

Re'eh Dvar Torah

Every Jewish fundraiser is well aware of the oft-quoted statement of *Chazal* (*Taanis* 9a) – “עשר” בשביל שתתעשר – Tithe (give *tzedakah*) so that you will become wealthy.

Re'eh introduces us to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* once again. The *Torah* implores each person to surely tithe - “עשר תעשר” (14:22). The Rabbis expound on the repetition of the words to teach the counterintuitive idea that giving away monies to those in need will result in personal financial gain. *Tzedakah* guarantees the greatest kickback.

We are the investment broker of G-d's money and when we invest it properly, by sharing it with His children, He continues to allocate more of His money with us. We are simply stewards of *Hashem*'s money in this world. In fact, this is the only area of *halacha* where we are indeed allowed to test *Hashem*.

However, if we are selfish or squander His money away, He refuses to allocate more in our direction.

(Amazingly, Rav Moshe Feinstein writes in a responsa that not only is one obligated to tithe his money but each person must also tithe their time – devoting at least 10% of one's time to helping others.)

There is also an alternative way to approach *Chazal*'s statement of guaranteed wealth as a result of giving charity.

The following insight of Rav Shimon Schwab will not help an organization's capital campaign in the short run but should in the long run.

Famously, the *mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* (4:1) redefines wealth. As opposed to defining wealth as the accumulation of a lot of money, *Ben Zoma* teaches that the wealthy person is the one who is happy with what he/she has been blessed with. To further the point, the *gemara* states that a person can only merit having *Nevuah* (prophecy), if they are strong, wealthy, wise and humble. The *Rambam* says that wealth in this case is accomplished by being *Sameach B'chelko*, happy with what you have – as not every *Navi* was necessarily blessed with physical wealth.

Similarly says Rav Schwab, when one gives *tzedakah* to others in need, a natural result of your actions is that you become happier. You feel good about yourself and what you've done. It's not a special *segula*. It's not magical. It's natural. It's human nature to feel good when you do good. People who are givers tend to be content with what they have. A person who is a giving person has that *teva*, that nature to be a happier person.

Similarly, the *gemara* in *Yoma* (26a) states that a person who serves as a *sandek* at a *bris* will become wealthy. Rav Chaim Kanievesky explains this example in the same vein as Rav Schwab.

Rav Schwab sees this idea in a statement we make every day near the beginning of *Shacharis*. Following *Birkas HaTorah*, we recite a list of *mitzvos* that we are told we do not only reap their

reward in the next world but we enjoy the fruits in this world as well. When the rabbis say we get rewarded is not in the sense that we get paid for their performance or anything material. Rather, each *mitzvah* is one in which the one who does the act, creates for himself a deeper appreciation for what he/she has. That is the *schar*, the reward, the *t'fillah* refers to. This is not surprising because the list of *mitzvos* are all those that are done interpersonally. When we give, we get. When we do for others, we receive.

However, the final *mitzvah* listed by the rabbis in which we receive this-worldly reward is that of *Talmud Torah*. Though learning *Torah* is most closely categorized as a mitzvah between people and *Hashem*, the entire experience of learning draws me closer to Him and I am made to realize more of the immense, and often unworthy, blessings I have received.

Speaking more expansively, the entire lifestyle of *Torah* is one where I am the true beneficiary. It makes me happier because it affords me a life of stability, mission, meaning, purpose, focus, discipline, inspiration, depth and passion. It allows me to go beyond all existence and meet the creator of the world.

It makes us rich – no question about it.

Shabbat Shalom!