

HELP THE DONKEY

by Rabbi Dovid Green

The Torah exhorts us in this week's parsha with many commandments to give aid even to people we hate. "When you see the donkey of someone you hate lying under its burden...you must make every effort to help him" (Exodus 23:5). The great Chofetz Chaim, of blessed memory, writes that even though the owner of the donkey is a person of evil deeds who gives us a very good reason to hate him, we are nevertheless commanded to help him. The Chofetz Chaim writes that this applies even if the donkey is carrying something not particularly crucial. Building on this, if the owner was a friend whose donkey was carrying relief packages to a war-torn city, how much more so we would have to help.

Taking the next step, what if the donkey was carrying badly needed life-saving medicines or oxygen? How great would the obligation be to help? What if the "beast of burden" lying under the load of life-saving medical supplies was a person, and not an animal? Certainly we would not question the need to help in every way possible.

The Chofetz Chaim concludes that it is certain, then, that when the person "laying under his load" is someone whose responsibility is to provide for people who learn Torah, how great the obligation is to help in every way. The Torah states "because it (The Torah) is your life." Torah is the spiritual sustenance for our souls. Without it we have no life. We must view those who learn it as those who are bringing life, blessing, and favor to the world. May we merit life, blessing, and favor through our support of Torah.

Good Shabbos!

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