



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Tzav

HAMELECH

Why "Tzav"?

The *parashah's* name is *tzav*. Not "turtle", but "command". This is an uncommon usage. We usually find "daber" or "emor". "Tzav" connotes an extra degree of encouragement. This is necessary when the *yetzer horah* acts up and disturbs. On this occasion, the *yetzer horah* tells the *kohen*: Why work on a *korban olah*? What do you get out of it? All of it gets consumed in the fire! Better you should work on a *chatat* or *shelamim*. There you'll get a fine cut of beef!

So the Torah says "Tzav" – command the *kohen* to be involved in the bringing of the *korban olah*.

Stingy?

Unfortunately, too many of us are plagued with at least some degree of *kamtzanut* – misplaced frugality, or, shall we say – stinginess. Many people are big spenders when it comes to their own pleasures, but they count their pennies when it comes to spending money on *mitzvot* and helping out others. Some are so stingy that they themselves are victims of their own stinginess.

Mind Over Money

R' Yochanan was one of the leading Sages of the Talmud. Nonetheless, we find that when he misplaced his wallet, he did not have the

presence of mind to render a *Halachic* decision (Yerushalmi Terumot 8:4). We see from here that even great people have difficulty getting their mind off their money.

Sefer Hayashar warns us not to look for leniencies in *Halachic* matters just in order to save money. Unfortunately, some people hesitate to ask *kashrut* related questions for fear of receiving a strict ruling. Others have difficulty avoiding conducting business transactions on Shabbat. In short, stinginess and affinity for finances are inconsistent with the service of Hashem.

The Iron Curtain

Sefer HaChinuch (480) explains the idea behind the *mitzvah* of not refraining from extending a loan just because *Shemittah* is approaching. At the end of the *Shemittah* year, all loans are void. So some people may hesitate to lend money, worrying that the loan will be annulled and they stand to lose. So the Torah gives us a special *mitzvah* not to avoid lending for that reason. The Chinuch explains that stinginess is an iron curtain between a person and blessing. Generosity breeds blessing.

Plant Your Money

The Dubner Maggid says it with a *mashal* (parable). A man took a walk and lost \$100. The



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next day, while walking, he finds \$200, for the taking. He is happy about his find, but he still feels bad about the loss. He thinks to himself: Had I not lost the \$100, now I would have \$300.

A different man *shleps* a heavy sack of wheat through his field. He does not realize that the sack has a hole and wheat kernels are falling all the while. He gets home to an empty sack, but a little bit later, the wheat begins to grow. He does not feel bad at all that wheat dropped out of his sack. He understands that only because the wheat fell does he now have so much more.

Explains the Maggid: When you give *tzedakah*, view it as planting, not parting with your hard-earned money.

The Rat Who Sat

Shlomo Hamelech says (Kohelet 5:18): There are some people whom Hashem has given them wealth and property and they enjoy it. That is a gift from Hashem. On the other hand, we find (ibid. 6:1-2): There is something unnerving. What is that? Some people are rich and seem to have it all, but, for some reason, they do not enjoy their wealth at all. Others seem to eat it up. This can be quite disturbing.

In Sanhedrin 29b, we find an interesting terminology for a stingy man; he is called, "a rat who reclines upon golden coins." Maharal

explains: Golden coins do not make such a comfortable mattress. So too, someone who has money but does not know how to part with it, is "sitting" on his cash, much to his own discomfort.

Go Cheap?

Kayin brought a *korban*. That was a great idea. But, at the same time, he brought one of poor quality. Why? Because he was stingy! He owned half of the world, but he still found it difficult to part with his goods.

So too, some people, when it comes to *mitzvot*, they look for the cheapest way out. Rashi (Sotah 48a) praises those who trust in Hashem and spend money to beautify *mitzvot* and to enhance *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*.

Rambam (Matnot Aniyim 10:2) informs us that no one gets poor from giving *tzedakah*.

What's Yours?

The Torah says (Bamidbar 5:10): A man, his holies, shall be his.

What does that mean? Chafetz Chaim explains: Money used for *mitzvot* is a person's real asset.

The story is told of R' Shmuel HaNagid, appointed treasurer for the King of Spain. As commonly happened in the King's Court, a well-respected Jew was envied by other officers. The sinister officials tried to get R' Shmuel in trouble.



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They slandered to the King, insisting that R' Shmuel pocketed some royal funds. At first, the King would not hear of it. He cherished R' Shmuel's integrity, wisdom and devotion.

But the wicked men kept nagging. They insisted that R' Shmuel tell the king how much money he owned. They would then go and count it and they were sure that they would find a discrepancy. Sure enough, R' Shmuel's claim was far less than what was found. But before sentencing R' Shmuel to a severe punishment, the king wanted to hear an explanation.

R' Shmuel brought his ledger and told the king, "The amount I told you is the amount which I gave to *tzedakah*. Only that is really mine."

How Many Candles?

The Rav of Kornick, Rav Chizkiyahu Yosef Mishkovsky once addressed some schoolboys and asked: If five candles are lit and two are extinguished, how many are left?

"Three," cried out the boys.

"Actually," said the Rav, "those three will quickly disappear. Only the two which were extinguished will be left."

