier. Therefore the merit of Tzedakah is great for it will prevent the person from losing his money, just that he will not become wealthier because of his past transgressions (Look further Succah 29, Arachin 30, Baba Metzia 71, Ketuvot 19, Kiddushin 40)

**PARENTS COME BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE IF
THEY ARE IN NEED OF TZEDAKAH**

If one's parents are poor, not only is one permitted to give them Tzedakah money, but they take precedence over others." However, if one is able to support his parents without the use of Maaser money it is preferable to do so. Even though one should not give all of his Maaser money to one person but rather divide it among many poor people, this does not apply to one's parents. He may give them all of his Tzedakah money if they need it. Rama Yore Deah Siman 240, Chatam Sofer Yore deah Siman 229, Maharsham Yore Deah Siman 251

**IF YOU DON'T GIVE TO YOUR RELATIVES BUT YOU GIVE TO OTHERS THIS IS A SIGN THAT YOU DON'T
DO IT LESHEM SHAMAIM**

We have a tradition that regarding he who gives Tzedakah to those who are not his relatives before he gives to his relatives, it is a sign that he does not act LeShem Shamaim Mishpat Tzedek in the name of Tzavaat Rabbi Yoel

**WHEN WE IGNORE OUR POOR RELATIVES AND GIVE TO OTHERS INSTEAD, THIS IS NOT CALLED
TZEDAKAH**

A rich man used to donate money to the community's Tzedakah fund and ask the administrator to distribute it to the poor. Now this rich man had an impoverished brother; in fact, all of his relatives were destitute. The Rabbi told the rich man, "The money you gave out to the poor through the Tzedakah fund is not Tzedakah. Rather, it causes tze'akah, 'sobbing' by your relatives. It is far better that you give these funds to your needy brother and penniless relatives. Sefer Chassidim 324

Rabbi Aryeh Levine of Jerusalem was a great Tzaddik of the 20th century. It is told that a certain man once came to Reb Aryeh' house and wished to give him a generous donation for his yeshiva. Reb Aryeh, however, would not take the contribution, and he said, "For you, it is forbidden to give any contribution." The man was amazed to hear this. "Why?" he demanded. "I am a man of means, you know." Reb Aryeh replied, "YOU HAVE RELATIVES AND FAMILY MEMBERS WHOSE SITUATION IS QUITE DISTRESSING. AS LONG AS YOU DO NOT HELP THEM I

MAY NOT TAKE YOUR DONATION. THE TORAH SAYS PLAINLY, 'DO NOT HIDE YOURSELF FROM YOUR OWN KIN' (Yeshayahu 58:7)." (Cited in "A Tzaddik in our time")

GREAT PUNISHMENT IS DUE TO THE PERSON WHO SUSTAINS OTHERS, YET HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND OTHER RELATIVES HE DOES NOT SUSTAIN. Sefer Chassidim Siman 155 – 321

Any person who loves Tzedakah, loves reproof, loves acts of Kindness, brings guests into his house, prays with concentration, even if he lives outside Eretz Israel, will not go through the judgment of the grave [Chibbut ha Kever] and he will not even go through the judgment of Gehinom
Sefer Chassidim Siman 32

THE ONE WHO SUFFERS MORE HAS TO BE HELPED FIRST

Whoever suffers more poverty than another must be helped before, and even if regarding some particular need both people have the same need, if one of them suffers more regarding other needs, this one must be helped first, for we need to show more compassion to this person and to alleviate his suffering. Chesed le Abraham Siman dalet

AND YOU MUST KNOW THAT THE TZEDAKAH THAT A PERSON DOES WITH PROPER INTENTION AND GOOD WILL, AND WITH A FULL HEART, THIS TZEDAKAH HAS THE POWER TO SAVE THE PERSON FROM THE JUDGMENT OF GEHINOM. AND WHATEVER A PERSON GIVES WITH ARROGANCE, IN ORDER TO GAIN HONOR, OR IN ORDER TO HUMILIATE, THIS TZEDAKAH HAS THE POWER TO SAVE THIS PERSON FROM UNTIMELY DEATH BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO SAVE HIM FROM THE JUDGMENT OF GEHINOM, BECAUSE AN UNTIMELY DEATH IS AN AFFLICTION WHICH LASTS A SHORT TIME BUT THE SUFFERING OF GEHINOM IS A LENGTHY ONE...

Chesed le Abraham Maayan Beit, Daf 24, Maayan 49

THE ONE WHO IS MORE HEARTBROKEN AMONG THE POOR COMES FIRST THAN OTHERS IN RECEIVING TZEDAKAH

The poor person who is heart broken to a greater extent than his fellow poor should precede him in receiving Tzedakah, therefore a widow comes before an orphan, and an orphan comes before one that is not, and so forth.
Sefer ha brit

IF AN ACT OF KINDNESS TO A POOR PERSON COMES YOUR WAY IS BECAUSE FROM HEAVEN THEY WANT TO DO KINDNESS TO YOU

Sometimes the Holy One Blessed be He arranges things in such a way that a person will do an act of kindness to his fellow Jew so that he can be repaid in kind and awaken the quality of kindness in heaven Toldot Yaakov Yosef Vayikra

WE MUST SHOW THAT WE DON'T PLACE OUR TRUST IN OUR WEALTH BUT IN HASHEM

An awesome advice. Whoever sees his means diminishing should give Tzedakah out of them to show that he does not place his trust on his money but only in the Holy One Blessed be He, and on this merit blessing comes and he will succeed in all he does Keddushat Levi Likkutim

GIVE TZEDAKAH SO THAT YOU WILL BE CONTENT WITH EVERYTHING YOU HAVE AND SO THAT YOU WILL LACK NOTHING

What our Sages said: Aser bishvil she Titasher Give a tenth so that you will become wealthy, does not refer to material wealth, but it refers to the quality of having all of the persons needs met, so that nothing will be lacking for this is the main aspect of wealth which belongs to the side of Keddusha, as it says: "Who is wealthy? The one who is happy with his portion" (Pirke Avot 4: 1) Meor Enaim Parashat Ree

DO NOT THINK MUCH OF YOURSELF WHEN GIVING TZEDAKAH FOR EVERYTHING YOU HAVE BELONGS TO HASHEM

DO NOT CONGRATULATE YOURSELF WHEN YOU GIVE TZEDAKAH TO THE POOR, AS IF YOU ARE THE ONE GIVING IT, FOR EVERYTHING COMES FROM HASHEM, AND HE IS THE ONE WHO GIVES YOU STRENGTH TO EARN THE MONEY YOU HAVE, AND THE PORTION OF THE POOR HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOU TO GIVE TO HIM Or ha meir Derush le Rosh ha Shana

BLESSING COMES THROUGH TALMIDE CHACHAMIM SO THEY SHOULD BE SUPPORTED ACCORDINGLY
The abundance in the world comes through the merit of the Talmide Chachamim so it is proper that the wealthy should see to it that all their needs are met Degel Machane Ephraim

**A FEW THINGS TO BE LEARNT FROM ABRAHAM AVINU CONCERNING THE QUALITY OF KINDNESS
SPECIFICALLY RECEIVING GUESTS**

- Even though he was sick, he waited outside his tent for passersby to come into his home
- He promised little and did much regarding the food he served to his guests.
- He didn't make the guests wait, when they had no time to spare.
- Everything he did with great diligence.
- He himself attended to all of the guests needs even though he had many servants
- He educated his sons to perform this Mitzvah.

KINDNESS HAS TO BE DONE IMMEDIATELY FOR THE PERSON WHO NEEDS IT IS SUFFERING AND HAS TO BE RELIEVED OF HIS SUFFERING

Anything that has to do with kindness has to be done immediately for the person needing it suffers when the kindness is delayed. And our Sages said (Sanhedrin 35) When they withhold Tzedakah in a day of fasting, this is considered as the spilling of blood, and sometimes the fact that kindness is withheld leads to danger as in the case of Nachum Ish Gamzu (See Taaanit 21)

THE QUALITY OF TZEDAKAH - KINDNESS IN SHORT

It is considered equal to all other Mitzvot in the Torah (Baba Batra 9 – Yerushalmi Peah 1) - It is greater than the sacrifices (Yalkut Hoshea) - It is one of the 3 pillars upon which the world stands (Pirke Avot) - It atones for our sins (Avot de Rabbi Natan) - It saves from death (Mishle 10) - It is a Segulah for length of days - It leads to having righteous sons who will have an easy life - The merit of the one who performs it lasts for all generations (Yerushalmi Pea) - It saves from the birth pangs of the arrival of Mashiach (Sanhedrin 98) - It saves from the judgments of Gehinom (Tanna debe Eliyahu Zuta Alef) - It protects him when he comes in judgment before the Holy One Blessed be he (Meil Tzedakah) - All good actions originated from his act of kindness are accredited to him, for if he sustains the soul of a Torah scholar, then he has a portion in all his Torah from then on (Ahavat Chesed) - Not everyone merits great levels in Torah, but he who wants to merit great levels in Kindness, has all the opportunity in the world to do it, as it says: "even evildoers whose only merit is the Tzedakah they have done, they will receive the Shechinah (Chesed Le Abraham Siman Alef) - The poor also have ample opportunity to do Kindness to others for it is not exclusively with money that kindness is done. (Chesed Le Abraham Siman Alef)

CHAPTER 11

**HOW SOME OF OUR GREAT RABBIS
BEHAVED TOWARDS THE POOR**

"WHEN HASHEM GRANTS RICHES TO SOMEONE." EXPLAINED RABBI ISRAEL SALANTER, "IT IS NOT EXCLUSIVELY FOR THAT MAN'S PERSONAL BENEFIT. THE WEALTH MAKES ITS OWNER A GABBAI TZEDAKAH, RESPONSIBLE FOR SHARING IT WITH THE POOR. WHO CAN ACCEPT SUCH A HEAVY BURDEN? It requires searching every corner of the city to discover whether someplace there is a pauper in distress or a youngster whose family lacks the funds to hire a teacher to teach him Torah. Who can find them all?" Rabbi Israel Salanter expressed his wonder that people do not realize what an immense obligation they have to

help others. Many people worry about helping their friends do a Mitzvah, but do not care about their material well-being. "Many times," said Rabbi Israel, "I have seen a person pass a Shul, and the people inside call out to him, 'Kedushah! Kedushah! Please come in and join us!' But I have yet to see a person pass by a house where a seudah [a meal] is being served, and the people eating at the table call out to the passerby, 'Seudah! Seudah! Please come inside and join us!' Rabbi Ephraim Zaitchik, Hameorot Hagedolim).

RABBI AHARON, THE SON OF THE CHAFETZ CHAIM, WRITES (DUGMAOS MIDARKEI AVI P. 38): MY FATHER WAS EXTREMELY CAREFUL WITH THE BEGGARS WHO WENT AROUND COLLECTING ALMS AND TOOK GREAT PAINS NOT TO HURT OR UPSET THEM IN ANY WAY. This was not an easy thing to do because these beggars would sometimes say or do things that were very disturbing and one had to exercise great self-control not to reply to them in a sharp, hurtful way. Father explained that his diligence was based on the verse, "You shall not cause pain to any widow or orphan (Shemot 22:21). Mechilta (ibid.) explains that this warning extends to all people who are broken hearted and it is prohibited to cause them even the slightest pain. I remember that Father once remarked, "THE PROBLEM IS THAT PEOPLE MISJUDGE THE POOR AND LOOK AT THEM WITH A JAUNDICED EYE. PEOPLE ARE WONT TO SAY THAT THESE BEGGARS ARE LAZY GOOD-FOR-NOTHINGS WHO WOULD RATHER BEG THAN PUT IN A HARD DAY'S WORK. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. OFTEN THE POOR ARE NOT TO BLAME; THEY ARE VICTIMS OF A DIVINE DECREE! For the Sages of the Talmud (Niddah 16b) teach that before a soul descends to earth a heavenly decree proclaims, 'So-and-so will be rich, so-and-so will be poor!' In order to make that decree come true, heaven above gives great ambition and energy into the man who is predestined to be rich so that he is motivated to toil incessantly to make more and more money. Heaven bestows so much vitality upon this person that he never seems to grow fatigued and he can work day and night without a stop. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ONE PREDESTINED TO BE POOR IS PREVENTED FROM ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING. IN OTHER WORDS, THE HEAVENLY DECREE IS NOT, 'LET THIS MAN BE PENNILESS!' RATHER IT IS, 'LET THIS MAN BE LISTLESS!' 'FROM HEAVEN THEY FILL HIM UP WITH MOLTEN LEAD' WHICH WEIGHS HIM DOWN, SAPS HIS STRENGTH AND PREVENTS THE PAUPER FROM DOING ANYTHING TO IMPROVE HIS LOT. THE PAUPER IS NOT INDOLENT BY CHOICE, BUT BECAUSE OF A DECREE. WE SHOULD BE FILLED WITH PITY FOR THESE POOR SOULS AND DO ALL WE CAN TO ALLEVIATE THEIR SUFFERING."

