



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Terumah

HAMELECH

Give and Take

Parashat Terumah opens with the command to conduct a campaign drive to secure necessary materials for the construction of the *mishkan*. Surprisingly, Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbeinu, "Speak to Bnei Yisroel and have them *take* for Me a contribution." We would have expected the verse to read, "and have them *give* me a contribution." What is the meaning of this unexpected terminology?

Opportunity Knocking at My Door

What is a *mitzvah*? Is it a burden or an opportunity?

The Zohar teaches that Hashem loves us so much that if we deserve punishment, He sends us a *mitzvah* opportunity to serve as a merit to ward off the punishment.

With this understanding, we can approach life's challenges with appreciation instead of indignation. If someone asks us for help, is it a burden or annoyance? It could very well be our own key to salvation!

We must know the source of our disturbances! If the Chief of Police would ask for our help with something, we would not hesitate. And if it was the Prime Minister? Or, *lehavdil*, a *Gadol Hador*? We would be overjoyed at the opportunity to help such a prestigious individual.

We ought to look at each request of help as a message from Hashem. It is He who is requesting that we help out one of His many children. It is a privilege to have been chosen to be involved in such an endeavor.

Sometimes we turn others away simply because it is not convenient for us at the moment. If we

would only realize that this *chesed* opportunity could very well be a ticket to success, we would view it in a different light.

Dovid Hamelech beseeched, "May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life." This could be interpreted to mean: May opportunities to bestow goodness and kindness come my way often.

A Wise Benefactor

Tehillim (41:2) states: Fortunate is one who is wise regarding the needy; on a difficult day, Hashem will spare him. What is this "wisdom"? When the needy comes, just give him a handout; why does it require brains?

Yerushalmi (Peah 8:8) explains: It is not enough to simply provide the needy with what they are lacking. You must plan how to do so without embarrassing him.

For example, Rabbi Yona saw a man who lost his riches. He wanted to help him out. Rabbi Yona approached him and said, "I understand that you are about to receive a large inheritance. Here, take this loan and pay me back when you can."

Once the "loan" was safely transferred, Rabbi Yona politely let him know that he need not ever return it.

Saved from a Snakebite

Rabbi Hiya and Rabbi Yosi stopped to observe the following exchange. Two men were walking and a man approached and asked for some food and drink. He explained that he had gotten lost and was wandering around now two full days without food. One of them pitied him and gave him food. His partner remarked, "How can you give him food? We ourselves are travelling and



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we need all of our provisions. Don't think that I am going to share any of what I have with you."

"I am not asking you for anything," the generous man replied.

The two continued walking and the generous man got thirsty and tired.

His friend said, "I told you that you should not have parted with your provisions so hastily! You endangered your own life."

With that, he left him resting under a tree, and continued on alone.

Well, that generous man fell asleep and a large snake slithered down the tree, looking like he wanted to bite the sleeping fellow.

Rabbi Hiya told Rabbi Yosi, "We had better wake him up fast!"

Rabbi Yosi responded, "I think that Hashem gave him that *chesed* opportunity as a merit to save his life."

Sure enough, a different beast came along just then and tore apart the snake, before it could attack. (Zohar Parashat Behar)

The Gift of *Tzedakah*

In a similar vein, Rabbi Elazar teaches that when Hashem loves a person, he pities him and sends him a gift before punishment strikes. What is the gift? Hashem sends to him a poor man asking for alms. In the merit of *tzedakah*, Hashem provides him with a shield of protection. For example, Hashem sent angels to Avraham. He served them graciously and in that merit, Lot was saved.

This is an additional aspect of "wising up" to the poor. Earlier we mentioned the aspect of avoiding embarrassing the recipient. Here, we stress the very attitude of viewing the entire situation as an opportunity as opposed to a

burden. Understand that the man in need was Heaven-sent, for your own good.

We now understand why the *parashah* opens with the words, "and have them take for Me a contribution." Yes, they are being asked to contribute, but that contribution is very worthwhile. It is indeed a "taking."