"So too," he continued, "when you give money to *tzedakah*. You think you are losing it, but that is what will remain with you."

Give and Be Good

Rambam (Peah 3:9) says that giving *tzedakah* 100 times will make you into a better person than had you given all at once, even the same amount.

The Chafetz Chaim sees this in the verse (Tehillim 112:9), "He gave his alms to the poor, his righteousness will forever endure." Since he gave *tzedakah* to many worthy recipients, he becomes a better person.

Signing Off

The *gabbai tzedakah* visited a miser. The man wrote out a large check but "forgot" to sign it. The *gabbai* quickly pocketed the check and left. A bit later, he returned and pointed out that the check had not been signed.

The miser said, nonchalantly, "Oh, I wanted it to be a 'matan beseiter.'"

Empty or Full

Reb Izik Charif went to collect for a worthy cause. The rich miser said, "Stop telling me what a great *mitzvah* it is. I do plenty of *mitzvot*."

Reb Izik said, "Now I understand the expression: Even the empty ones are full of *mitzvot*! Just ask them! They'll tell you themselves that they are full of *mitzvot*!"

Your Money or Your Life?

Reb Zusha of Anipoli was once travelling. He came to a city and asked the poor people, "Are



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there any *gevirim* here? Where can I get a reasonable handout?"

They answered that there was one *gvir* in town, but he was miserly.

Reb Zusha knocked on his door and said, "The Gemara tells us that some people value their money more than their lives. How can this be? Well, we are taught that those who help out the poor will be reimbursed. Yet, some have their hesitations and are reluctant to give. But those same people go to sleep at night, entrusting their soul to the One Above, confident that He will return it the next morning.

"So tell me please, what do they value more: their money or their lives?! Their lives they entrust nightly and their money they dare not entrust!"

A Wise Man Takes Mitzvot

A baby is born with a clenched fist, indicating that he wishes to take over the world and grab everything for himself. One of the first words many children learn to say is "mine". A person is naturally self-centered and must work on himself to be a giver. You can learn a whole lot about a person if you study his attitude towards his possessions (Eiruvim 65).

A story / joke is told of a stingy man who returned home hungry. Much to his chagrin, his wife

uncordially informed him that the chicken which she had planned to serve him had obviously spoiled and she was inclined to dispose of it.

"Throw it in the garbage?!" he exclaimed in disbelief. "It could make our poor neighbor ecstatic. He has not seen chicken on a plate in many a moon!"

Without waiting for a response, he packed up the foul fowl and delivered it to the poor man's door, knocked loudly and ran away.

Indeed, the poor fellow rejoiced at this gift. Oblivious to the odor, he swallowed it hastily, almost not stopping to chew, for indeed he had not eaten a meal worthy of that name for many a day.

But a few hours later, the food poisoning got the better of him. He rushed to the emergency room, but the situation seemed irreversible. The miserly / generous neighbor got wind of his neighbor's plight and paid him a hospital visit. Next day, he attended the funeral, and later on, he visited the house of mourning.

He returned from there and told his wife, "Do you see how many mitzvot can come from one smelly chicken?! Matan beseiter, bikur cholim, halvayat hamet and nichum aveilim! And you said to throw it out?!"



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Only a Fifth

Rav Shteinman was abroad and a wealthy man approached him and asked for a bracha that his son should strike it rich. "How much?" asked the Gadol Hador.

"25 million dollars," answered the gevir.

Rav Shteinman said, "I'll give him a bracha for 50 million on condition that anything beyond that he'll give to tzedakah."

At this, the gevir stuttered, "But, but... we are taught not to give more than a fifth to tzedakah!"

We see how connected this man was to money. He only asked for a brachah for 25 million and already has a hard time imagining parting with any more than 50 million.

The Old Fish

The Ibn Ezra was known for his rough life. He wandered from place to place. In one town, there was a set-up of rotating hospitality. Each homeowner took his turn to host guests for the Shabbat meals.

One rich miser always prepared the best for himself and the worst for his guests. One *Erev Shabbat*, he went to the market and bought for himself a nice, big fish. His wife prepared it just how he liked it. Then, the *gabbai* came to inform him that it was his turn to host needy guests. So

he quickly ran to the market to buy old, rotten, tiny fish.

Yes, his guest was none other than the Ibn Ezra. The Ibn Ezra stepped into the wealthy home and already smelled something fishy. He immediately put two and two together and understood that he would be served the rotten fish while his host would wait and then eat the delicious fish.

As he was served the tiny, rotten fish, he bent over and whispered something to his plate. He whispered some more and then inclined his ear and smiled. His curious host asked, "What's going on?"

The Ibn Ezra explained, "I do not remember when I last saw such old fish, so I thought that maybe he was around since the time of *Kriat Yam Suf*. So I asked him if he could describe for me *Kriat Yam Suf*. He answered, 'I was very small then. Maybe my big brother in the kitchen remembers.'"

The host was embarrassed and learned his lesson. He shared his nice fish with his guest.

Let us uproot miserliness from ourselves and adopt generosity. We ourselves will have much to gain from such an approach. A wise person invests in *mitzvot* and reaps great dividends.

**Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka**