

THE FLAVOR THAT'S FOREVER

by Mordechai Dixler

Mayer Amschel Rothschild of Frankfurt, Germany was the Eighteenth Century founder of the famed Rothschild dynasty. A guest in his home once inquired, with much *chutzpah*, "How much are you worth?" In reply, Rothschild took out a ledger with the word 'Charity' on it and started to sum up the figures. The surprised visitor exclaimed, "Perhaps you didn't understand my question. I asked you what you have, not what you have given away."

Rothschild smiled and replied, "I understood you perfectly well. When I die, I will leave all my material wealth behind. The only thing that I will be able to take with me is the merit of that which I have given away. Consequently, all that I really possess is that which I give." (Quoted from Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Chief Rabbi of the UK)

Each individual was obligated by the Torah to give tithes from his crop to the *Kohanim*, the priests, and the Levites. The Torah says, "each man, his holy things shall be his" [Num. 5:10]. This verse refers the giver's right to choose which individuals will receive his gifts. But these same words, says Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan zt"l (the Chofetz Chaim), can be understood to say that the only things we truly own are our holy deeds. No business investments have a guaranteed profit, and certainly not an eternal profit. Profits from spiritual investments, however, are both guaranteed and eternal.

A group of teenage boys were visiting Rabbi Avraham Schorr of Flatbush, a renowned lecturer and teacher. Rabbi Schorr wanted to give them a sense of the eternal value of a *Mitzvah*, one of G-d's commandments. So he asked them: "Think about the pleasure, the sense of satisfaction, you had a year ago from eating a juicy piece of steak, or any other delicious meal. Now think about the pleasure and satisfaction you had a year ago after helping an old person cross the street. Which pleasure do you still feel today?"

Thus, even in this world, our own experience in holy endeavors testifies to this truth: it is spiritual investments that have the most lasting gains.

Let us prioritize our spiritual pursuits in both *Mitzvah* observance and Torah study, so that we may then look forward to enjoying their everlasting benefits.