One Friday, a poor man came to the home of Rabbi Yeshayahu Brodsky, who was the Rabbi of Jerusalem before Rabbi Shmuel Salanter, and told him that his family had no food to eat. Rabbi Brodsky told him, "I don't have any money, but I'll give you one of my candle sticks that I use for Shabbat. Sell it, and use the money to buy food." A few weeks later, the poor person returned and again asked for financial assistance. Rabbi Brodsky gave him the second candlestick to sell. Not too long afterward, the poor man came back once again and asked for help. This time Rabbi Brodsky had nothing else to give away except his shtreimel (a fur hat worn on Shabbat and holidays), which he happily gave the man. The poor man had a bad temper and instead of thanking Rabbi Brodsky, he threw the Shtreimel on the floor and cursed him for not giving him a sufficient amount of help. "If a person behaves in such a manner, his suffering from his poverty must be so unbearable that it has greatly affected him," said Rabbi Brodsky. He then offered to go with the man to collect funds from others. Together they went from door to door until a sufficient amount was collected. Maidmuyos Yerushalayim, pp. 54—55

RABBI SHMELKE OF NICHOLSBURG SAID, "WHEN A POOR MAN ASKS YOU FOR AID DO NOT USE HIS FAULTS AS AN EXCUSE FOR NOT HELPING HIM. FOR THEN HASHEM WILL LOOK FOR YOUR OFFENSES, AND HE IS CERTAIN TO FIND MANY OF THEM. KEEP IN MIND THAT THE POOR MAN'S TRANSGRESSIONS HAVE BEEN ATONED FOR BY HIS POVERTY WHILE YOURS STILL REMAIN WITH YOU." (FUN UNZER ALTER OTZER, VOL. 2, P. 99)

A wagon driver told the Chafetz Chaim's son: "Once when your father was a passenger in my wagon, I asked him what I could do to earn a share in olam habah (the world to come). When your father told me that I should start my own Gemach (a free-loan society), I laughed. I am a poor man,' I told him. But he told me that one does not need a large sum of money to start a free-loan society, and that if I would put aside a small amount of money every week, I would accumulate a sizable amount in a number of years. I took his advice, the fund grew, and I began lending

money to my acquaintances. As the size of my capital keeps growing, I am able to lend money to an increasing number of applicants.” Michtevai Chafetz Chaim, pp. 37—38

IN A TIME OF DANGER OR DISTRESS, A PERSON IS BEING JUDGED ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTE OF STRICT JUSTICE. THEREFORE, IT IS ADVISABLE TO AROUSE THE ATTRIBUTE OF MERCY BY BEING MERCIFUL TO THE POOR AND GIVING TZEDAKAH TO THEM (Taam va Daat, Vayishlach 32: 21)

WHEN ONE SEEKS FORGIVENESS FROM HASHEM, TZEDAKAH IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SACRIFICES IN THE BEIT HA MIKDASH. FOR ANIMAL SACRIFICES ONLY ATONE FOR UNINTENTIONAL SINS, WHEREAS TZEDAKAH BRINGS G-D TO FORGIVE A PERSON EVEN FOR INTENTIONAL ACTS OF DEFIANCE AGAINST HIS WILL. This concept is stated by King Shlomo who said: “Performing acts of Tzedakah and justice is preferable to Hashem than a sacrifice (Proverbs 21:3). Rabbi Chaim Palagi (Tzedakah L'Chaim 297)

THE SANZER RAV THE GREAT SUPPORTER OF THE POOR

THE SANZER RAV, RABBI' CHAIM HALBERSTAM (1793.1876), WAS ONE OF THE CHASSIDIC LEADERS OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PROFOUND TORAH SCHOLAR, RENOWNED AUTHOR OF THE CLASSIC RESPONSA DIVREI CHAIM, AND REVERED LEADER OF THOUSANDS OF DEVOTED DISCIPLES, HE FOUND THE TIME AND WHEREWITHAL TO CARE FOR THE NEEDS OF THE POOR AND DESTITUTE. HIS INCREDIBLE KINDNESS AND MERCY PLACE THE SANZER RAV AMONG THE GREAT MASTERS OF TZEDAKAH WHO HAVE GRACED THE JEWISH PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE AGES.

The Rebbe was the central Chassidic leader of Galician Jewry at a time when those Jews were mired in poverty and dire want; every penny was hard to come by. The only exceptions were a few rare individuals, and these men of means were overburdened by Tzedakah obligations. The Rebbe of Sanz was like a great minister of finance, under whose auspices huge sums flowed from the purses of the wealthy negidim into the hands of the poor.

RABBI' CHAIM HIMSELF DERIVED NO BENEFIT WHATSOEVER FROM HIS TZEDAKAH ACTIVITIES; NOT A PENNY DONATED FOR TZEDAKAH WAS USED FOR HIS OWN NEEDS OR THOSE OF HIS FAMILY. HIS OWN HOME WAS BARE OF FURNITURE, AND HIS PERSONAL INCOME WAS A FEW GULDEN A MONTH; YET, THOUSANDS OF GULDEN FLOWED THROUGH HIS FINGERS ON A MONTHLY BASIS.

Twice a day, every day, at set times in the morning and evening, the Rebbe would distribute Tzedakah lavishly. As he entered the Beit HaMidrash every morning for prayers, he always found hundreds of the needy of Sanz waiting for him. They surrounded him on all sides as he would give each one his allotted amount. When his funds were exhausted, they would still tug on his coat from every side. He did not become angry, but only pleaded with them that he simply had no more money. They refused to leave him alone until he gave more. He would go again and again to his wife, the Rebbetzin, to request that she lend him a few gulden, until she too could give no more. Then he would send out his gabbai to borrow from one of the local householders. In this fashion, every morning he would distribute many gulden. After his prayers the Rebbe would return to his private room and again he found waiting for him poor youths with various urgent requests. This one desperately needed shoes, and that one needed another item of clothing, and so on.

At night, following the evening prayers, the Rebbe would give out money to the needy yoshevim, his disciples and followers who came from far and wide to spend an extended period of time in the court of the Rebbe and to benefit from his teachings and holy influence. These included men of Torah and accomplished scholars. The Rebbe also provided them with a good meal by holding a tish for them every day. The Rebbe found no rest for his soul until he had fulfilled the needs of all who required his help. HE USED TO SAY: “I LOVE THE POOR. DO YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE HA KADOSH BARUCH HU LOVES THEM”

REBBE CHAIM SANZER ONCE SAID: "SOME PEOPLE ARE RELUCTANT TO GIVE TO ONE HUNDRED BEGGARS OUT OF FEAR LEST ONE OF THEM BE A FRAUD. ON THE OTHER HAND, I BELIEVE THAT THE MERIT OF TZEDAKAH IS SO GREAT THAT I WOULD GLADLY GIVE TO ONE HUNDRED BEGGARS EVEN IF ONLY ONE WAS TRULY IN NEED!" (DARKEI CHAIM P. 137).

TZEDAKAH IS THE BEST DECORATION FOR THE SUKKAH

On the eve of Sukkot, Rabbi Chaim Sanzer told his sons that he needed several thousand rubles. As soon as they brought him the amount that they had quickly borrowed from various wealthy householders, he distributed it all to the needy. As he entered his sukkah that evening he said: "People are accustomed to decorate their sukkah with all kinds of pretty ornaments. But the beauty of my sukkah is different: Tzedakah, Tzedakah - that is what makes my sukkah beautiful!" Sippure Chassidim

RABBI CHAIM SANZER LIVED FOR TZEDAKAH, AND GAVE OUT TZEDAKAH LAVISHLY. ONCE HE GAVE A SIZABLE SUM TO SOMEONE WHO TURNED OUT TO BE AN IMPOSTER. THIS UPSET HIS CHASSIDIM VERY MUCH, AND THEY ASKED THE REBBE WHY HE GAVE TZEDAKAH TO SUCH AN UNDESERVING PERSON. "Let me tell you a story about the Rebbe Rabbi' Zusya of Hanipoli," said Rabbi' Chaim. "Rabbi' Zusya had an admirer who considered it his great privilege to help support his pure and holy Rebbe, and periodically he would give Rabbi' Zusya a generous sum of money. This open-handed Chassid achieved considerable success in his business ventures and prospered. Once this man came to Hanipoli and was told that Rabbi' Zusya had just left town in order to be with his own master, Rabbi' Dov Ber, the great Maggid of Mezritch. The Chassid said to himself, 'If the Maggid of Mezritch is Rabbi' Zusya's master, he obviously must be a greater tzaddik than Rabbi' Zusya himself. Why bother supporting the lesser disciple if I can go right to the top and support the supreme master himself!"

"However, from the very day he discontinued visiting Rabbi' Zusya, his business began to fail. The Chassid then returned to Rabbi Zusya and admitted, 'I realize that it is not a coincidence, but I fail to understand why my fortunes took a turn for the worse when I became a devotee of your Rebbe, who you must admit is greater than you are.'

"RABBI ZUSYA RESPONDED, 'YOU SEE, MY SON, THE ALMIGHTY DEALS WITH US ACCORDING TO HOW WE DEAL WITH OTHERS. AS LONG AS YOU WERE WILLING TO HELP SUPPORT SOMEONE AS UNDESERVING AS ZUSYA, HASHEM DEALT GENEROUSLY WITH YOU AS WELL, WHETHER OR NOT YOU WERE WORTHY OF HIS BLESSINGS. BUT ONCE YOU BEGAN TO BE SELECTIVE AND WERE SCRUPULOUS TO GIVE YOUR SUPPORT ONLY TO THE GREATEST OF TZADDIKIM, THEN THE ALMIGHTY REACTED ACCORDINGLY AND BECAME MORE SELECTIVE IN CHOOSING ONLY THE WORTHIEST RECIPIENTS FOR HIS BOUNTY."

"Rabbi Zusya concluded: This explains the strange request of the prophet Yirmiyahu: Master of the Universe, even when these wicked men perform acts of Tzedakah, make them stumble by sending them people who are not worthy of receiving Tzedakah, so that they will not receive a reward for their deeds (Baba Kamma 16b). How could a holy prophet, a lover of all Jews, possibly wish ill for his brethren, even if they were sinners? The answer is that in heaven they always deal with people 'measure for measure.' If a person is scrupulous and demanding and only gives his Tzedakah to worthy people, heaven will only bestow its blessings upon him when he is worthy. But if he gives Tzedakah even to the unworthy, heaven will be lenient and kind hearted toward him even when he is unworthy. Therefore, the prophet Yirmiyahu was actually blessing these wicked people, saying, Dear G-d, do these wicked people a favor and let their Tzedakah money go to unworthy people, so that You can be good to them even when they are unworthy! Thus, these wicked people will not receive the 'reward,' the appropriate punishment they deserve, for their [evil] deeds."

RABBI CHAIM SANZER CONCLUDED: "AS LONG AS I AM NOT OVERLY SELECTIVE AS TO WHOM I GIVE MY TZEDAKAH, THEN I CAN HOPE THAT HASHEM WILL BE MERCIFUL AND GENEROUS EVEN TO SOMEONE AS UNDESERVING AS I AM. BUT IF I WILL BEGIN TO BE SCRUPULOUS AND EXACTING AND ONLY GIVE TZEDAKAH TO THOSE WHO ARE TRULY DESERVING, THEN WHAT RIGHT HAVE I TO ASK HASHEM FOR ANYTHING FOR MYSELF?"

THE MOTHER OF RABBI SIMCHA ZISSEL ZIV HAD A CUSTOM TO COLLECT MONEY FOR THE POOR AT FUNERALS. AT THE FUNERAL OF HER ONLY DAUGHTER, SHE ALSO COLLECTED TZEDAKAH. WHEN ASKED HOW SHE WAS ABLE TO COMPOSE HERSELF IN THE SUMMIT OF HER GRIEF, SHE REPLIED, "JUST BECAUSE I AM SUFFERING DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE POOR HAVE TO SUFFER ALSO." (TNUAT HAMUSSAR, VOL. 2, P. 28)

One cold winter day, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Miesel went to the home of a wealthy person to ask him to donate money to warm the home of a poor family. When the wealthy person saw Rabbi Miesel approaching, he ran outside

to greet him. Assuming that the Rabbi would immediately enter his house, he did not bother to put on his coat. Ray Eliyahu Chaim, however, began to talk with him at length, ignoring his repeated invitations to come inside. Finally, when the wealthy man was shivering from cold, Rabbi Miesel entered his house, and said, "I have to ask you for money to warm the home of a poor family. SINCE YOUR HOME IS ALWAYS WARM AND YOU OWN A HEAVY FUR COAT, YOU MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO SUFFER FROM THE COLD. NOW THAT YOU HAVE FELT HOW UNCOMFORTABLE IT IS FEELING COLD, YOU WILL GIVE GENEROUSLY" (Yechide Segulah p. 126)

Rabbi Aharon Kotler once gave alms twice to the same beggar, upon entering and leaving a synagogue. He was afraid that someone noticing him pass the second time without giving might assume that he had a reason not to give to this particular beggar. (Rabbi Shaul Kagan)

Once when Rabbi Israel Salanter was in the middle of the morning prayers, he heard a loud argument between the heads of two Chevra Kadishas (burial societies). A poor woman had died and each society claimed that it was the others obligation to bury her. In the middle of his prayers, Rav Israel removed his Tallit and Tefilin, gathered together a few of his students, and told them to join him in the burial of the woman. Since neither society wanted to perform the burial, it was a Met Mitzvah (when no one else is available to perform the burial) and everyone must drop whatever he is doing to do this final Chesed with the deceased. (Tnuas Hamussar, Vol. 1, p.375)

CHAPTER 12

EXCERPTS FROM AHAVAT CHESED
BY THE CHAFETZ CHAIM, RABBI ISRAEL MEIR KAGAN ZTKL

FOREWORD

TO THE SAME EXTENT, THEN, THAT MAN ACCUSTOMS HIMSELF TO PRACTICE THE VIRTUES OF GOODNESS AND KINDNESS THROUGHOUT ALL HIS LIFE, WILL HE ENJOY THE GOODNESS AND ABUNDANT CHESED OF THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT. WE HAVE FOUND THIS HOLY VIRTUE EVALUATED, IN MANY INSTANCES, IN THE KETHUVIM AND IN RABBINIC LITERATURE, AS BEING EQUIVALENT TO TORAH STUDY, BOTH IN RESPECT OF SAVING MAN FROM SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT, AND ALSO OF MAKING HIM WORTHY OF RECEIVING ALL THAT IS GOOD.

