

PARSHAS BEHAR

by Gedalia Litke

1. We are instructed to assist someone who is faltering. (25:35) Rashi explains that this means we should help them before they hit rock bottom, because then it would require even more assistance to get them back on their feet. This seems to be a fairly basic concept. Why does Rashi feel he needs to explain it to us? Also, Rashi provides an analogy to a load which is slipping off of a donkey's back - while it is still slipping one person alone can solve the problem, but if the load has already fallen to the ground then five or more people will be needed to re-load. Why do I need an analogy to understand this simple idea?

2. In Parshas Terumah we are instructed to vigorously assist someone who is struggling under his burdens, even if we intensely dislike that person. (23:5) As we explained there according to Rashi, the Torah goes out of its way to give these instructions because I might be inclined to help someone I don't like for the sole purpose of having the recipient beholden to me; I want to have something over him, but I don't want to help him to the point that he has regained his independence. For this reason the Torah instructs me to vigorously help the person I dislike, meaning help him to the same degree as anyone else so he, too, can regain his independence.

3. Here, too, in Parshas Behar, a crasser element of my personality might be inclined to wait until the person hits rock bottom before lending assistance, because at that point, instead of having merely lent a hand, my efforts would cause the recipient to be completely beholden to me. This is true even though I have no particular dislike for the person. Rashi understands and spells out for us (perhaps based on 'u'moto yado imoch' / 'and his hand falters or slips within your proximity' and 'v'hechezakto bo' / 'you shall hold on to him') that the pasuk is emphasizing that we must assist him while it is still in the slipping stage because at that stage he requires hand holding but not a total rehabilitation.

[This is based primarily on shiurim of HoRav Yochanan Zweig, Shlita.]