

Excerpt from Shabbos Parshas Nitzovim-Vayelech 5743

(Free Translation by Sichos in English)

10. To explain the practical lesson from this, so that it can be understood by even the simplest Jew who has no knowledge of Torah's deepest secrets or of Torah's secrets at all; this instruction will even be able to be fulfilled by someone who does not possess broad knowledge of nigleh:

When giving tzedakah, whether it is maaser, chomesh, or an even greater percentage, the regular way for a person to go about it is to calculate their total earnings at the end of each month and to then give the allotted amount to tzedakah. (Giving more than a chomesh is based on the explanation of the Alter Rebbe that the ruling, "A person is not to expend more than a fifth," does not need to be observed when one does so to redeem and rectify their soul. He continues, "Obviously, the healing of one's soul is no less important than the healing of one's body, for which a person will squander any sum, and the Torah tells us, '**All that a man has** (not only a fifth) he will give for his soul.'")

However, we learn from Shabbos Mevarchim of the seventh month, Tishrei — which Hashem blesses, thereby enabling the Jewish People to bless all of the other months — that a person must give tzedakah on account of how much they will make in the upcoming months until the following Elul. This is what Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei sets in motion as a preparation for the upcoming year. **Simply**, one should give tzedakah on account of what they will make throughout the entire upcoming year.

Despite not yet having the money that he will earn in hand, there is the well-known custom in this country (**which is outstanding** in the giving of charity and the performance of kindness) of making a pledge. Meaning, a person can obligate themselves in writing to give a certain amount to tzedakah monthly, and being that "Every Jew is trustworthy," they will certainly fulfill their pledge.

In other words: A Jew can claim that he conducts himself in the manner of "doing business and giving in good faith." Thus, being that he does not yet have cash in hand from the money that he will make in the upcoming months — he may not even know how much he will make in the upcoming months — how can he give tzedakah on this account?

Moreover, he claims: A person knows that they cannot always **demand** of Hashem to provide them with children, health, and a generous livelihood, but rather must sometimes request this from Hashem as **tzedakah**. This being the case, the well-known instruction of Sefer Chassidim not to give money received from tzedakah away to tzedakah surely applies!

In response, we tell him that we are not talking about actually giving the money in cash, but about committing to give a certain amount monthly. He should not suffice with making a resolution in his mind, nor with making a verbal commitment, but he should write out an actual pledge. This is considered to be an aspect of action, and not only a "minor action" (of moving one's lips to speak), but real action: the action of writing, which was one of the 39 creative labors performed to build the Mishkan.

11. To address his claim that he does not know how much he will make, we tell him, “The Holy One, blessed be He, connects a good thought to action.”

To preface:

On the theme of “The Holy One, blessed be He, **connects** a good thought to action,” the Alter Rebbe explains that Hashem connects the good thought with an action that will be performed in the future (and not that “The Torah considers it **as if** the person did the action,” despite them not having done it). Then, he has something complete, a good deed together with a good thought.

From this explanation, it is understood that the person only has this connection when they actually perform the action afterwards. Thus, being that the expression is “The Holy One, blessed be He, connects a good thought to action,” the **implication** is that **whenever** there is a good thought, it is certain that it will manifest in a real action.

The reason for this is that when Hashem observes a good thought, He helps the person successfully bring the thought into action. Then, this good thought is actually connected to the deed.

Similarly, in our topic: When a Jew decides and obligates himself to give a large sum to tzedakah, Hashem helps and assists him to successfully bring his good thought into action. Meaning, he will profit immensely so that he can keep his promise to give a large sum to tzedakah.

There is the well-known story of when the Frierdiker Rebbe wanted to print the sefarim of the Tzemach Tzedek (whose birthday, Erev Rosh HaShanah, we are in proximity with). A yungerman approached the Frierdiker Rebbe and pledged to give the full sum required to print the sefarim, despite it being completely unrealistic considering his financial circumstances. But being that he pledged to donate such a sum, Hashem opened **new channels** of parnassah for him. (They were **new**, meaning that they weren’t just an expansion of his previous ventures, but they were truly new channels.) He was able to give the pledged sum with joy and happiness, after he was left with many times more for his personal needs. (Importantly, he would have given the sum happily even had he not been left with many times more for himself.)