Chesed is effective in securing atonement for one's sins, as we find in Scripture (Proverbs 16.6): "By Chesed and truth iniquity is expiated". It is recounted in Avot de Rabbi Nathan: Once Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai was on his way out of Jerusalem. Rabbi Yehoshua followed him. Seeing the Beit ha Mikdash lying in ruins, Rabbi Yehoshua exclaimed: Woe to us, for the place where the transgressions of Israel could be expiated lies in ruins. He (Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai) replied: My son, do not grieve. We have another, equally effective form of atonement. What is it? - Acts of Chesed, since it is written: "For I desire Chesed and not sacrifice." (Hoshea 6:6)

Take notice of the power of this holy virtue. It is effective in prolonging human life, as we have found in the case of the sons of Eli. Against them, the decree was pronounced (1 Samuel 2.33): "And all the increase of your house will die young men." Now this decree was reinforced by a Divine oath and could therefore never be rescinded, as Our Sages have pointed out. Nevertheless, when the Holy One, blessed be He, issued this decree against them, He intimated to them that it could be circumvented by learning Torah and by doing Chesed, and so their lives would be prolonged. For Scripture relates (1 Samuel 3.14): "Therefore I have sworn concerning the house of Eli, that the iniquity of the house of Eli will never be expiated by sacrifice or meal offering." Abaye accordingly deduced that the oath could never be annulled through the medium of sacrificial or meal offerings: but that it could be obviated by Torah study and Gemilut Chesed. So the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18a) relates, and adds that both Abaye and Rava were descendants of the house of Eli. Rava devoted himself to Torah learning alone and lived to the age of forty. Abaye was occupied with Torah learning and Gemilut Chesed, and therefore lived till sixty. Gemilut Chesed

avails to save one from the sufferings of the pre-Messianic era, according to Our Sages (Sanhedrin 98b). Rabbi Eliezer's disciples inquired of him: What must a man do to be spared the birth pangs of the Messiah? He replied: Let him engage in Torah study and kindness. This merit will endure for a person through all succeeding generations, as Our Sages have declared (Yalkut Shimoni, Psalms 103.17): Chesed stands by man to the end of all generations as it is said: "And the kindness of G-d endures forever and ever for those that fear Him."

Whoever seeks to discover how highly this virtue is regarded by the Torah, will find it placed at the very summit of human affairs. So the Midrash has it (Ruth Rabba 5.4): Come and consider how great is the power of those who are charitable and perform deeds of Chesed, for they shelter neither in the shadow of the morning, nor in the shadow of the wings of the earth, nor in the shadow of the wings of the sun, nor in the shadow of the wings of the Chayot or the Cherubim nor in the shadow of eagle's wings; but under whose wings do they shelter? - Under the shadow of Him at Whose word the world was created, as it is said (Psalms 36.8): "How precious is Your Chesed, O G-d, and the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings." CONVERSELY, HOW DEFICIENT IS THE PERSON LACKING THE VIRTUES OF MERCY AND CHESED. HE REMOVES HIMSELF FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, THE SOURCE OF COMPASSION AND GRACE ...PEOPLE FAIL TO REALIZE THE INHERENT GREATNESS OF THIS VIRTUE, HOW MIGHTY IS THE POWER IT EXERTS ON ITS EXPONENTS, HOW MUCH GOOD IT BESTOWS ON THEM IN ALL THEIR AFFAIRS, BOTH IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE WORLD TO COME, AND IN SAVING THEM ON THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT.

INTRODUCTION

Rabbi Simlai explained (Sotah 14a): "The Torah begins with an act of kindness (Gemilut Chesed) and ends with an act of kindness. It begins with Kindness, as it is written (Bereshit 2.21): 'And Hashem, G-d, made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them.' It ends with Kindness, as it is written (Devarim 34.6): 'And he (Moshe) was buried in the valley in the land of Moab.' "Here Our Sages have made us aware of the great importance of Gemilut Chesed by showing that the Torah begins and ends with this topic.

NOW WE SHALL DEMONSTRATE FOR EVERYONE'S BENEFIT HOW THE TORAH IS REPLETE WITH ACTS OF CHESED. EVERY PERSON WILL THEN BE ABLE TO JUDGE FOR HIMSELF HOW IMPORTANT G-D, MAY HE BE BLESSED, CONSIDERS THIS MATTER. First of all, on the verse (Bereshit 2.22): "And the rib which Hashem, G-d, had taken from the man, made He a woman. And He brought her to the man," Our Sages have commented (Berachot 61a): "This teaches that G-d braided Eve's hair." G-d also acted as best man at their wedding (see Gemara there). In the Parasha, Noach, the Torah relates (Bereshit 9.21): "And he drank of the wine; and was drunk; and he uncovered within his tent ... and Ham saw ... And Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders ... and they covered the nakedness of their father." (They were not obliged to show this respect; this act is not one of the seven Mitzvot of Benei Noach. The sons acted out of Chesed.) The Torah further quotes the blessing, given by Noach to these sons, which was fulfilled later on. It is mentioned in order to show us the greatness of this virtue. MAN MUST DEAL BENEVOLENTLY WITH HIS FELLOWS AND EXERT HIMSELF TO THE UTMOST TO HIDE THE SHAME OF HIS FELLOWMEN, JUST AS HE WOULD IN PROTECTING HIS OWN HONOR.

Next, in Lech Lecha, the Torah tells of the war of the four kings, and how Abraham strove with all his might, even taking others (Aner, Eshkol and Mamre) with him - all in order to rescue Lot and his possessions from captivity. Now Lot was at fault, as Scripture indicates (Bereshit 13.12): "And Lot abode in the cities of the district and moved his tent as far as Sodom." (Here Rashi elucidates (Ibid. 15.141: "What made this happen to him? - His dwelling in Sodom.") Nevertheless, Abraham extended him the kindness of coming to his rescue. The entire Parasha of Vayerah is pervaded by the trait of Chesed; the very first verse dealing with visiting the sick, the next - the entertainment of guests, then the energetic exertions of our forefather Abraham, all of which were acts of Chesed (see Baba Metzia 306; Shabbat 127b). The Torah thereupon informs us of G-d's love for Abraham, seeing that "he would instruct his sons and his household after him to keep the ways of Hashem, to do Tzedakah and justice," and Chesed is included in the category of Tzedakah and even transcends it as Our Sages have pointed out. IN ABRAHAM'S PERSISTENT INTERCESSION WITH G-D, ON BEHALF OF THE MEN OF SODOM, TO BEAR THEIR INIQUITY AND NOT DESTROY THEM, WE SEE HOW ONE SHOULD STRIVE TO DO GOOD TO

OTHERS IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE, EVEN TO PRAY FOR THEIR DELIVERANCE, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE STRAYED FROM THE GOOD PATH. THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM ITSELF TEACHES THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS VIRTUE. THE ESSENTIAL WICKEDNESS OF THE INHABITANTS CONSISTED IN THEIR ARROGANT SELF-SUFFICIENCY, THEIR REFUSAL TO HELP THE POOR, AND THEIR DESIRE TO PREVENT ANY STRANGER FROM ENTERING THEIR TERRITORY. SO RABBI YONAH GERUNDI HAS EXPLAINED IN HIS YESOD HATESHUVAH. The Torah further relates how Lot exerted himself to the fullest extent to serve the angels, even though he was unaware of their identity. Next we read that (Ibid. 21.33): "Abraham planted a tamarisk" (see Rashi there).

Then the Parasha of Chayei Sarah is full of the virtue of Chesed, first of the Chesed in Abraham's exertions in arranging Sarah's burial and in delivering the eulogy over her. These two acts constitute Gemilut Chesed, as is evident from the Gemara. Next we read a detailed account of the meeting of Yitzchak and Rebecca, the essential feature being her kindness, as Scripture recounts (Bereshit 24.14): "Let the same be she that You have appointed for Your servant even for Yitzchak and thereby shall I know that You have shown kindness to my master." As Rashi has elaborated, "She is fit for him since she is charitable, and she will be worthy to enter the house of Abraham." Further on (Ibid. 25.9): "And Yitzchak and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah." After Abraham's death (Ibid. v. 11) "G-d blessed Yitzchak his son," which indicates, according to Our Sages, that G-d duly comforted Yitzchak in his mourning. Then, in Vayetze (Bereshit 28.20,22), "Yaakov vowed a vow saying . . . 'And of all that You shall give me, I will surely give a tenth to You.' " Doubtless the tithe was set aside for charitable purposes. Again in Vayishlach (Ibid. 35.8,9), G-d appeared to Yaakov when he returned to Padan Aram to pronounce the blessing of the mourner; after the death and burial of Deborah, Rebecca's nurse (see Rashi). We are told later (Bereshit 35.19) of the burial of Rachel and of the setting of a tombstone on her grave; next of the burial of Yitzchak (Ibid. v. 29). In Vayeshev (Ibid. 37.35): "All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him." Reuben and Yehudah strove to save Yosef from death and subsequently Yaakov commended Yehudah for this act (Ibid. 49.6): "Yehudah, you, shall your brothers praise." (Rashi has also pointed out that Tamar was willing to allow herself to be burnt rather than expose the guilty party and put Yehudah to shame (Bereshit 38.25). This is the kindness which man extends to his fellow.) Later we find (Ibid. 40.14): "Have me in your remembrance when it shall be well with you, and show me kindness . . ." ALL THESE TYPES OF CONDUCT CONSTITUTE GEMILUT CHESED, TO KEEP THE OTHER PERSON IN MIND FOR THE PURPOSE OF DOING GOOD TO HIM, AND PRAISE HIM TO THOSE HAVING THE POWER TO HELP HIM, AS WE SHALL WITH G-D'S HELP, EXPLAIN IN THE ENSUING CHAPTERS.

Now "Yosef commanded ... to give them food for the way" (Ibid. 42.25), since this is the proper treatment to accord to departing guests (Sanhedrin 103b). Yosef's dealings with the inhabitants of Egypt (Ibid. 47.13 ff.), his endeavors to preserve their lives and his exertions to sustain them, fall in the category of Chesed, the worthy relationship of man to his neighbors. What forced Yosef to attempt to acquire the population (as Pharaoh's slaves), if not these considerations? Various sections of Vayechi, too, speak of Chesed: the death and burial of Yaakov, the weeping over him, the eulogy, the carrying of his bier, and his funeral, all of which are acts of Chesed, as has been explained. So too, it is written (Ibid. 47.29): "And deal with me in Chesed and in truth," as Rashi has explained. The first chapter of Shemot (Shemot 1: 17) relates: "But the midwives feared G-d ... and saved the male children alive." See what Chesed was performed here! The midwives could have discharged their moral duty both to G-d and to Pharaoh by resigning from their positions. They were concerned, however, that their replacements might, out of fear, carry out Pharaoh's designs. Hence they acted charitably towards the daughters of Israel and endangered their own lives for the sake of those women. Furthermore they would provide food and water for the poor women in confinement (see Rashi).

MOSHE (IBID. 2.11) "WENT OUT TO HIS BROTHERS AND LOOKED ON THEIR BURDENS." HE TOOK THEIR DISTRESS TO HEART, SHARED IN IT, AND WAS ANXIOUS FOR THEM (RASHI IBID.). THIS IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VIRTUE OF CHESED WHICH OBLIGES ONE TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE SUFFERINGS OF OTHERS, TO SEE WHETHER IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HELP THEM TO SOME EXTENT. "He (Moshe) smote the Egyptian" to save the life of the victim (v. 12). Subsequently (v. 17) "Moshe stood up and helped the daughters of Yitro," and they related (v. 19): "Moreover he drew water for us and watered the flock." Later, "the

officers of the children of Israel were beaten" (Ibid. 5.14). What Chesed lies here! The officers did not want to drive their workers unmercifully and so took the beatings themselves (see Rashi). Moshe took the remains of Yosef with him (Ibid. 14.19), and thus G-d repaid Yosef for the kindness he had extended in burying his father Yaakov (Sotah 9b).

COMMENTING ON THE VERSE (IBID. 15.2): "THIS IS MY G-D AND I WILL GLORIFY HIM," ABBA SHAUL HAS DECLARED (SHABBAT 133b), "IMITATE HASHEM. AS HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SO BE YOU GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL." (VEANVEHU IS HERE EXPOUNDED AS ANI VEHU, "I AND HE.") MOSHE WENT OUT TO MEET HIS FATHER-IN-LAW, YITRO (IBID. 18.7). HERE, AND IN THE FOLLOWING VERSES, THE DUTY OF WELCOMING GUESTS, WHICH IS CHESED, IS EXEMPLIFIED. IN THE VERSE (IBID. 20): "AND YOU SHALL SHOW THEM THE WAY WHEREIN THEY SHALL WALK," THE "WAY" IS TAKEN BY OUR SAGES TO INDICATE GEMILUT CHESED.

The Ten Commandments announce (Ibid. 20.6) that G-d shows Chesed to thousands of generations, and it is necessary for us to follow the example of His virtues. The Parasha of Mishpatim (Ibid. 22.24) mentions the duty of "lending money to My people" and the regulations governing the restoration of a pledge (Ibid. v. 11) which also stem from the virtue of benevolence, as is explained in Devarim (24.13). Many topics are discussed in the Parasha of Behar (Lev. Chap. 25), all of them aspects of Chesed, such as: redeeming relatives from slavery and "Your brother shall live with you."

I THEREUPON CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS NO END, INDEED, TO THE CHESED MENTIONED IN THE TORAH. SO MANY POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MITZVOT EMANATE FROM HIS VIRTUE OF CHESED, MAY HE BE BLESSED.

There are leket, shichah, peah (leaving the gleanings, forgotten sheaves and the corners of the harvested field for the poor); the tithe of the poor and shemittah, which is not only "a sabbatical year to G-d," but also has this aspect (Shemot 23.11): "But the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat with you." Then there is the commandment to return lost property - the Torah admonishes us to guard the possessions of a fellow Jew. Even if the article in question is only worth a perutah, one must take the trouble to restore it to its rightful owner. Helping to load and unload (Shemot 23.5) and many other such Mitzvot are all included in this category and all emanate from G-d's goodness and kindness. He has, therefore, also commanded us to come to the aid of our fellow man in every way possible. Hence I have refrained from enumerating all the other instances.

FROM WHAT HAS BEEN CITED ABOVE, THE INTELLIGENT READER WILL BE ABLE TO APPRECIATE THAT THE HOLY VIRTUE OF CHESED IS OF SUCH SUPREME IMPORTANCE THAT THE ENTIRE TORAH IS PERVADED BY IT. HOW TENACIOUSLY SHOULD ONE CLING TO THIS HOLY TRAIT AND NOT WEAKEN HIS HOLD OF IT ALL THE DAYS OF HIS LIFE EN EARTH! IN THIS CONNECTION, THE TORAH STATES (DEVARIM 19.9): "TO WALK IN HIS WAYS ALL THE DAYS" - MEANING THAT ONE SHOULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITH THE OCCASIONAL PERFORMANCE OF AN ACT OF CHESED ONCE A MONTH OR ONCE A WEEK, AS WE SHALL EXPLAIN (PART II, CHAP. 12). It is also necessary to be familiar with the laws governing the exercise of this virtue - all the details pertaining to the matters we have mentioned in the beginning of this introduction.

