

MITZVAH 24: GIVING CHARITY

by Rabbi Moshe Goldberger

If there is a poor person among you... you shall open your hand to him... (Devarim 15:7-8)

All Jews are like brothers, as we see from the Rambam in Hilchos Matnas Aniyim (10:2). An outgrowth of mitzvah 22 above is to provide financial assistance to fellow Jews in need. We are urged to be more careful with this mitzvah than with all others.

Giving tzedakah is equal to all other mitzvos. (Bava Basra 9a)

One should give with a smile... and also offer kind words. Persuading others to give as well is an even greater mitzvah (Hilchos Matnas Aniyim 10:13).

We are also taught that redeeming captives is a very great fulfillment of this mitzvah (ibid. 8:10).

We are taught in Mishlei, "Charity saves from death" (Mishlei 10:2). Why is this so?

- Giving tzedakah can save someone else's life. Thus, the reward is life.
- By giving tzedakah, one demonstrates that he understands that the purpose of life is to help others, as it says, "This world is built on kindness: (Tehillim 89:1). Thus, his reward is life (Rav Shimon Shkop, Preface to Shaarei Yosher).

The Gemara teaches a fringe benefit to giving tzedakah: "Give a tenth [of your income to tzedakah] so that you will become wealthy: (Taanis 9a).

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