

# INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

בס"ד

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rabbi Chaim Grosz, of blessed memory, a pioneer of the Miami Beach Community.  
"May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS RE'EH

## Getting by Giving



*You shall truly tithe... (14:22)*

The Gemara (*Taanis* 9a) records a fascinating conversation between R' Yochanan and his young nephew. R' Yochanan asked his nephew, 'Recite to me the Bible verse [you have learned today]. The latter replied, 'You shall surely tithe.' At the same time, his nephew asked, 'What are the meaning of these words?' R' Yochanan answered, 'Give tithes that you may be enriched.'

The boy then asked, 'How do you know this?' R' Yochanan replied: 'Go test it [for yourself].' The boy thereupon asked, 'Is it permissible to test the Holy One, blessed be He? Do we not have a verse (*Devarim* 6:16) that says, "You shall not try the Lord?"' R' Yochanan replied, "Thus said R' Oshaia: The case of tithe-giving is excepted [from the prohibition], as it is said (*Malachi* 3:10), "Bring the tithes unto the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and with this you may test me."'

In other words, a person can literally test Hashem's promise to enrich those that give *tzedakah*. Even though the general rule is that one may not test the Almighty; the *mitzvah* of giving charity is exempted from this prohibition. Not only is it exempted but Hashem actually encourages us to test Him by giving charity. Additionally, the Gemara (*Pesachim* 8a) states that if a person says, "I am giving this money in order that my son shall live," he is a

complete *tzaddik*. Meaning that even though he is giving the money with an ulterior motive, it is a proper act of *tzedakah* and he is considered righteous.

Why is the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* an exemption to the prohibition of testing Hashem? Furthermore, there is a general rule laid down in *Pirkei Avos* (1:3) which says, "Do not be as a servant serving his master in order to receive reward." So, why is the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* different?

Rashi (*Vayikra* 20:17) explains that the word *chessed* in Aramaic means shame. In prior editions of INSIGHTS we have explained that Aramaic is the language of understanding another person's perspective. While a person may feel good about sharing his good fortune with others by giving *tzedakah*, one has to also consider the receiver's perspective. In other words, when a person has to accept *chessed* from someone there is a devastating feeling of embarrassment that he cannot take care of his own needs.

This is why we ask Hashem in *bentching*: "Do not cause us to come to need to rely on gifts or loans from others." It is debilitating to one's psyche to have to rely on the largesse of others for survival. Yet, we know that giving *tzedakah* and doing *chessed* are key components of one's obligation to "follow in His ways." So how do we

reconcile this obligation with the pain being caused to the recipient of *tzedakah*?

This is the reason why Hashem created a system by which the person giving is monetarily enriched by his act of *tzedakah*. Just as a person would not be embarrassed to be paid for giving someone terrific investment advice, so too a person receiving *tzedakah* is providing the giver the opportunity to enrich themselves. In fact, it is better than ordinary investment advice; its success is actually guaranteed by the Almighty. Hashem, in his infinite wisdom, is removing the poor person's shame in receiving *tzedakah* by enabling him to give back to the person giving the *tzedakah*. Perhaps this is why the word "*nassan* – to give" in Hebrew is a palindrome – a word that reads the same backwards and forward; because the giving goes in both directions.

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# The Tipping Point

**And when you send him out free from you, you shall not let him go away empty handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, and out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress; of that with which Hashem your God has blessed you, you shall give to him (15:13-14).**

The Torah charges us with giving a gift to our Jewish servants when they leave our service; the Hebrew word for this is “hanaka.” Rashi (ad loc) explains that this comes from the Hebrew word for adornment. Similarly, the word *anak* is used in scriptures to mean necklace (*Shir Hashirim* 4:9). In fact, giants are called *Anakim* because they wear the sun around the neck like a necklace (*Sotah* 34b). Rashi on this verse explains that you have to give the freed slave something that makes it clear that you have given him a gift.

Why are we obligated to give him a gift at all? He had already been paid in advance for all of his years of servitude, why does the Torah place an obligation to bestow him with a parting gift? In addition, this reference to a necklace indicates that he needs to leave our service bejeweled. But what does that really mean? He actually isn't given jewelry; as the verses go on to explain, and further elucidated in the Talmud and Rambam (*Hilchos Avadim* 3:14), he receives food and food related items. What is this reference to being bejeweled?

Did you ever wonder why, when checking in to a hotel, you tip the bell person and chambermaid but not the person who checked you in? Or when shopping, you tip the person who carries your bags to the car but not the cashier? When ordering food in a restaurant, you tip the waitress; but if you go to the counter and order, you do not tip the person behind the counter. Why? When do we instinctively give a tip and when do we not give one? In fact, what is the purpose of giving a tip?

The answer is, we give a tip when someone performs a personal service for us. In other words, these are all situations where you would physically be taking care of yourself; carrying bags to your car or room, cleaning the room, bringing your food to the table. In all of these situations a person has demeaned themselves and acted in your service so that you didn't have to. You cannot check yourself into a hotel or a flight – the hotel or airline has to check you in – therefore no tip is warranted.

A tip is given to restore a person's dignity. Giving a tip is a statement that you appreciate that the person is doing something that you would otherwise do for yourself. The very giving of the gift means that they aren't your servants; you have no right to expect it of them, but you appreciate what they are doing for you.

But perhaps even more important is the lesson in what our attitude toward them should be: If we are obligated to restore someone's dignity for their act of service, how much more so do we have to speak and relate to them in a kindly fashion during their act of service, and ensure that we do not further diminish their dignity.

That is why the Torah describes it as bejeweling a person even though no jewelry is involved. We want to make sure that the Jewish servant who is leaving our service has a measure of his dignity restored. By recognizing him as an individual, he is now able to come back into the community not as a servant, but as a respected member of society.

## Did You Know...

This week's *parsha* discusses the physical signs that distinguish between kosher animals and fish and their non-kosher counterparts. The section concludes with several *halachos*, including the prohibition of cooking meat with milk.

There's a Gemara (*Chullin* 109b) that relates a fascinating principle: “Whatever the Merciful has forbidden he permitted something just like it.” Thus, for every food that the Torah has prohibited, there's another permissible thing that tastes exactly like it. This, as explained by the Achronim, was provided by Hashem in order to teach us that the reason for prohibiting the food wasn't because he wanted to deny us of its special taste.

The Gemara continues and lists several of these examples:

- Blood is forbidden to be consumed, but eating an animal's liver is fine. Rashi here explains that the liver is made up entirely of dried blood and tastes like blood. Aruch HaShulchan (*Yoreh Deah* 73:2) writes that we know we are allowed to eat the liver because the Kohanim were permitted to eat it.
- Certain fats of domesticated animals we may not eat (ox, lamb, and goat), but the corresponding fats of undomesticated kosher animals (deer etc.) we may eat.
- We are not allowed to eat pork, but we can eat the brains of the *shibuta* fish. Consequently, there have been many attempts to identify the *shibuta* fish. The most likely match is an Iraqi fish (one remarkably named to this very day “*shabout*”), a type of carp known mostly by its scientific name, *barbus grypus*.
- He forbade *girusa*, a non-kosher bird species, but allowed fish tongue. Tosafos (*Moed Katan* 11a), explains that not all fish tongues have this unique taste, but a specific species of fish does.
- Lastly, since Hashem forbade the consumption of milk and meat together, what is permitted is the cow's udder, which contains the milk.



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