SECTION II CHAPTER 2 - 3

Now everyone can understand how far his love for the virtue of Chesed should extend. Consequently when he becomes suffused with the love for this virtue, he will react, each time G-d provides him with the opportunity to perform a deed of kindness, as if he had suddenly found a valuable article. He will perform the deed to perfection. No one borrowing from him would suffer embarrassment. And so G-d will bless him. Moreover, when a person feels a love for this Mitzvah, he will stimulate others to engage in it as well.

Of course, every person would like G-d to treat him with the Midot of kindness and compassion. Yet these divine attributes themselves are so exercised that they accord with the principles of justice. In so far as man's conduct in this world exemplifies these characteristics, so does he attract the corresponding attributes towards himself from

the Heavenly sources. If, in his dealings with others, he is accustomed to act according to these Midot, he calls forth the Divine attributes of mercy, and then G-d has compassion on the world for his sake. Of necessity, man's soul is fed by the fruits of his conduct. Hence he deserves that G-d extend the same consideration to him when he stands in need of compassion. As our Sages have declared (Shabbat 151b): 'Everyone who has compassion on his fellow creatures is himself granted compassion by Heaven.'

IF DURING HIS LIFETIME A PERSON WAS IN THE HABIT OF NOT FOREGOING ANYTHING OF HIS OWN FOR ANOTHER, OF NOT HAVING PITY ON OTHERS, HE REINFORCES THE ATTRIBUTE OF HEAVENLY JUSTICE. SO AFTERWARDS, WHEN HE IS IN NEED OF SUCH BENEFITS, HE IS PAID BACK WITH HIS OWN ATTITUDE. G-D DEALS WITH HIM WITH THAT ATTRIBUTE. THIS IS THE IDEA EXPRESSED IN YESHAYAHU (3.10): "SAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS THAT IT WILL BE WELL WITH HIM; FOR THEY SHALL EAT THE FRUIT OF THEIR DOINGS. WOE TO THE WICKED! IT SHALL BE ILL WITH HIM, FOR THE WORK OF HIS HANDS SHALL BE DONE TO HIM."

The Tzedakah and Chesed which one dispenses in this world cause one's repentance to be accepted in Heaven, even if it is inadequate from the point of view of pure justice. By his good deeds, while still alive, the person has drawn the Divine attributes of Chesed and Rachamim (compassion) towards himself. And so the very attribute of justice itself will be inclined to treat him with Chesed - to give him full credit in the end for his repentance and all his Mitzvot.

Now we can appreciate why, throughout the Torah, G-d, may He be blessed, pressed man to embody this trait, for as is well known from Scripture (Micah 7.18), "G-d desires loving-kindness." Hashem's desire is that his people be vindicated in their trials in the time to come and not, G-d forbid, be declared guilty. Therefore, many times over in the Torah, He commanded them to follow in all His ways, the paths of goodness and kindness, so that He will be able, in the end, to conduct himself towards them in accordance with this Midah.

SECTION II CHAPTER 4

MAN ENJOYS THE FRUIT OF THIS MITZVAH IN THIS WORLD; WHILE THE STOCK IS STORED UP FOR THE WORLD TO COME. THE MERIT STANDS BY HIM TO RESCUE HIM FROM ALL TROUBLE

Come! See for yourself how great this Mitzvah is. It is one of those Mitzvot, the fruit of which, man consumes in this world, while the stock remains in the world to come, as is asserted in the Mishnah (Peah 1.1). Our Sages (Yerushalmi *ibid.*) add that Chesed stands by man until the end of all generations, as Scripture (Psalms 103.17) states: "And the Chesed of G-d endures for ever and ever for those that fear Him." The effect of Tzedakah on the other hand lasts only for three generations, as we find (*ibid.*), "And His Tzedakah for the sons of sons." Now, acts of loving-kindness are designated as the "Chesed of G-d" because, through them, we cause G-d to exercise this Divine attribute, as we have previously asserted in Chapter 3. Its merit also stands by man in his hour of need and rescues him from his troubles, as we find in Avodah Zara (17b): "Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi Eleazar ben Perata and Rabbi Chanina ben Teradion were arrested, Rabbi Eleazar said to Rabbi Chanina: Happy are you! You have been arrested on one charge. Woe is me! I have been arrested on five charges. Rabbi Chanina replied: Happy are you! You have been arrested on five charges, but you will go free. Woe is me! Though I have been arrested on one charge, I shall not go free. You occupied yourself with the study of Torah as well as with acts of Chesed, whereas I occupied myself with Torah study alone. This accords with the view of Rabbi Chuna. For Rabbi Chuna said: "He who only occupies himself with Torah study is as if he had no G-d, for it is said (2 Chr. 15.3): 'Now for long seasons Israel was without the true G-d.' What is meant by 'without the true G-d'? - It means that he who only occupies himself with the study of Torah is as if he had no G-d to protect him." (See Rashi *ibid.*) Take note of what the Gemara (*ibid.*) states. Rabbi Chanina as well occupied himself with acts of kindness. He was a Tzedakah treasurer. Yet he did not do as much as he should.

The content of this passage can be further elucidated by an excerpt from the Midrash (Ruth Rabba Chap. 5): "Come and consider how great is the power of those who perform acts of Tzedakah, how great is the power of those who do kindly deeds (Chesed), for they shelter neither in the shadow of the morning, nor in the shadow of the wings of the earth, nor in the shadow of the sun, nor in the shadow of the wings of the Chayot or the cherubim or the seraphim, but under whose wings do they shelter? - Under the shadow of Him at Whose word the world was

created, as it is said (Psalms 36.8): 'How precious is Your loving kindness, O G-d! And the children of man take refuge under the shadow of Your wings.' " This is what the passage intends to convey: When the Heavenly tribunal conducts a trial, there are many angels of mercy among the Sanhedrin (in fact, they form a majority and stand at the right side of the Divine throne to seek merit for the person judged - they are called *nedivim* according to the *Shaare Orah*). Nevertheless, they, too, act in accord with justice. When the Holy One Blessed be He, sits in judgment by Himself, however, then pure mercy holds sway. Hence Scripture asserts (Psalms 118.8): "It is better to trust in G-d than to trust in *nedivim*." G-d, however, conducts the trial on His own only when the person judged has acted with kindness, and has thereby opened up the Heavenly sources of *Chesed* for himself. Only then does he merit having the Holy One, blessed be He, as his sole Judge. This is what the Midrash (*Ruth Rabba* 5.4) meant to say: "Come and consider how great is the power of the charitable, how great is the power of those who do kindly deeds ... as it is said (Psalms 36.8): 'How precious is Your loving kindness, O G-d...' —How precious, indeed, it is when the children of men awaken Your *Chesed* and so become worthy of the protection of "the shadow of Your wings" and not the wings of others.

The same idea is expressed in the Psalms (17.2): "Let my judgment come forth from Your presence; Let Your eyes behold the right," i.e. from Your presence alone, and not with the participation of the Heavenly court. So too it is written (2 Chr. 18.18): "I saw G-d sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and on His left" - on the right to acquit and on the left to convict, as Our Sages have explained. The distinction referred to above is brought out by the conclusion of the verse: "Let Your eyes behold the right" - meaning that when G-d himself will focus his mercies upon the just and the perverse, He will seek some merit, perhaps some fortuitous circumstance that provoked the evil deed. Not so when the whole Heavenly court sits in judgment. Certainly the person brought to trial cannot hope to gain acquittal in such a case. Now we can understand the passage in question.

IF MAN OCCUPIES HIMSELF WITH THE STUDY OF TORAH AND ACTS OF KINDNESS AND SO AWAKENS THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTE OF MERCY, THEN WHEN HE IS, G-D FORBID, IN TROUBLE, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, HIMSELF, WILL HEAR HIS CASE AND EXTEND HIS CHESED TO HIM. SO THE PERSON WILL SURELY BE SAVED. IT IS OTHERWISE WHEN A PERSON HAS BEEN EXCLUSIVELY PREOCCUPIED WITH TORAH STUDY, AND DID NOT DEVOTE HIMSELF SUFFICIENTLY TO ACTS OF CHESED. THEN THE HEAVENLY CHESED IS CORRESPONDINGLY NOT AROUSED ON HIS BEHALF. SO IF HE AFTERWARDS SUFFERS DISTRESS, G-D FORBID, AND HE IS, AT THE SAME TIME, ARRAIGNED IN HEAVEN, THEN HE WILL NOT SUCCEED IN ENTIRELY PREVENTING THE FORCES OF JUSTICE EXERCISING POWER OVER HIM.

This is the meaning of Our Sages's assertion: "He who only occupies himself with Torah study and not with kindness is as if he has no G-d." (*Avodah Zara* 17b). He is like one who has no G-d to shield him by His Divine mercies and *Chesed* from the forces of justice, because he had cast those holy virtues behind him...

From all that has been said, one should appreciate the greatness of the virtue of *Chesed*; one should cling to it, as so be rescued from distress both in this world and the next.

SECTION II CHAPTER 5

THIS MITZVAH EXCEEDS IN IMPORTANCE THE SACRIFICIAL SERVICE, AS IS BORNE OUT BY THE YALKUT'S (HOSHEA 522) COMMENT ON THE VERSE (HOSHEA 6.6): " 'FOR I DESIRE KINDNESS AND NOT SACRIFICE' - THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, DECLARED: "THE KINDNESSES YOU EXTEND TO EACH OTHER ARE MORE PRECIOUS TO ME THAN ALL THE SACRIFICES OFFERED BY KING SHLOMO' " ["A THOUSAND BURNT OFFERINGS DID SHLOMO BRING" (1 KINGS 3.41)].

THE LESSON HAS BEEN EVEN MORE EMPHATICALLY EXPRESSED IN THE YERUSHALMI (PEAH 1.1): "TZEDAKAH, AND ACTS OF CHESED ARE EQUAL IN IMPORTANCE TO ALL THE REST OF THE MITZVOT OF THE TORAH."

SECTION II CHAPTER 6

WE SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER: HOW CAN ONE LIFT UP HIS FACE TO THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED BE HE, AND ASK, "GRANT PEACE, WELFARE, BLESSING, GRACE, LOVING KINDNESS AND MERCY TO US . . ." IF HE HAS NO DESIRE TO DEAL WITH HIS NEIGHBOR IN COMPASSION OR KINDNESS?. G-D WOULD HARDLY ACCEPT HIS MANY REQUESTS IF HE HIMSELF DOES NOT PRACTICE CHESED. This is especially true of the many petitions for daily sustenance which one constantly addresses to Hashem, may He be blessed, where one is entirely dependent on the Chesed of the Holy One, blessed be He, as we recite in our daily prayers: "Who sustains life in kindness." When a person has habitually practiced the virtue of kindness, however, his petitions will surely be accepted by G-d, may He be blessed, and his requests will be granted. So Our Sages have asserted (Midrash Shocher Tov Chap. 65): "As for Ben Azzai and Rabbi Akiva, one of them declared: Whoever bestows loving kindness will receive the good tidings that his Tefillah has been accepted, as it is said (Hoshea 10.12): 'Sow to yourselves according to Tzedakah, reap according to Chesed.' What is written next?-'It is time to seek Hashem-' He prays to Hashem and is answered: He receives the glad tidings that his request has been fulfilled. And Chanina said: I do not dispute the statement of my Master, but come to add to it: 'As for me in the abundance of Your Chesed will I come into Your house' (Psalms 5.8). Immediately afterwards it says (Psalms 69.14): 'You answer me with Your salvation.'"

SECTION II CHAPTER 7**THE GREAT HARM RESULTING FROM WITHHOLDING TZEDAKAH AND CHESED**

In the previous chapters we have explained the greatness of this holy virtue. Now we shall expose the evil nature of the person who avoids it, who shuts his eyes to it.

FOR WITHHOLDING TZEDAKAH AND KINDNESS HE WILL BE AMONG THOSE CONDEMNED TO GEHINOM. SO THE GEMARA (BETZAH 32B) BEARS OUT: "RAV SAID: THE RICH OF BABYLON WILL GO DOWN TO GEHINOM." THEIR SIN, AS RELATED THERE, WAS THAT THEY REFUSED TO PERFORM ACTS OF TZEDAKAH AND KINDNESS.

Consider how great was the shame of the individual who was suspected by Our Sages (Betzah 32b) of being descended from the "mixed multitude" (EREV RAV) (Shemot 12.38). "Shabtai ben Marinus came to Babylon, and entreated them to provide him with a loan for trading. (He would share the profits equally with them.) They refused this to him; neither did they give him any food. He said: These are the descendants of the mixed multitude, for it is written (Devarim 13.18): 'And He will show mercy and have compassion upon you.' Whoever is merciful to his fellow men is certainly of the children of our father, Abraham, and whoever is not merciful to his fellow men is certainly not of the children of our father Abraham" (ibid.). And Our Sages have further declared (Yevamot 79a): "This nation is distinguished by three characteristics: They are shy, compassionate, and benevolent (Gomlei Chasadim)." Whoever does not have these three characteristics is not worthy to become part of this nation.

CONSIDER HOW FAR OUR SAGES HAVE GONE IN DESCRIBING THE WICKEDNESS OF A PERSON WHO REFRAINS FROM PERFORMING ACTS OF CHESED, IN SAYING (KOELET RABBA 7.1): "IF ONE REPUDIATES HIS OBLIGATION TO DO CHESED, IT IS AS THOUGH HE REPUDIATES THE CARDINAL DOCTRINE (OF G-D'S EXISTENCE)." By this remark they intend to convey that Hashem, may He be blessed, is the source of all goodness and kindness. His purpose in all that He created was to give His creatures the opportunity to earn merit, enabling Him to repay them, ultimately, with goodness and kindness. To this end the Torah was revealed and its Mitzvot ordained. As Scripture states (Devarim 6.24): "And G-d commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Hashem, our G-d, for our good always . . ." Hence if one refuses to accept this view of the virtue of Chesed and asks, "What do I need it for?" his rejection is tantamount to denying the fundamental principle (of G-d's existence), Heaven forbid. Hence one should completely avoid such thoughts. He should take care to cling to the ways of G-d, may He be blessed, which are permeated with goodness and kindness, in order to receive goodness in this world and in the next.

Tanna debei Eliyahu Zuta (Chap. 4) declares: "If you have given Tzedakah, you will acquire possessions. If you have acquired possessions, give them as Tzedakah while they are still in your hands. Buy this world with them, and

you shall inherit the world to come. For if you do not use them for Tzedakah, they will soon depart, as it is said (Proverbs 23.5): "Shall your eye make it fly away and be gone?"

SECTION II CHAPTER 9
THE REFUTATION OF THE RATIONALIZATIONS OF IGNORANCE AND OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR
EXEMPTION

IGNORANCE. Some people are negligent in Gemilut Chesed because of sheer ignorance. They are unaware of the important and obligatory nature of the Mitzvah and do not realize the reward it carries. They consider it to be a good trait and commendable conduct, but fail to realize that it is as much a positive command of the Torah as Sukkah, Lulav and Tefillin. SEE, MY FRIEND, HOW WE ARE REMISS IN THIS MITZVAH. HOW MUCH EFFORT DOES EVERY JEW EXERT IN BUILDING A SUKKAH, IN PURCHASING A LULAV AND THE LIKE! HE IS ANXIOUS TO FULFILL ALL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW. HE DOES NOT AFTERWARDS REGRET, G-D FORBID, HIS EXERTIONS IN CARRYING OUT G-D'S COMMAND. ON THE CONTRARY, HE REJOICES THAT G-D GAVE HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXERT HIMSELF TO PERFORM THESE MITZVOT, AND THAT HE WAS ABLE TO FULFILL THEM...ON THE OTHER HAND, HOW GRUDGINGLY DO WE LOOK DOWN ON GEMILUT CHESED! EVEN A SMALL INCONVENIENCE IS SUFFICIENT FOR US TO AVOID ITS PERFORMANCE. AND WHEN WE DO ACT, IT IS WITH RELUCTANCE AND SADNESS, WITHOUT A TRACE OF PLEASURE.

I shall describe a single case, and an intelligent person can apply it to similar situations. Suppose one person meets another in the street, and says to him: "Brother, would you lend me a few dollars for a short time?" Even if the latter considers the person seeking the loan reliable, he will find a thousand reasons for turning down the request. Sometimes he will answer that it is too much effort for him to go home to get the money; the borrower should have come at another time, and to him at home. Or else he might tell him that he only has a ten dollar bill with him and is unwilling to break it, or else he might suggest that he go and borrow from somebody else or any of many similar excuses. If the poor man pleads with him, and he finally goes home or changes the bill and lends the borrower the money, he does so reluctantly and sadly, without a trace of joy. His facial expression is soured by the trouble to which he was put.

Now, consider, my friend! Suppose a man whom you held to be reliable met you in the street and said: "Quickly, brother, go to your home. I have a good business proposition to tell you about. The down payment is small ... but you'll profit well. After the transaction is completed, you may give me a modest sum for my recommendation." Would you tell such a person: "I'm too tired to go back home or [to obtain a certified check]. Go to that other person. He will take up the deal." No, you would rush home immediately and find ways and means to secure the investment for yourself. And once you saw that the venture was brought to a successful conclusion, how warmly would you praise the person for giving you the good advice!

SO INDEED IS OUR CASE. WHEN SOMEONE APPROACHES YOU FOR A FREE LOAN, THE TRANSACTION IS A MINOR ONE AS FAR AS THE RECIPIENT, THE BORROWER HIMSELF, IS CONCERNED. HE WILL GAIN A FEW PIECES OF SILVER THROUGH IT. YOU, THE LENDER, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE BESTOWER OF KINDNESS, HAVE BEEN APPROACHED TO ENGAGE IN A MAJOR UNDERTAKING INVOLVING A POSITIVE COMMANDMENT OF THE TORAH, THE REWARD FOR WHICH IS ETERNAL. YOU SHOULD HAVE REJOICED. YOU SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED THIS PERSON IN A HAPPY FRAME OF MIND. AND IF G-D, MAY HE BE BLESSED, HAS HELPED YOU SO THAT YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO ACT BENEVOLENTLY, YOU SHOULD HAVE RUSHED TO PERFORM THIS MITZVAH, as Scripture puts it (Proverbs 21.21): "Whoever pursues Tzedakah and Chesed shall find life, Tzedakah and honor." (Our Sages have pointed out that the receiver benefits the giver more than the giver benefits the receiver.) Only because of our many sins is the evil inclination able to minimize the importance of this Mitzvah in our eyes, to have us regard it as merely a commendable habit. The recommended remedy for correcting such an attitude is to study the relevant passages in the Codes clarifying the subject. One should also meditate on the Aggadot of our Sages which set forth its significance and the details of its reward for us. In this way, the Yetzer hara will be overcome.

THE ILLUSION THAT ONE IS EXEMPT

OTHERS CONSIDER THEMSELVES EXEMPT. THEY ARGUE WITH THEIR CONSCIENCE: "AM I THE ONLY ONE IN THE WHOLE CITY? LET HIM GO TO THOSE OTHERS. THEY ARE RICHER THAN I" THIS ARGUMENT IS FALLACIOUS. FIRST, WHO KNOWS WHETHER THEY WILL BE WILLING TO HELP? RADBAZ HAS RECORDED IN HIS RESPONSA THAT, IF A PERSON HAS RICH RELATIVES WHO ARE UNWILLING TO HELP HIM, THE REST OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY ARE OBLIGED TO. IF HIS RELATIVES DEVIATE FROM G-D'S LAWS, IS HE THEREFORE TO DIE OF HUNGER? FURTHERMORE, SINCE THE PERSON ORIGINALLY APPROACHED HAS THE MEANS, HE IS NOT ABSOLVED FROM THE POSITIVE COMMANDMENT JUST BECAUSE THERE HAPPEN TO BE RICHER MEN THAN HE IN THE CITY. WHAT WE HAVE WRITTEN BEFORE ALSO PROVIDES A LOGICAL REFUTATION OF THIS ARGUMENT.

SECTION II CHAPTER 10
THE EVIL TRAIT OF BEING PARSIMONIOUS

SOME PEOPLE AVOID THIS MITZVAH OUT OF MISERLINESS (THEY BEGRUDGE OTHERS THE USE OF THEIR MONEY). THIS IS A VERY UGLY TRAIT. IT LEADS ONE TO REFRAIN FROM GIVING TZEDAKAH AND PERFORMING ACTS OF CHESED. IT CAUSES ONE TO REPRESS ALL FEELINGS OF PITY AND COMPASSION, TO STOP UP ONE'S EARS AND TO BE DEAF TO THE CRY OF THE POOR. SOMETIMES SUCH CONDUCT CAN EVEN LEAD TO BLOODSHED.

So we find (Sotah 38b): "Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: The heifer whose neck has to be broken is only brought on account of niggardliness of spirit, as it is said (Devarim 21.7): 'Our hands have not shed this blood.' Now can it enter our minds that the elders of a Court of Justice are shedders of blood! The meaning is that the man found dead did not come to us for help and we dismissed him; we did not see him and let him go, i.e. he did not come to us for help and we dismissed him without supplying him with food; we did not see him and let him go without support i.e. he needed food and could not obtain any. Seeing someone carrying food, he was driven by his hunger to snatch it from him. Thereupon, the other retaliated and killed him. [Rashi]." So we see that if a person approached his neighbor for some help and, because of this wicked trait of parsimony, the latter paid no attention to him, and the needy one died as a result, the Torah proclaims the refuser a shedder of blood...

For a person not to have compassion and pity for the poverty and distress of another is in itself a culpable offense. See what is explicitly related (2 Sam. Chap. 12) concerning Nathan the prophet who came to King David and told him of the poor man who owned only a single lamb. Because of his abject poverty, he raised it, fed it from his own loaf, let it drink from his own cup. Then came a wealthy man and stole it from him and slaughtered it. In passing sentence on the robber, David cried out: "As G-d lives, the man that has done this deserves to die ... because he had no pity. A further examination of this passage reveals that the main reason for the offender being sentenced to death was his lack of pity for the poor (he had already been fined four sheep for the robbery and slaughter). (Note: How deeply and constantly should we meditate on this passage. To withhold pity is a very frequent occurrence, because of our many sins, and is involved in thousands of actions and with far reaching consequences.)

OCCASIONALLY, IT HAPPENS THAT THE MISER NOT ONLY REPRESSES HIS OWN FEELINGS OF PITY AND COMPASSION, BUT ALSO INFLUENCES HIS ASSOCIATES TO WITHHOLD HELP FROM THE LESS FORTUNATE. HE DOES NOT WANT TO APPEAR THE WICKED ONE. SO HE REVILES ANY ONE WHO DOES DIFFERENTLY. HE BECOMES THE EMBODIMENT OF THE DESCRIPTION (AVOT 5.13): "HE WHO WILL NOT GIVE AND DOES NOT WISH OTHERS TO GIVE IS A WICKED MAN..."

Therefore a man should keep away from miserliness. He should always train himself to be goodhearted and to help others. He should not impair his sense of pity. Then others will have compassion on him too, as it is written (Psalms 125.4): "Do good O G-d to the good . . ." He should always realize that the money given to him by G-d, may He be blessed. was not given to him for his own use alone, but to dispense Tzedakah and to engage in Gemilut Chesed. Then it will be well with him in this world and the next.

SECTION II CHAPTER 17
THE IMPORTANCE OF TZEDAKAH

It is related in the Avot de Rabbi Nathan (Chap. 3): "There was once a Chassid who habitually gave Tzedakah. One time he set out in a boat; a wind rose and sank his boat in the sea. Rabbi Akiva witnessed this and came before the court to testify so that his wife might remarry. Before he could take the stand, the man came back and stood before him. Are you the one who went down in the sea? Rabbi Akiva said to him. Yes, he replied. And who raised you out of the sea? -The Tzedakah that I practiced, he answered, it raised me out of the sea. How do you know this?- Rabbi Akiva inquired. He said to him: When I sank to the depths I heard the sound of a great noise of the waves of the sea, one wave saying to the other, and the other to another: Hurry, Let us raise this man out of the sea for he practiced Tzedakah all his days. Then Rabbi Akiva spoke up and declared: Blessed be G-d, the G-d of Israel. Who has chosen the words of the Torah and the words of the sages, for the words of the Torah and the words of the sages are established forever and to all eternity. For it is said (Kohelet 11.1): 'Cast your bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days' and (Proverbs 10.2) 'Tzedakah rescues from death.'"

FOR THE MERIT OF TZEDAKAH, BLESSING ENTERS A MAN'S HOME, AS IT IS SAID (DEVARIM 15.10): "YOU SHALL SURELY GIVE HIM, AND YOUR HEART SHALL NOT BE GRIEVED WHEN YOU GIVE TO HIM, BECAUSE FOR THIS THING HASHEM YOUR G-D WILL BLESS YOU IN ALL YOUR WORK." THEREFORE EVERY PERSON SHOULD STRIVE CONSTANTLY TO PERFORM THIS MITZVAH AND THEREBY CAUSE BLESSING TO ENTER HIS HOME. THIS BLESSING IS IN ADDITION TO THE EVERLASTING REWARD THAT IS STORED AWAY FOR HIM.

SECTION III CHAPTER 7

THIS WORK OF OURS SETS FORTH IN DETAIL THE WAYS IN WHICH CHESED IS TO BE PERFORMED. THE SAME TOPIC IS COVERED BY THE SCRIPTURAL PASSAGE (PSALMS 41.2): "FORTUNATE IS HE THAT CONSIDERS THE POOR" (DAL) CONSEQUENTLY I HAVE DECIDED TO EXPOUND THIS PASSAGE TO THE BEST OF THE ABILITY G-D HAS GRANTED ME.

The Psalm begins, "Happy is he that considers the poor [DAL]; Hashem will deliver him in the day of evil." Now "wisely considering the poor" has many aspects, and the term poor has many ramifications, one of which is poor in money. If a person is financially poor, he often lacks all basic necessities: food, clothing, housing. So one has to consider the poor in all these three matters - that he should not lack food, as Scripture puts it (Yeshayahu 58.10): "And you draw out your soul to the hungry"; that he be given clothes (Ibid.7): "When you see the naked, that You cover him"; that a house be rented for him (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, Laws of Tzedakah). If he is a wayfarer, lodging must be found for him, since Scripture ordains (Job. 31.32): "The stranger must not lodge in the street." The Gemara adds (Shabbat 118a): "If he stays overnight, he is given the means of lodging ... a bed and pillow." These are the three basic necessities that have to be provided for the financially poor.

The keenest intelligence must be used in extending help to the poor person so that he will enjoy the maximum benefit and have to expend the least effort. Suppose, for instance, one lends or donates money to the poor. He should give it when the money can be used to the greatest advantage, when prices are lowest.

A gift to a poor person should be given in a manner that allows the recipient to enjoy without delay. For instance, when one gives clothes, the garment should be ready to wear. When food is given, it should be prepared, and the donor should take the trouble of bringing it to the recipient's home. Our conclusions are derived from (Sukkah 49b): "The reward for Tzedakah is commensurate with the Chesed in it, for it is said (Hoshea 9.12): 'Sow for yourselves according to Tzedakah but reap according to Chesed.'" Rashi elucidates: "The gift is the Tzedakah: the effort in making the gift is the Chesed. The donor put his mind to benefit the poor, so that the money should not go to waste. He gives when grain is abundant: he takes the trouble to go to the poor man's home to give him food, ready to eat, and clothes, ready to wear." If a person is wise enough to give so that the recipient is unaware of his identity, as in the case of Mar Ukva, then happy is his lot. At the very least, one should guard the privacy of such giving, so as not to put the recipient to shame.