Charity Saves

In Mishlei (10:2) we learn: Wealth amassed through deceptive means does not avail one any; but charity saves from death. And in Mishlei (11:4) we read: Wealth [even if earned honestly] is not helpful on a day of wrath; but charity saves from death.

This brings to mind the story of Mr. Orenstein, the great philanthropist who lived in Meah Shearim, not far from Shechem Gate. He was once approached by a man who needed help funding his daughter's wedding. On the spot, he offered to sponsor the entire wedding, insisting that he be invited to attend.

"Why, certainly!" exclaimed the appreciative father, who immediately began with the necessary preparations.

Well, as it happens, distracted by all the many preparations, whose name was forgotten on the invitation list? Mr. Orenstein, the man behind it all. And when was the mistake realized? Only minutes before the *chuppah* was to take place, the bewildered father became acutely aware of the oversight. What could be done now? He made an announcement that Mr. Orenstein was responsible for this wedding, so it would only be appropriate for the entire wedding party to parade over to his home and extend a personal invitation.



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What was Mr. Orenstein doing at that time? He was not doing very well. His home has been broken into by neighbors from East Jerusalem. They were after his money. They demanded that he put it all on the table. Realizing that they meant business, he emptied his safe. The burglars were still not satisfied. They wanted his wife's jewelry. This, too, they put on the table.

The thieves wanted more. Mr. Orenstein said that this was all he had. The thieves proceeded to tie up Mr. & Mrs. Orenstein and were threatening to beat them or worse if they refused to reveal more riches. Just then, the wedding party was marching up the street, escorted by musicians. It was quite a loud ruckus.

Hearing the sudden noise from outside, the Arabs thought it was the police. So they left everything on the table and fled. The wedding party came to the house and the father of the bride knocked on the door. Not receiving a response, he turned the knob and let himself in. He found the terrified couple all tied up. He immediately released them and invited them to join in the festivities. Mr. Orenstein understood that his act of charity saved his life.

Frozen Yossi

Rav Zilberstein relates: A poor woman knocked on the door of an *avreich* with 14 children. She asked for a chicken. The *avreich* apologized, explaining that he has a large family and the two chickens in the freezer were all he had for the upcoming holiday.

The woman persisted. "Pity me," she begged. "I have not eaten a normal meal in days."

Overcome with compassion, the *avreich* said, "Wait a minute," and proceeded in the direction of the kitchen. He had an old fridge with a freezer compartment inside. He opened the

freezer to take out the chicken, and what did he see? His three year old son, blue in the face! He had no idea how he got there, but he immediately called for emergency medical services. Those who came to save the child's life declared unequivocally that one more half-a-minute in the freezer and that would have been the end of the child's life. The father felt certain that his act of *chesed* is what saved his son.

Bombs and Trees

Let us bring two more short stories to finish off.

A man was walking in Machane Yehuda and his friend saw him and asked if he could borrow twenty *shekalim*. He stopped, pulled out his wallet, and handed him the money. Right then, they heard a very loud, "Boom!" A bomb had gone off in Machaneh Yehuda, in the very direction he had been heading. He knew for sure that this *mitzvah* came his way to save his life.

Then there's the story with Rabbi Chanina Schiff. It was a snowy winter in Yerushalayim. Rabbi Schiff was making his way in the snow, all bundled up. Not many people were about. But one man whose home was not much warmer than the outdoors, had to earn his daily feed, so there he was, asking the seldom wayfarers for handouts.

Rabbi Schiff had to unbutton his coat to reach into his pocket to give the man a donation. Those few seconds paid off. Just then, the snow got the better of one of the nearby trees and toppled it right in Rabbi Schiff's path, exactly at the place he could have been expected to be had he not stopped to give the *tzedakah*.

May we merit to appreciate opportunities that come our way and see how beneficial they really are.

Fondly,
Mordechai Malka