

# THAT'S TZEDAKA!

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

And He took him outside and said, "Gaze, now, toward the Heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them!" and he said, "So shall your offspring be!" And he trusted (believed) in HASEHM and He considered it to him a Tzedaka- righteousness. (Breishis 15:5-6)

After gaining assurance from HASHEM that he will have children, Avraham believed in or trusted HASHEM and was accredited as if He had done Tzedaka. Tzedaka is a term we use to describe charity. Remarkably, Avraham is described as having done an act of charity with The Almighty. How is that possible? King David had said, "To HASHEM is the world and all its fullness!" What can one possibly give that, so to speak, HASHEM does not have already? How is possible to do Tzedaka with HASHEM?

The answer is one word-"Emunah". "He believed in HASHEM!" When the Talmud wanted to express the essential principle of Torah in one phrase it zeroed in on a single verse from the Prophet Habakuk, "The Tzadik (righteous one) lives with his Emuna (belief). Now we only have to define the term "Emuna" and all of life becomes a Tzedaka box for HASHEM.

The word "Emunah" is often translated as "belief" or "faith". For sure something is lost in the translation. Those words carry the connotation of a shallow, blind, or even foolish acceptance of something that can't be seen or proven. There might be some elements of truth there but it is woefully incomplete. "Emunah" represents an attitude of faithfulness, a disciplined loyalty to a notion one knows is true.

Let us say that I want one of my children to clean his or her room and to incentivize them I offer a reward like a big chocolate bar. Some kids will agitate for hours because they harbor multilayered doubts about the size, flavor, or existence of the chocolate bar. It may just be a sophisticated form of laziness but in the end everyone is frustrated and the task remains undone and unrewarded and the kid says having fulfilled the negative prophecy, "Aha! I knew there was no chocolate bar all along!?"

Another child completes the job and gets the chocolate bar without questions. What a relief! This is an "Emuna" approach. I am extremely grateful when that happens. I have a giant closet filled with goodies. They're all mine. I can clean the room myself! The only thing I can't give myself is the trust that the child who dutifully does the task offers. That's "Emunah"! It can be a real form of "Tzedaka" even to HASHEM.

When Uri Zohar was stepping away from his career of comedic entertainment to immerse himself in a new found life of Torah learning and Mitzvos his old friends begged him to leave them with a parting joke. This was it: A couple of religious fellows were riding around on a motorcycle when they caught the attention of a secular policeman. Wanting to catch them in some infraction he quietly stalked them for a good length of time but failed to find one fault in their driving conduct. They stopped at every sign and signaled appropriately while staying within the boundaries of the speed limit. In utter frustration the policeman pulled them over to the side of the road and asked them, "How did you manage to keep all the traffic laws so perfectly?" The driver answered, "What are you talking about!? How could we violate the law? G-d is with us in whatever we do!" To which the officer responded, "Aha! I've got you now! Having three on a motorcycle is against the law!"

The Baal Shem Tov had said the following parable: A musician was once playing a most beautiful melody with wondrous rhythm and all the sweetness of the world. Those who heard the song were jumping and dancing with extreme joy. A deaf man entered an unable to hear the music judged all of the people to be insane. If he had been wise he would have reasoned that there was wondrous music at play and he too might have joined in the joyous and festive dancing.

Avraham Avinu moved about in a world deaf to HASHEM. In spite of the tidal waves of constant opposition he persisted with unyielding "Emuna", reliably responsive to HASHEM's every command and quieted by His promises! **That's Tzedaka!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).