GIVING INTELLIGENTLY INVOLVES, ABOVE ALL, OBSERVING HOW BEST TO BENEFIT THE RECIPIENT, GIVING SO AS TO EXTRICATE HIM FROM HIS POVERTY BY GRANTING A GIFT OR LOAN, OR BY FINDING HIM EMPLOYMENT, OR ANY OTHER MEANS THAT WILL MAKE HIM SELF-SUPPORTING. THE DONOR

FULFILLS THIS MITZVAH OF (LEV. 25.35): "AND HIS MEANS FAIL WITH YOU, THEN YOU SHALL UPHOLD HIM." It is similarly stated in the Sefer Chassidim "There is a form of giving which does not appear to be Tzedakah. Yet it has always appeared eminently so in the eyes of G-d. Suppose a poor man was selling some product or book which no one wanted to buy, and this person bought it from him. Or else the poor may have looked for a job; no one wanted to hire him -- but this man gave him employment. There is no higher form of Tzedakah." I have known rich and respected people of this type. They have undertaken certain business activities for the specific purpose of providing employment for poor Jews to earn a living. All this, and the like, is Tzedakah, if not higher. Happy, is their lot. We have dealt with that Mitzvah of "and you shall uphold him" at length, above (Chap. 21, Cf. *ibid.*).

We have also encountered the term, DAL -- poor, referring to the physically weak, the sick. So Scripture describes him (2 Sam. 13.4): "Why, O son of the king, are you becoming more ill (dal) every day?" To deal intelligently, with the sick requires, as Our Sages have shown, to visit him, to observe whether it is possible in any way to hasten his recovery. We have previously explained what has to be done (Chaps 3 and 4 - Cf. *ibid.*). This consideration must also be extended to the person who suffers persecution. One must try to devise some plan to extricate him from this distress...

Others have no practical sense. They ruin their businesses. Sometimes such a person is exposed to public ridicule for his folly. Here, too, it is a Mitzvah to open his eyes - to teach him, so that he should avoid ruining himself or suffering humiliation in the future. Suppose your son had gone to another city. How much would you desire that some upright and good individual provide your son with the knowledge and understanding to conduct his affairs! So you should act towards your neighbor. All this behavior is included in "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." So the Rambam has laid down in his Code (Hilchot Deot, Chap. 10, Par. 3) in elucidating this Mitzvah. One should take as much care of another's money as of his own. And he should desire his friend to be respected as much as he desires to be respected himself.

THERE IS YET ANOTHER, EXTREMELY IMPORTANT CASE IN WHICH CONSIDERATION IS TO BE SHOWN TO THE POOR. THIS OCCURS WHERE THE PERSON DOES NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO PROVIDE HIS CHILDREN WITH A TORAH EDUCATION AND HE IS UNABLE TO TEACH THEM BY HIMSELF. HIS CHILDREN DEGENERATE. THEY REMAIN UTTERLY IGNORANT. SOME EVEN STRAY TO EVIL WAYS. HENCE IT IS A GREAT MITZVAH TO ACT WISELY TOWARDS THEM, TO PROVIDE THEM WITH SCHOOLING. It happens that such children often succeed in their Torah study, for the sake of their downtrodden fathers, as Our Sages have warned (Nedarim 81a): "Pay heed to the children of the poor, for from them shall Torah go forth." The merit of a person occupied in this way is very great, as the Gemara (Baba Metzia 85a) points out: "If a person teaches Torah to the son of the ignorant then, even though the Holy One, blessed be He, has issued an evil decree, He rescinds it on that person's account."

There are many similar instances where one must be mindful of the condition of the poor. I have, however, decided to be brief, since the intelligent person can apply what has been said here to the other instances. For the merit of such acts, Hashem, may He be blessed, will deliver this person in the day of evil, as Scripture has promised...

SECTION III CHAPTER 8
CHESED BY WORD OF MOUTH: THE MITZVAH
OF SAVING ONE FROM DISTRESS

Our Sages have pointed out that Chesed can be done both with one's person and with his money. The Chesed performed with one's person can be divided into three types: deeds, words, thoughts. So far, in the previous chapters, we have dealt mainly with such Chesed as is performed in deed or thought, that is, to help one's fellow man by some effort or through some consideration - to devise a method or discover some advice to improve his condition that he should not, G-d forbid, collapse. All this is included in the Scriptural admonition: "Happy is he that considers the poor."

Now we shall consider the Chesed which man performs with his speech. A person may indeed incorporate this attribute in his words. First, in respect to Torah, the teaching of others is also a Chesed. What he studies for himself is not Chesed. As the Talmud declares (Sukkah 49b): "What does the expression mean (Proverbs 31.26): 'She opens her mouth with wisdom and the Torah of Chesed is on her tongue - Is there a Torah of Chesed and a Torah

not of Chesed? The Torah that is studied in order to teach is a Torah of Chesed; the Torah that is not studied in order to teach is not a Torah of Chesed." Next, suppose someone is angry at a person's friend. The person intercedes and so stills the man's anger. He is performing an act of Chesed. It is written of Yosef (Bereshit 40.14): "But have me in your remembrance when it shall be well with you and show kindness, I pray you, to me and make mention of me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this house." Furthermore, if one is able, by word of mouth, to prevent harm befalling another, this also constitutes Chesed. An instance of this would be if, by chance, someone happened to meet a group of suspected robbers. He believed that they intended to rob someone since he overheard them discussing this person's wealth. It is his moral duty to misrepresent to say that the intended victim is poor, even though he knows, in his heart, that this is not true. All this is included in Chesed. So we find Abraham telling Sarah (Bereshit 20.13): "This is the kindness (Chesed) which you shall show to me: at every place ... say of me: 'He is my brother.'" It would be even better if the person could forewarn the intended victim to guard himself against their nefarious designs. He is certainly obliged to do so, according to the law of the Torah (end of the Choshen Mishpat).

Again, if a person can convince someone to do a favor to a fellow man, this too falls in the category of Chesed. The person will receive the blessing of Hashem, as we find in the Tosefta (Peah Chap. 3) that even if one only as much as told others to give, reward is bestowed on him. So Scripture indicates (Devarim 15. 10): "For because of this speech (read *davar* here as *dibhur*), Hashem your G-d will bless you . . ."

THIRDLY, ONE CAN PROFFER GOOD ADVICE TO A PERSON IN THE CONDUCT OF HIS AFFAIRS AS IS RECORDED IN THE CHOSHEN MISHPAT (CHAP. 97 - CF. IBID.), AND THIS APPLIES TO RICH AS WELL AS TO POOR PEOPLE. FOURTHLY, IF ONE FINDS A FRIEND DEPRESSED BY HIS POVERTY OR SOME OTHER TROUBLE, AND ONE IS, G-D FORBID, UNABLE TO HELP HIM, IT IS STILL A MITZVAH TO SPEAK SYMPATHETICALLY TO HIM TO ALLAY HIS ANXIETIES. ALL THESE ACTS FALL IN THE CATEGORY OF CHESED. RABBI YONAH GERUNDI HAS RECORDED IN HIS IGGERET HATESHUVAH THAT EVEN IF ONE IS POOR AND CANNOT AFFORD TO ENGAGE IN THE CONCRETE ASPECTS OF GEMILUT CHESED, NEVERTHELESS HE CAN PRACTICE THIS VIRTUE WITHOUT MONEY, OR COST. THIS IS HOW SUCH CHESED IS TO BE DONE: ONE SHOULD SPEAK SYMPATHETICALLY, TO THE POOR AND GIVE SATISFACTION TO THE NEEDY BY HIS WORDS, COMFORT THEM IN THE DIFFICULTIES OF THEIR WORK AND TOIL, AND SHOW THEM RESPECT.

Our Sages (Baba Batra 9a) have said that whoever gives a coin to the poor earns six blessings, while one who reassures with his speech earns eleven, as it says (Yeshayahu 58.10): "And if you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in darkness and your gloom be as noonday. Hashem will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought." Here the virtue is practiced by speaking soothing words, by showing good will sincerely and graciously. Do you not see the explicit assertion that the reward for this act is very much greater than for giving Tzedakah, and the blessings are more numerous and significant? How great is this Mitzvah! On its account, one is given life in the world to come, as we find (Taanit) in the incident involving Rabbi Berokah. Rabbi Yonah has also added that a person should submit suggestions to the community for improving the Tzedakah and Chesed activities. One receives special reward for initiating communal Tzedakah endeavors, in recompense for the souls he preserved. He himself will be the proof of the reward given for the Tzedakah he did. So Scripture states (Yeshayahu 32.8): "But the generous devises generous things." And Our Sages have declared (Baba Batra 10a): "Greater is he who causes others to act, than he who acts alone." This is the real Ahavat Chesed.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER TYPES OF CHESED PERFORMED BY WORD OF MOUTH, FOR INSTANCE TO PRAY THAT G-D HEAL THE SICK. THIS IS INCLUDED IN VISITING THE SICK (BIKKUR CHOLIM), WHICH IS ALSO A GEMILUT CHESED. SO WE FIND IN THE GEMARA AND IN THE YOREH DEAH (CHAP. 335). WE HAVE ALREADY QUOTED THE PARAGRAPH (SEE CHAPTER 3 ABOVE). THE SAME APPLIES TO THE HARM THAT THREATENS A PERSON EVEN WITHOUT HIS KNOWING ABOUT IT. WE FOUND THAT ABRAHAM INTERCEDED ON BEHALF OF THE MEN OF SODOM IN SUCH AN INSTANCE. HE PLEADED THAT THEY BE SPARED. HOW MUCH MORE DOES THIS APPLY WHEN A FELLOW JEW IS INVOLVED!

The Mitzvah of Chesed is involved in all the good that there is in the world. Every person can exercise this virtue in his affairs, and sometimes even by mere, simple acts, where the recipient benefits while the donor loses nothing. Yet people make light of this, because of our many sins. So I believe that the Midrash quoted by the Sefer, Lev David, would be appropriate to our discussion. "Eliyahu, of blessed memory, was walking with Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. As they walked along, Eliyahu pointed to a large square where a crowd of people had congregated at one of the stores and were bargaining. They were jostling and pushing one another. Eliyahu and Rabbi Yehoshua approached the store and discovered, in all the pushing, that the store was selling putrid dog's meat at a dinar per litra. Yet the customers kept pushing, each trying to get ahead of the other. The two proceeded on their way and came to another square. It was empty. A single store was selling prime veal at a perutah per litra. Yet there were no customers. Rabbi Yehoshua was astounded. 'Don't be surprised at tastes,' Eliyahu told him. 'The store selling putrid meat is illustrative of the masses who expend their might and squander their money to pursue sin, which is like a decomposing dog. On the other hand. Torah and Mitzvot may be compared to prime meat, and are cheap to come by. Yet there are no customers.' "

SO I SAY HERE. SOMETIMES IT IS EASY FOR A PERSON TO LAVISH THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON WORTHLESS THINGS WHICH THE EVIL INCLINATION HOISTS ON HIM AS, FOR INSTANCE, TO REVEL IN AND GLOAT OVER SOME VICTORY OR TO ACHIEVE HONOR. PEOPLE EVEN EXPEND ENORMOUS EFFORT ON SOMETHING THAT BRINGS THEM NO BENEFIT WHATEVER, NEITHER IN THIS NOR IN THE NEXT WORLD. SUCH ACTIVITIES ARE NO BETTER THAN DOG'S CARCASSES. AS FOR CHESED, HERE THE GOOD INCLINATION ACTS AS BROKER, ANNOUNCING THAT ITS MERCHANDISE IS LEGITIMATE AND THAT G-D HIMSELF TRADES IN IT (AS IT IS WRITTEN [MICAH 7.18]: "FOR HE DELIGHTS IN CHESED"). IT BRINGS HAPPINESS TO MAN IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT. IT IS CHEAPLY BOUGHT, AND REQUIRES NO EFFORT. YET, ON ACCOUNT OF OUR MANY SINS, NO ONE GIVES THIS LUCRATIVE BUSINESS THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES. THE REASON FOR ITS NEGLECT IS THAT THE YETZER HARA DOES NOT LET GO OF MAN. IT DOES NOT LET HIM SEE THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF THE MITZVAH OF CHESED.

EPILOGUE

...Now I know that many people think that, in this day and age, the practice of Tzedakah and Chesed has become sufficiently, widespread, and nothing more need be said about it. To such an argument I would reply: Tzedakah, as is well known, is measured relative to the giver and the receiver -- as far as the recipient is concerned, according to his needs, since the Torah has ordained: "You shall surely open your hand to him and surely lend him sufficient for his need." IN EARLIER TIMES THE NEEDS OF THE POOR COULD EASILY BE SATISFIED BY SOME SMALL GIFT. TODAY CLOTHING, SHOES AND HOUSING AND THE OTHER DAILY, BASIC NECESSITIES ARE MUCH MORE EXPENSIVE. ONE SHOULD LOOK AT HIS OWN SELF, HIS OWN EXPENDITURES, AND HE WILL SEE THAT, TODAY, THE COSTS OF ALMOST EVERYTHING HAVE DOUBLED AND QUADRUPLED. HENCE THE OBLIGATION TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF THE POOR ALSO REQUIRES MUCH LARGER SUMS. The same applies to the Chesed we have been commanded to do in making loans to the poor as the Torah ordains: "If you will lend money to My people, to the poor with you." It is also written, "And if your brother grows poor and his means fail with you, then you shall uphold him. This matter is included as well, as has been explained above (Chap. 1). SO TOO IN EARLIER TIMES A PERSON NEEDED LITTLE FOR HIS SUSTENANCE AND A SMALL LOAN WAS SUFFICIENT FOR HIM TO ENGAGE IN TRADE, TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY. THE LENDER WAS THEREBY ABLE TO FULFILL THE INJUNCTION OF THE TORAH TO UPHOLD THE POOR. THIS IS NOT SO TODAY, WHEN THE NEEDS ARE MUCH GREATER. THE MARGIN OF PROFIT IN EVERY BUSINESS TRANSACTION IS SMALLER NOW, ALSO. HENCE EVERY MAN NEEDS MUCH MORE TO MAKE A LIVING.

