

REPAY KINDNESS

by Rabbi Dovid Green

"When your brother becomes impoverished and loses his ability to support himself in the community, you must come to his aid. Help him survive etc." (Leviticus 25:35).

This is the commandment regarding lending money interest-free to someone who has fallen upon hard times. Rashi comments that this means one should give a person the ability to continue standing on his own two feet, before he falls all the way. Rashi gives the following analogy. If a donkey is carrying a load which is causing it to lose its balance, as long as it hasn't fallen, one person can even support it, and reestablish it. However, once it has fallen, even five people won't be able to stand it up again.

Lending money is considered a greater act of kindness than giving someone charity, because with a loan, a person can retain his dignity. He can repay the loan. He is still maintaining his independence to a great extent.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn tells a beautiful story in *The Maggid Speaks* of a young man whose father had passed away leaving him as the breadwinner of his family at approximately 20 years old. His father had been a mohel, who performs ritual circumcision, as was he. A young mohel understandably needs to break into the field, and it is a slow process. Times were very hard for his family. An old friend of the family summoned the young mohel to his office and handed him an envelope with a substantial sum of money. "Thank you, but I'm not ready to take charity," said the young man. "This is not charity," came the reply. "This is a loan. When things improve you can repay it." Eventually, the young man accepted the loan. Time went by, and things did improve. When the young mohel had accumulated the sum of the loan, he returned to the office his friend, intending to repay the loan in full. "I'm sorry, but I can't accept that money in return," said the man. "But you said this was a loan! I said I didn't want to accept charity!" exclaimed the young man. "It was a loan, but I cannot accept repayment. I'll explain. There was a time when I was in your shoes. I was young, and things were difficult. A friend offered me a loan and I accepted it. When I went to repay it, he refused to accept the money. He told me that I should repay the loan to someone else who needs it at some point. Now I've done the same for you, and now I'm refusing to accept it. Please give it to someone else in similar circumstances whom you may find in the future." And so it was.

The Torah is a treasure. It teaches us its pleasant ways. This is as it states, "its ways are ways of

pleasantness, and all of its paths are peace." May we merit to experience its sweetness, and walk its paths in earnest.

Good Shabbos!

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