This story is an instruction to us from the Frierdiker Rebbe, and the lesson is that when a Jew pledges to give a large sum to tzedakah, even if the sum is beyond his capacity, Hashem opens new channels for him so that he can keep his promise in full.

(As is self-understood and obvious, the intent is not to act in a manner of Olam HaTohu, but as is befitting of Olam HaTikkun.)

12. There is a well-known ruling of the Shulchan Aruch that when a Jew accepts a good resolution, the very acceptance of the resolution generates the reward, even before he actually fulfills the resolution. This teaches us the greatness of pledging to give tzedakah throughout the months of the upcoming year, even before actually giving the money.

Moreover, when a person makes a resolution in a moment of inspiration — such as Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei — pledging to give a large amount, it is possible that they wouldn't have given this amount if they would have simply given after earning the money. This is not so when someone makes a pledge. Then, they will certainly fulfill their pledge, even when the inspiration wears off.

Highlighting this idea is our parshah, Parshas Nitzavim. Inside, we read about the treaty about which is explained in Likkutei Torah (in the beginning of the Parshah) that a treaty effectuates an unwavering eternity, to the extent that nothing (no claim of the yetzer hara, etc.) can obstruct the person from keeping this resolution.

In other words, despite the fact that the person will no longer feel the inspiration when actually paying the pledge, what truly matters is the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah. This is especially so with regard to the mitzvah of tzedakah. The actual sustainment of the poor person's life is what is of primary importance/relevance.

It says in the Sifri (Teitzei, 24:19) that “Even when someone **loses** money and it is found by a poor person, thereby supporting them,” the person is considered to have fulfilled the mitzvah of giving tzedakah, notwithstanding his **annoyance** at having lost the money. Indeed, when a person loses money, they are entitled to be upset about it (as long as they are not a fool who does not care to lose what he was given), being that they know the Torah is concerned about Jewish money. They could have used the money for many good things, and they are now bothered by not being able to use the money for its proper purpose.

Nonetheless, we tell the person that when the poor person found the money and was supported by it, it is as if he gave him the money for tzedakah. As a result, the money was utilized in the best possible way. If he would have used it himself, it would have been used for a purpose “for the sake of Heaven” or even to perform one of the mitzvos. However, when the poor person found the money after one lost it and was supported by it, the person fulfills the mitzvah **which is equated to all of the other mitzvos!**

13. *The above lesson applies to every Jew, including young children, as will be explained. This will be connected to our parshah, Parshas Nitzavim.*

*The parshah discusses the unity between all demographics of the Jewish People: “You are all standing today, the leaders of your tribes, your elders...;” including also “**your children.**” The parshah emphasizes that it is “All of you.” Meaning, despite the different demographics among the Jewish People, precedence is not given to the leaders and elders, followed by “every Jewish person,” and only then the children, but “You are **all** standing today.” Moreover, the Alter Rebbe adds and emphasizes, “Unified as one,” to the extent that “It is impossible to find a beginning and an end.”*

To preface:

Recently, we have been encouraging that Jewish children be taught to give tzedakah by being given coins to put in the pushkeh. There are those who “search for pretexts” to complain and question, “What’s the purpose? They are little children who are not obligated in mitzvot; they do not even have their own money. What is the point of giving them coins to put in the pushkeh?”

The response to this is the instruction of the verse, “Educate a child... so that he will not stray from it when he grows older.” In other words, when we educate children to put money into a pushkeh, they will certainly continue to do so when they grow older and have their own money.

There is another positive aspect which is the result of putting money in a pushkeh:

The mitzvah of tzedakah applies not only when a poor person approaches you, requesting money to support him and his family, or if a fundraiser reaches out to discuss supporting a poor family. Instead, even when no one is promoting a cause, a person must know that they have to give tzedakah.