Giving is also relative to the donor, since the obligation to give Tzedakah depends on each person's circumstances. The obligation of the well-to-do is much greater than that of the poor (the latter too must contribute to Tzedakah - see Gittin 7a). The obligation of the rich is greater than that of the well-to-do. As for the extremely wealthy person, his obligation is all the greater than that of the others. Now, two people may perform exactly the same act. The one is praiseworthy and receives reward. The other is condemned to lose his money. The reason is that, for the latter,

the gift was trivial in comparison with the blessing G-d, may He be blessed, had bestowed on him. A case in point is the incident involving Nakdimon ben Gurion (Ketubbot 67b). He was indeed a very prominent person. He was one of the three for the sake of whom the world enjoyed sunshine, as is related in the Gemara (Taanit 20a). He dispensed Tzedakah and Chesed to all Israel (see Ketubbot, Taanit ibid). Nevertheless, because he had not contributed in accordance with his means, he was condemned to lose his fortune.

Obviously we cannot evaluate today's obligations with the criteria of former times. Formerly, less wealth had been accumulated in the world. Today there are indeed enormously wealthy people, and many more affluent individuals than ever before. (Everyone can appraise the true state of affairs in his own city. One who was affluent by former standards is considered relatively poor today. Whoever was once considered wealthy is not even regarded as well-to-do today. By comparison with former times, there are also more poor people today and the obligation of the rich to help, in the time of need, is therefore increased. So how can we regard the obligations to have remained the same as they were before?)

In former times people lived on very low standards. They only spent money for basic necessities. In times of emergency, it was sufficient to fulfill one's Tzedakah obligations with the modest sum of money one held ready for Tzedakah and Chesed. Circumstances have changed. PEOPLE SPEND MUCH OF THEIR MONEY ON LUXURIES AND PLEASURES, ON EXPENSIVE CLOTHES AND HOMES, ON DOMESTIC HELP AND THE LIKE. THE MEASURE OF MAN'S TZEDAKAH AND CHESED, WHICH INVOLVES HIS VERY LIFE AND SOUL, HIS DELIVERANCE IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT, SHOULD NOT BE LESS THAN FOR ONE OF THESE LUXURIES. Our remarks are indicated in the assertion of Our Sages: "G-d will in the future reprove each person in relation to what he is." Now, when we ask someone how he deals with his household expenses, behaving like a rich man, spending more than his means allow, he answers readily that he finds it impossible to reduce these expenditures by any amount. He trusts that G-d will, on that account, help him. Yet when a Tzedakah case is brought to his notice, he hardens his heart and closes his fist, giving the impression that he is poor and impoverished. He does not even contribute in accordance with his means. On this matter, Scripture has remarked (Proverbs 13.7): "There is one that pretends himself rich (in his own affairs), yet has nothing. There is one that pretends himself poor (in giving Tzedakah and doing Chesed), yet has great wealth."

AS IS KNOWN, TZEDAKAH AND CHESED OVERCOME THE ATTRIBUTE OF STRICT JUSTICE. ON THE VERSE (DEVARIM 13.18): "AND HE WILL GIVE YOU MERCY AND HAVE COMPASSION ON YOU," OUR SAGES HAVE COMMENTED (SHABBAT 151B): "WHOSOEVER HAS MERCY ON HUMAN BEINGS WILL BE GRANTED MERCY FROM HEAVEN." IN THESE TIMES WE SEE WITH OUR OWN EYES HOW THE ATTRIBUTE OF STRICT JUSTICE GROWS STRONGER IN THE WORLD FROM DAY TO DAY. ALL KINDS OF MALADIES AND UNNATURAL DEATHS ABOUND. THERE IS A LACK OF DIVINE INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD, SO THAT EACH DAY IS MORE CURSED THAN THE DAYS, BEFORE. HOW MUCH MUST WE INCREASE THE PREVALENCE OF TZEDAKAH AND CHESED. PERHAPS IN THIS WAY, WE SHALL SUCCEED IN AVERTING THE SEVERITY OF THE JUDGMENT AND THE WORLD WILL BECOME FILLED WITH MERCY.

And included among the poor people of your city, are the poor people of Eretz Israel who really are the poor of our city, the city of our strength, therefore it is the custom of all exiles to give to the emissaries from Eretz Israel, Fortunate are you Israel. Rabbi Eliezer Papo ZTK'L, Sefer Pele Yoetz Tzedakah

CHAPTER 13

**SELECTIONS DEALING WITH TZEDAKAH
FROM THE BEN ISH CHAI**

We think that the money we have given away to the poor is lost, and the money we hoard is ours. But the opposite is true. The reward of the money that we give will stay with us in the world to come. Thus our verse (Shemot 22: 24) says: "If you lend money to My people, to the needy one, [it will be] with you...."only the money that you lend to My people and that you give to the needy is "with you" to stay. Od Yosef Hai, Derushim Mishpatim

A PERSON WHO HAD EVERYTHING AND THEN LOST IT ALL, SUFFERS A THOUSAND TIMES MORE THAN ONE WHO WAS BORN POOR Ben Yehoyada on Sota 5a

When a person needs other people, it is as if he is judged with two judgments: Fire and Water (Berachot 6b) It happens that a poor person approaches a rich man for help, and the rich man does not help. The rich man may get angry at the request and heap abuse upon the poor man until he leaves in shame. This poor man has been judged with the fire of anger. Or the rich man may not reply at all. He leaves the poor man standing there begging, until his blood becomes chilled and turns to water. This poor man has been judged with water. (Ben Yehoyada)

IN THIS WORLD WE ARE SO BUSY EARNING MONEY THAT WE FORGET THE WORLD TO COME. G-D THEREFORE COMMANDED US MANY TIMES IN SCRIPTURE TO GIVE TZEDAKAH IN ORDER TO REMIND US OF THE ETERNAL WORLD. CONSTANTLY GIVING TZEDAKAH PROTECTS OUR SOULS FROM BEING DAMAGED BY OUR MONEY. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH PROTECTS US IN THIS WORLD and the next as it is written: "The work of Tzedakah shall be peace, and the effect of Tzedakah quietness and confidence forever" (Yeshayahu. 32- 17-18). Ben Ish Chayil 3, Teshuvah 4

**THESE VERSES SPEAK AGAINST THOSE
WHO DO NOT GIVE TZEDAKAH**

The vile person shall no longer be called generous, nor the churl called a philanthropist. For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity to practice flattery, and to utter wickedness against Hashem, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to be lacking. The vessels of the churl are bad. He gives wicked advice to destroy the poor with lying words and the impoverished with talking justice. But the generous advises generous things, and by generous things he shall stand. Rise up, you tranquil women, and hear my voice; you confident girls, hearken to my speech. [Yeshayahu 32]

"The vile person shall no longer be called generous, nor the churl called a philanthropist." (Yeshayahu 32:5) This verse speaks against those who do not give Tzedakah. Why is a vile person called generous? Sometimes, when rebuke has no effect on him, people may entice him to give by calling him "generous." There is then a chance that he will give in order to protect his "reputation."

BUT THE PROPHET OBJECTS TO THIS PLOY. "FOR THE VILE PERSON WILL SPEAK DECEIT, AND HIS HEART WILL WORK INIQUITY." IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIS REPUTATION, HE WILL NEVER SAY, "I DON'T WANT TO GIVE." INSTEAD, HE WILL CAST ASPERSIONS ON THE PAUPER. "IF IT WERE ANYONE ELSE, OF COURSE I WOULD BE THE FIRST TO GIVE. BUT SO-AND-SO WHY, HE DOESN'T DESERVE A PENNY. HE'S A VILLAIN, A FRAUD. Another way a miser protects his supposed reputation for philanthropy is "to practice flattery." When the community leaders gather to levy a large sum of money for some Mitzvah, the miser says, "My brothers, you can levy as much as you want on me, and I will gladly give it. But please do not burden the people with such a heavy load in these hard times."

Naturally, the people are happy to get out of the levy, and since the amount is actually too great to request of a few, even if they are rich, the Mitzvah does not get done at all. Or else only a small levy is placed, and the miser himself is not asked for much. After all, since he saved them from the levy with his flattery, how can they ask him for a lot?

In addition, to support his flattery he “uttered wickedness against Hashem,” by complaining about the hard times. Thus, not only did he himself fail to give, he also prevented others from giving, thereby “making empty the soul of the hungry and causing the drink of the thirsty to be lacking.” Furthermore, if people call the miser a “philanthropist,” he will only use this praise against them. When they ask to borrow his things, he will reply, “I’m sorry, all my vessels are broken from being lent out so often.” “He gives wicked advice, to destroy the poor with lying words.” To protect his reputation, he casts aspersion on the poor. When they object that he is lying, he immediately “talks justice to the impoverished” — he takes them to the community leaders to be punished for insulting him.

Who should be called “generous” and “philanthropist”? Only he who “advises generous things, and by generous things he shall stand.” The prophet now addresses those who do not give Tzedakah and rebukes them. He calls them women: “Rise up, you tranquil women, and hear my voice; you confident girls. hearken to my speech.” (Yeshayahu 32:9) The male represents the giver; the female, the receiver. Like a woman-girl who is supported by her husband/father without supporting him or others in return, so are the misers supported by G-d without supporting the poor in turn. The prophet distinguishes between people who never give Tzedakah at all, whom he calls single “girls,” and those who give rarely, whom he calls married “women.” In the old days, even if a girl earned some money, it was nothing compared to what her father had to pay for her wedding. She only received from her father, and never gave to him. Married women, however, sometimes earn money. Then they give to their husbands, and do not only take.

To the “women,” who are not so cruel and who do occasionally give Tzedakah, the prophet calls: “Rise, you tranquil women, and hear my voice.” You do not feel the pain of the poor because you are tranquil; your needs have been met. A person who has a full stomach does not understand the suffering of the hungry person. You come to the synagogue where I speak of giving Tzedakah; you hear my voice and are moved momentarily by my words. The problem is that when you rise to leave the synagogue, you forget it all. Therefore I ask you to “rise.. and hear my voice” — Even when you rise to leave the synagogue, continue to hear my voice.

“YOU CONFIDENT GIRLS, HEARKEN TO MY SPEECH.” YOU, WHO NEVER GIVE TO THE POOR, ACT THIS WAY BECAUSE YOU ARE TOO CONFIDENT. YOU PLACE YOUR TRUST IN YOUR MONEY, AND DO NOT FEAR THE FINAL DAY OF JUDGMENT. I ASK THAT YOU, WHO NEVER LISTEN TO REBUKE, HEARKEN NOW TO MY SPEECH. Ben Ish Chayyil 3, Teshuvah 4

WITH THE PRIDE OF THE WICKED, THE POOR IS PURSUED. THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE SCHEMES THEY HAVE PLOTTED. (PSALMS 10:2) THE MISHNAH STATES THAT “HE WHO WISHES.. . THAT HE SHOULD NOT GIVE AND THAT OTHERS SHOULD NOT GIVE IS WICKED” (AVOT 5:13). WE CAN UNDERSTAND THAT A PERSON IS A MISER AND DOES NOT WISH TO GIVE, BUT WHY SHOULD IT BOTHER HIM IF OTHERS GIVE? THE ANSWER IS THAT THE MISER DOES NOT ADMIT THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO GIVE. HE THEREFORE INVENTS AN EXCUSE. “OF COURSE I WOULD GIVE,” HE SAYS, “BUT THAT PERSON IS NOT POOR; HE IS JUST PRETENDING.” OF SUCH DOINGS, KING DAVID SAYS, “WITH THE PRIDE OF THE WICKED, THE POOR IS PURSUED.” ULTIMATELY, THE WICKED GET THEIR JUST DESERTS. “THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE SCHEMES THEY HAVE PLOTTED” — THEY WILL BECOME IMPOVERISHED, AND OTHERS WILL THINK THEY ARE RICH AND WILL NOT HELP THEM. Hayyim VeHaShalom

“He who is kind to the poor lends to Hashem, and He will repay his good deed”. (Proverbs 19:17) When you give Tzedakah, it is as if you are lending to G-d. What are the implications of this statement? Interest on a low-risk loan is generally much lower than on a high-risk one. And since a loan to G-d is the safest of all, it should pay the lowest interest. Yet the opposite is true. The interest G-d pays in this world is many times the principal, and the reward in the world to come is infinite. If a king were to announce publicly, “I borrowed from Shimon and I am indebted to him,” how honored Shimon would feel. The King of kings owns the whole world, His is the silver and His the gold, and all wealth comes from him, as it is written, “For everything is from You, and from Your hand we have given You” (I Chronicles 29:14). Nevertheless, He had it proclaimed through Divine Inspiration that “He who is kind to the poor lends to Hashem.” What an honor to the donor! WHEN A PERSON MAKES A RECKONING OF HOW MUCH G-D HAS DONE FOR HIM AND HOW LITTLE HE HAS DONE FOR G-D, HE CAN TAKE SOME COMFORT IN SEEING THAT HE HAS GIVEN TZEDAKAH. Ben Ish Hayyil 4, HaGadol 4

The Arizal taught that giving Tzedakah completes G-d's Name. The Tetragrammaton consists of four letters: yud-hey-vav and the final hey. The yud, which is small, symbolizes the coin. The numerical value of hey is five, corresponding to the five fingers of the hand. The first hey indicates the hand of the giver; the final hey, that of the recipient. These two letters/hands are linked by a vav, which is shaped like an arm, linking giver with recipient. Thus the effect of Tzedakah — the coin passing from one hand to another — is the completion of the Tetragrammaton, as it is written, Vehayah ma'aseh haTzedakah shalom, "The work of Tzedakah shall be completion" (Yeshayahu 32:17)

