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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

YOU CAN BE A SUPER-HERO!

PARSHAS EMOR

Your friend, Shimon, called you to tell you an amazing story. He received a phone call from a long-lost uncle. His uncle told him that he was giving him one million dollars! Shimon was ecstatic! His uncle then said that Shimon should give \$20,000 of that money to a specific cousin.

If you were Shimon, how would YOU feel about that condition? Would you be upset that you were asked to give away the \$20,000? Would you ignore the request, do it begrudgingly, or be happy to do it, considering all the other money that you had received?

The **Talmud** (Bava Basra 10A) brings a conversation between the evil Roman governor, Turnus Rufus, and the great sage, Rabbi Akiva. Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva: If your G-d loves the poor, why does He not support them Himself? Rabbi Akiva said to him: He commands us to sustain the poor, so that we will be saved from the judgment of Gehinom through the charity that we give them.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai once dreamt that his nephews were destined to lose seven hundred dinars over the course of the year. He did not tell his nephews about the dream but encouraged them to give a lot of money to tzedakah. They ended up giving the full seven hundred dinars less seventeen. On Yom Kippur eve, the government sent messengers who took seventeen dinars from them. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai told them not to worry, since the government would not take any more money from them. The money that they had given to tzedakah was in lieu of the other 683 dinars that the government would have taken.

It says in **Mishlei** (Proverbs 19:17), "He who graciously gives to the poor, makes a loan to Hashem. That which

he has given, Hashem will pay him back." Giving to the poor is considered as if one had granted a loan to Hashem! **Rashi** says that the charity that one gives, defends him before the Divine strict standard of justice. The **Midrash Tanchuma** says, "In the future, when your son or daughter becomes deathly ill, I will recall in their behalf the good deed that you had performed for the poor man, and I will save them from death. I will repay you soul for soul".

It says in our **Parsha** (Vayikra 23:22), "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger, I am Hashem your G-D."

A farmer, more than any other person, has the best opportunity to develop a belief in Hashem and a realization that Hashem controls the World. A farmer cannot help but notice that Hashem constantly determines the success of his crop. Will there be enough rain to help his crops grow? Will there be an infestation of insects that will destroy his crop? Will the climate be too harsh, either intensely hot or intensely cold, thus destroying his crops? When the farmer sees a successful crop, he should clearly understand that it is a blessing from Hashem. If Hashem would ask him to leave part of his harvest for the poor, it should not be a problem. The farmer is similar, to the man who had received 1 million dollars from his uncle and was then asked to give a small

percentage of it to another cousin. He should be happy to follow Hashem's directive and share a portion of his bounty with the poor.

All that we have are a gift from Hashem. If Hashem wants us to share our wealth with those Jews who are less fortunate, of course we should do so.

The extent to which Hashem values the actions of the farmer, or anyone who helps the poor, goes even further!

Rashi quotes a Sifra (Emor, Chapter 13 11): Rav Avdima the son of Rav Yosef asked why the Torah places the law concerning the corner of the field, in the middle of the group of psukim that discuss the various Holidays. First, the Torah discusses the sacrifices given on Pesach and Succos. Next, it discusses the mitzvah of leaving a corner of one's field for the poor. Then, the Torah discusses the sacrifices brought on Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Succos. **Rashi** answers that it teaches us that one who leaves his gleanings, his forgotten sheaves, and the corner of

his field to the poor, is regarded as though he had built the Beis Hamikdash and had offered his sacrifices there. Astounding! All that the farmer has, is from Hashem. Yet, if he leaves part of it for the poor, he is considered a **hero**! It is as if he, alone, caused the Third Beis Hamikdash to be built and then offered sacrifices therein!

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (sefer Derash Moshe)- asks why the act of leaving these parts of the field to the poor is considered as if one had built the Beis Hamikdash and had brought korbanos there. **Rav Moshe** zt"l answers that in the merit of tzedakah, the Jews will be redeemed quickly and the Beis Hamikdash will be built. If most Jews would copy the actions of the farmer and give their proper share of tzedakah then Mashiach would come, the Beis Hamikdash would be rebuilt, and korbanos would again be sacrificed. Since this farmer did all that he, personally, could, he gets full credit and reward as if the Beis Hamikdash was built!

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All that we have is a gift from Hashem. Yet, Hashem considers us and our actions to be special when we follow Hashem's directive to share what He gave us with those in need.

We even receive the reward of one who is responsible for the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash!



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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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