This is the positive aspect of putting money in a pushkeh. The money is not given directly to the poor person, but is placed in a pushkeh. It is inanimate and cannot approach a person, encouraging him to give money to a certain cause. (At most, it is a small hint.) Nevertheless, the person fulfills the mitzvah without needing a special reminder.

This is highlighted with little children. An adult knows how to read what is printed on the outside of the pushkeh. When he sees the name of the organization printed on the outside of the pushkeh, he realizes that this organization needs funds. (Sometimes this is even stated on the outside of the pushkeh.) This encourages him to give tzedakah.

However, this does not apply in the case of a young child who does not yet know how to read. The above scenario does not play out, and when they insert coins into a pushkeh, it is purely an expression of “A hand that distributes tzedakah” (See Tanya, Ch. 23). In other words, the child is trained that their hand should give tzedakah, this being the ultimate capacity that their hand can attain. (A self-understood fact is that a person strives to do everything in their capacity to ensure that their hand is always healthy and does not wait until they require a doctor, chas veshalom.)

Circling back to the topic at hand, being that giving tzedakah applies to children, it follows that the above instruction applies to them as well. Meaning, they also should take upon themselves a pledge to give a certain amount to tzedakah monthly, throughout the entire duration of the upcoming year.

*Children are able to give tzedakah from the money they receive from their parents as a reward for good behavior in Torah and mitzvos. And when they improve their behavior, their parents will give them even more money, enabling them to give **even more** tzedakah. This will then encourage the children to improve their behavior so that they can give even more tzedakah.*

14. *This is the practical lesson from the earlier discussion of Hashem's berachah on Shabbos Mevorchim Tishrei, which empowers the Jewish People to bless the other months of the year:*

We should plan our avodah for the entire upcoming year, for example, in the area of the mitzvah of tzedakah. We should pledge monthly amounts of money to be given to tzedakah until the end of the upcoming year, as discussed above at great length. This should be done before Rosh HaShanah and optimally, on Motzaei Shabbos — not only by Tuesday, which is still called Motzaei Shabbos, but actually on Motzaei Shabbos itself. If this is not possible, it should at least be done by Sunday morning, for although the entire week is blessed by Shabbos, the influence of Shabbos is felt in a more revealed way earlier in the week.

*Regarding the amount that should be donated: Halachah instructs us that “We are not commanded to enrich” a poor person. Nevertheless, being that **the person** wants Hashem to provide **him** with **wealth** in children, livelihood, and health, it is his responsibility to act in a like manner, meaning to give tzedakah **generously** as would a **wealthy man**.*

If this applies on a basic level to physical tzedakah, how much more so does it apply to spiritual tzedakah, this being the theme of spreading Judaism and the wellsprings of Chassidus. Hachlatos must be made in this regard as well for the entire year. And, as stated above, this giving must be in a generous, wealthy manner and in such a way that the resulting influence is apparent throughout the entire year.

And just as tzedakah applies to small children as well, as explained above, the same applies to spiritual tzedakah. This is relevant even to those who are “children” in matters of Judaism. They too must give tzedakah relative to the knowledge that they have attained in matters of Judaism.

15. Through serving Hashem in the area of tzedakah, we will all merit the blessings of Hashem in the manner of “Yours is tzedakah.”

Tzedakah must be given relative to the resources of the giver, and it therefore follows that the blessings of Hashem in accordance with this are in the greatest way — “From His full, open, holy, broad hand,” physically and spiritually together — and ultimately, meriting us with the most important blessing, the true and complete Redemption.

*Then, the tzedakah that we receive will no longer be “that Hashem spread us among the nations.” Rather, we will receive the tzedakah of understanding the G-dly knowledge which will characterize the times of Mashiach. Not only will we comprehend the knowledge of our Creator with human capabilities, but in **a greater way**, in a manner of **tzedakah**, reaching the ultimate level of fusion with the knowledge.*

*More simply, we will merit the true and complete Redemption with Mashiach Tzidkeinu. May we speedily be redeemed “by the clouds of heaven,” with the redemption of every Jew, **unified** together as one, below ten tefachim, revealed and visible to all.*