Hashem is righteous; He loves Tzedakah. The upright (yashar) shall behold His face. (Psalms 11:7) Yashar also means "straight," hence "in order." THE ARIZAL TAUGHT THAT THE BEST WAY TO GIVE TZEDAKAH IS TO GIVE BEFORE ONE IS ASKED. IN THIS CASE, THE ACT OF TZEDAKAH PRODUCES THE DIVINE NAME IN THE CORRECT ORDER. IF THE POOR PERSON EXTENDS HIS HAND FIRST, HOWEVER, THE TWO LAST LETTERS PRECEDE THE FIRST LETTERS, yielding the word Vehayah, as in Vehayah ma'aseh haTzedakah shalom, "The work of Tzedakah shall be completion." Although the Name of G-d will be out of order, it will nevertheless be complete and will still yield blessing for the donors. Hashem is righteous, and He loves for people to give Tzedakah. Most of all he loves the type of Tzedakah wherein the letters of His name are in order, that is, when the rich extends his hand to give before the poor extends his hand to take. Yashar also means "honest." When does G-d love Tzedakah? When it comes from honestly earned money; for "I, Hashem...hate robbery, [even] in an offering" (Yeshayahu 61:8). Hayyim VeHaShalom

One thing have I asked of Hashem, that (OTAH) will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Hashem and to visit early in His Sanctuary. (Psalms 27:4) By supporting the poor, we honor G-d and cause the attribute of strict justice to be tempered. We add the letter HEY to the word TZEDEK, "justice," and make it TZEDAKAH, so that mercy is brought into the world. King David said, "One thing have I asked of Hashem, that OTAH (THE LETTER HEY) will I seek after. The word OTAH, "that," can be broken into two words: OT HEY "the letter hey." King David was saying: What I seek is the letter hey. I wish to add it to TZEDEK and turn the word into TZEDAKAH, so that strict justice will turn into Tzedakah. Ben Ish Hayyim 4, Kallah 4

They came, every man whose heart raised him up...and brought Hashem's offering. (Shemot 35:21) WHEN A PERSON THINKS OF CONTRIBUTING TO A WORTHY CAUSE, THE EVIL INCLINATION MOUNTS AN ATTACK. IT REMINDS HIM OF EVERY BUSINESS LOSS HE HAS SUFFERED AND THE RISKS INVOLVED IN HIS PRESENT VENTURES. THE MEDICAL AND DENTAL BILLS; THE HIGH COSTS OF FOOD, SHELTER, EDUCATION AND CLOTHING, NOT TO MENTION MARRYING OFF HIS CHILDREN. By the time the evil inclination has finished painting him a bleak financial picture, even if he gives something, he will probably do so sadly. Sadness is a trait that G-d despises. The Torah admonishes: "Because you have not served Hashem your G-d with joy.(Devarim 28:27). Our mission is to raise ourselves up from sadness, which is tied to the lowly physical world, and soar toward the joy of the heavenly spheres, for "Strength and joy are in His place" (I Chronicles 16:27). The verse speaks of "every man whose heart raised him up" — above the sadness of the physical world toward the joy of the spiritual worlds. These people "brought Hashem's offering" — a perfect offering, brought with wholehearted joy. Aderet Eliyahu, Vayakhel

EVERYONE WHO CONSIDERED AN OFFERING OF SILVER AND BRASS BROUGHT HASHEM'S OFFERING. (SHEMOT 35:24) IF A RICH PERSON CONSIDERS HIS OFFERING OF A THOUSAND SILVER PIECES NO GREATER THAN THE POOR MAN'S OFFERING OF A FEW BRASS PENNIES BECAUSE EACH GAVE AS MUCH AS HE COULD, THEN THE RICH MAN BROUGHT "HASHEM'S OFFERING" — AN OFFERING THAT IS TRULY FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN. The Ben Ish Chai, Aderet Eliyahu, Vayakhel

"In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both alike shall be good". (Proverbs 11:6) SHOULD TZEDAKAH BE GIVEN IN SECRET OR IN PUBLIC? EACH ONE HAS AN ADVANTAGE AND A DISADVANTAGE. THE

ADVANTAGE OF GIVING IN SECRET IS THAT THE GIVER DOES NOT BECOME PROUD, WHICH IS WHY “HE WHO GIVES TZEDAKAH IN SECRET IS GREATER THAN MOSHE” (BAVA BATRA 9B). THE ADVANTAGE OF GIVING IN PUBLIC IS THAT IT AROUSES OTHERS TO FOLLOW SUIT, AND “GREATER IS HE WHO CAUSES OTHERS TO GIVE THAN HE WHO GIVES HIMSELF” (BABA BATRA 9A). THE EVIL INCLINATION EXPLOITS THESE POINTS TO ITS OWN ENDS. WHEN A PAUPER APPROACHES NACHMAN IN THE PRIVACY OF HIS HOME, THE EVIL INCLINATION ADVISES, “WHY GIVE SECRETLY? WAIT TILL TOMORROW AND GIVE IN PUBLIC, SO THAT ALL WILL SEE AND LEARN FROM YOUR EXAMPLE. IN THIS WAY YOU WILL BE ACCRUING MERIT FOR YOUR PEOPLE.” THE NEXT DAY, AS NACHMAN WALKS THROUGH THE MARKETPLACE, THE PAUPER AGAIN APPROACHES HIM. NACHMAN REACHES FOR HIS WALLET. “JUST A MINUTE!” CALLS THE EVIL INCLINATION. “IF YOU GIVE IN PUBLIC, YOU WILL BECOME PROUD, AND THE PUNISHMENT WILL EXCEED THE REWARD. WAIT FOR HIM TO COME TO YOUR HOME; THEN YOU CAN GIVE HIM IN SECRET”. The verse therefore teaches: “In the morning sow your seed” — if the pauper approaches you in the daytime, in public, give. “And in the evening” — if he approaches you in the evening, in the privacy of your home — “withhold not your hand. For you know not which shall prosper, whether this or that” — you know not which point you must rectify, that of giving modestly in secret, or that of encouraging others to give. “Or whether both alike shall good” — perhaps you need to rectify both. Give therefore, in public and also in private. Divrei Hayyim

HOW CAN A RICH MAN POSSIBLY APPRECIATE THE SUFFERING OF THE HUNGRY WHO ASKS HIM FOR FOOD? HASHEM COMMANDED THAT RICH AND POOR ALIKE FAST ON YOM KIPPUR. AT THE END OF THE FAST, WHEN THE RICH MAN GOES HOME HUNGRY, THIRSTY AND WEAK, HE KNOWS WHAT IT MEANS TO SUFFER HUNGER. SIMILARLY, IF A RICH MAN HAS FELT FINANCIAL PRESSURE, HE CAN APPRECIATE THE SUFFERING OF THE POOR WHO ASKS FOR MONEY. Ben Ish Hai, Derushim Behar

YOU CAN ARGUE: “THERE ARE MEN FAR RICHER THAN ME WHO DO NOT GIVE. LET THEM GIVE FIRST” OR “MY HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES ARE SO LARGE THAT I AM EXEMPT FROM HELPING OTHERS” THESE ARE THE ARGUMENTS OF THE EVIL INCLINATION. IF YOU HAVE A REASON NOT TO GIVE AND YOU STILL GIVE, THEN YOUR MITZVAH IS EVEN GREATER. DURING THE FESTIVAL SEASONS IN PARTICULAR, THE POOR LOSE MANY DAYS OF WORK JUST WHEN EXTENSIVE PURCHASES NEED TO BE MADE FOR THE HOLIDAYS. AT THIS TIME, EVERY PENNY YOU GIVE IS WORTH A HUNDRED. DON’T WAIT UNTIL THE POOR COME AND ASK. The verse says, “When you see the naked, that you cover him” immediately, before he asks. “And you hide not from your own flesh” — do not deny the lesson of your own flesh, namely, that G-d gives you life each second even without you asking. “Then shall your light break forth like the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily” — just as you hurried to give to the poor, so will G-d hurry to give to you.” Whenever a person does a Mitzvah, a good angel is created. Our verse speaks of the angel created from the Mitzvah of Tzedakah. “And your Tzedakah shall go before you” — the angel called Tzedakah will go before you to beseech G-d on your behalf even before you yourself ask. Ben Ish Hayyil 4, Teshuvah 2

GREAT IS TZEDAKAH, FOR IT HASTENS THE REDEMPTION. (BABA BATRA 10A) IN ADDITION TO HASTENING THE REDEMPTION, TZEDAKAH SAVES FROM SUFFERING AND FROM EXILE, AND NULLIFIES EVIL DECREES. HOW DOES TZEDAKAH ACCOMPLISH ALL THIS? PUT ANOTHER WAY, HOW CAN GIVING A BIT OF THE MATERIAL ACTUALLY SAVE LIVES? The act of giving Tzedakah demonstrates the unity of the Jews. I give to a stranger because he is part of me. Spending on him is like spending on myself. Then, the suffering of another is my suffering as well. Between his suffering and mine, I will have paid for any personal sins and so I will not need any further corrective punishment. The evil decree against me can be rescinded. Taking this idea further, if the suffering of each exiled Jew is felt by the entire community, the amount of collective suffering soars astronomically. This amount should be enough to fill whatever quota of pain G-d deems necessary to correct the sin for which we are in exile. Hence giving Tzedakah hastens the redemption. Ben Ish Hayyil 4, Teshuvah 4

CHAPTER 14

OTHER HALACHOT OF CHESED

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Chapter 179
Mitzvot Concerning Loans

1. Lending money to the poor among the Jewish people fulfills a positive mitzvah...The mitzvah of lending money to a poor person is greater than the mitzvah of giving Tzedakah to the poor. In the latter instance, the person has already been forced to ask for alms, while a person who asks for a loan has not sunk that low. The Torah has spoken sharply concerning a person who refrains from lending to a poor person, saying [Deuteronomy 15:9], "When you look wickedly at your poor brother ' A person who lends money to a poor person in need is assured by [Yeshayahu 58:9]: "When you will call, Hashem will answer."
2. It is also a mitzvah to lend money to a rich person who is forced to borrow, and to give him the benefit of good advice.
3. It is forbidden to give a loan, even to a Torah scholar, without the transaction being observed by witnesses, unless collateral is given as security. Preferably, one should draw up a contract of loan.
4. It is forbidden to pressure a borrower for payment when one knows that he does not have the means. It is even forbidden to pass in front of him, for it will embarrass him to see the person to whom he lent money when he has no means to repay. Regarding this, [Exodus 22:24] warns: "Do not appear to him as a debt collector."
5. Just as it is forbidden for a lender to pressure the borrower for repayment, it is also forbidden for the borrower to maintain possession of money that is rightly due his colleague, telling him, "Go and come back [later]," although he has the means to repay him, as [Proverbs 3:28] states: "Do not tell your colleague, 'Go and return..."

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Chapter 193
Visiting the Sick

1. When a person falls ill, it is a mitzvah for all others to visit him. Indeed, we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick. Thus on [Genesis 18:1]: "And God appeared to him in Elonei Mamre," [Sotah 14a] comments, "He came to visit the sick."
Close relatives and friends who frequently enter one's home should visit a sick person as soon as they become aware of his condition. People who are more distant, and therefore do not usually visit a person at home, should not visit him immediately, so that his fortunes will not be harmed by having him considered to be a sick person. Therefore, they should not visit him until three days have passed. If, however, a person suddenly falls seriously ill, even people who are distant may visit him immediately.
[In the face of illness, the formalities associated with personal honor are relaxed.] A person of greater stature may visit a person of lesser stature and, indeed, may do so several times. The more one visits a sick person, the more praiseworthy he is, as long as he does not become a burden to the person he is visiting.
A person should not visit his enemy when he becomes sick, or comfort him when he is mourning, lest he give the impression that he is rejoicing at his misfortune. He may, however, attend his funeral, because in such a situation no one will think that he is celebrating the deceased's misfortune, for this is the end for every man.
3. The fundamental intent of visiting the sick is to concern oneself with the sick person's needs, to do anything that is necessary for him; also to lift up his spirits, and furthermore, to focus one's attention on him and entreat for mercy on his behalf.. If one visits the sick without entreating [Hashem] for mercy, one does not fulfill the mitzvah.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Chapter 198
The Funeral Proceedings, Accompanying a Corpse

1. When there is a deceased person in a city, all the inhabitants of the city are forbidden to perform work. If, however, there is a burial society in the city that is charged with dealing with the burial of the dead, those who are not required to tend to the corpse are permitted to perform work.

2. When there is a deceased person in a small village, all the inhabitants of the village are forbidden to greet each other. Surely, it is forbidden for people to greet each other in a cemetery when an unburied corpse is located there. [This applies] even in a large city. When there is not an unburied corpse in a cemetery, one may' greet a colleague, provided they are [standing] more than four cubits away from a grave.

8. When a person sees a corpse and does not join in the funeral procession, he commits a transgression and is considered to be one who "mocks the poor." He is deserving of being placed under a ban of ostracism. At the very least, he should walk four cubits together with the funeral procession.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Chapter 207
Comforting Mourners

1. It is a great mitzvah to comfort mourners. Indeed, we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, came to comfort the bereaved, as [Genesis 25:11] states: "And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac, his son." [Offering such comfort] is an act of kindness to the living and to the dead. (See Chapter 193, Law 11.)

The people offering condolences are not permitted to begin speaking until the mourner speaks to them, as we see in the example of Job. It is written [2:13]: "And none spoke to him." Afterwards, it states [ibid., 3:1]: "And Job opened his mouth...", and then [ibid., 4:1]: "And Elifaz of Teiman replied to him."

When those who have come to offer condolences see that the mourner has dismissed them, they should not stay any longer.

Talmud Yerushalmi Peah 1:1 [3a]

צדקה וגמילת חסדים שקולות כנגד כל מצותיה של תורה שהצדקה נוהגת בחיים וגמילת חסדים נוהגת בחיים ובמתים הצדקה נוהגת לעניים וגמילות חסדים נוהגת לעניים ולעשירים הצדקה נוהגת בממונו של אדם וגמילות חסדים נוהגת בין בממונו בין בגופו

Tzedakah and Chesed [Kindness] are equivalent to all the Mitzvot of the Torah, for Tzedakah deals with those alive and Chesed with those that are alive as well as with those that are dead. Tzedakah deals with the poor and Chesed deals with the poor as well as with the rich. Tzedakah deals with a person's money and Chesed deals with a person's money as well as with himself