

מטעמים  
לשולחן שבת

treats for  
the shabbos table

Rosh HaShana

ראש השנה



הש"ע  
אנגליה

### Tzedaka on a day when money is muktzeh

In our Rosh HaShana prayers we say, "ותפילה ותשובה" – But prayer, repentance and *tzedaka* nullify the evil decree." Every morning we say a Mishnah in Peah that lists mitzvos whose performance brings a person "fruits in this world" while the "principle" is reserved for him in the World to Come. From the Rosh HaShana prayers we see clearly that *tzedaka* is included in that list. From giving *tzedaka* one "eats fruits" even in this world. The "fruit" of *tzedaka* is nullification of "the evil decree." Instead of the coming year being a year of woe, one gains a year of blessing and happiness.

The Maggid of Kamenetz *zt'l* once went to visit one of his town's wealthiest residents. During the

man asked the wealthy Jew to please give him an additional coin, and the result was an explosion of anger. "Another leach who goes knocking on doors asking for money! It's a plague! You don't finish with one and already there's another knocking on the door! This one cannot afford to marry off his daughter. This one's business failed. This one's house burned down. It never ends! Leach after leach, sucking at you all day long!"

The poor man who had lost his house stood there flabbergasted and ashamed, but the Maggid of Kamenetz answered the wealthy man and said, "Let me share a true story with you. Once, on an extremely hot summer day, I was traveling in a horse-pulled wagon. The horse was exhausted and hot, and



visit a knock was heard at the door. A Jew from a neighboring town had come to ask for *tzedaka*. He pulled out a letter from his Rav testifying that a fire had destroyed the man's home and had left him penniless. The wealthy Jew looked at the letter and gave the man one copper coin. The unfortunate

when we reached a forest the air was full of flies that attacked and hounded him constantly, biting him everywhere until blood flowed from him. The poor beast tried to swat them with his tail. The driver tried to shoo them away with his whip, but as soon as the satiated flies flew off, clouds of hungry ones took their

place. The driver, a simple, upright Jew, turned to me and asked, 'Rebbe, we all know that *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* is good and created the world to bestow of His good. I once heard that everything that He made He made for a purpose, but these beastly flies – it looks like destruction is their only purpose. Look at what they are doing to my horse! Why doesn't the Al-Mighty show mercy on him and make the flies leave him alone? Why does He let them keep biting him and sucking his blood?'

"I answered, 'If you would read books about science and nature, you would not say such a thing. You would know that the flies are doing your horse and you a great favor and you would thank the Al-Mighty for creating them. I have read that in Africa, every month they drain blood from their horses and many of the horses die from it. The scientists discovered that the blood letting is necessary because in Africa there are hardly any flies. When a fly bites a horse he sucks out blood that the horse's body needs to replace. Blood circulating through a horse's system collects infectious things that biting flies remove, but in Africa, where the flies are lacking the horses periodically need to have artificial blood letting, which is often fatal to them. Realize, therefore, that if not for these flies swarming on your horse, you would have to pay good money out of your pocket and have a doctor come and perform blood letting on him. Afterwards, your horse would not be able to work for you and would need at least a week to recover its strength. Instead, *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* sends you these flies to perform the blood letting for free, and your horse recovers while he is still on the job!'



"When the driver heard he lifted his hands to Heaven and cried, 'Master of the Universe! I thank You for the kindness that You have shown to me and my horse, and I ask forgiveness for questioning You.'"

The Maggid concluded by telling his host, "Words like the ones that I said to that driver I say to you now, for you have complained about poor people coming to your door like swarms of leaches. If you only understood the Al-Mighty's ways and were aware of His Infinite Goodness, You would ask forgiveness for your words and your outburst. You would thank Him for sending these shuls to your door and you would not call them leaches. The Medrash says, 'Any door that does not open to allow the poor in will eventually open to allow in a doctor.'

If Heaven decides that a man has extra money and he must part with it, it is best for him to happily give it to the poor. If he doesn't -- if he looks at the poor as if they are leaches and keeps the extra money, he eventually will part with that money under much more painful circumstances -- when he needs it to pay a doctor" (*Ateres Zvi*).

**How great is the mitzvah** of *tzedaka* and how tremendously valuable are its fruits! The prophet says (*Yeshayahu 32:17*), "From the act of giving *tzedaka* comes peace (peace of mind & peace in the home). Through the *avoda* of *tzedaka* comes tranquility and security forever." Similarly (*Mishlei 10:2*), "וגדקה תציל ממות – And *tzedaka* will save from death." Similarly (*Ibid. 21:21*), "רודה בודקת וחסד ימצא חיים גדקה וכבוד *tzedaka* and *chessed* will find life, *tzedaka* and honor."

One can ask, however, "Granted, on Rosh HaShana we can nullify the evil decree through prayer and repentance. Money, however, is *muktzeh*, so how can we nullify the evil decree by giving *tzedaka*? If giving *tzedaka* must wait until after Rosh HaShana, what will be in the meantime?"

**Such thinking is a terrible and fateful mistake.** Why on earth should anyone think that *tzedaka* can be done only with money? Giving someone a smile is *tzedaka*, too! So, too, is taking interest in another person's welfare. So, too, is any sacrifice for another person, even a small sacrifice. For example, somebody by mistake has sat in the seat that you bought for the Rosh HaShana *davening*, but you remain silent. You don't tell him to go sit somewhere else. To avoid causing any unpleasantness, you go find another seat. Or say that someone mistakenly is using your *Machzor*. Perhaps you want the honor of taking the *sefer* Torah out of the Ark, but someone else wants the honor. In all of these cases, if to avoid unpleasantness you "step back" and forego your wishes – if you let your fellow have his way -- you are performing *tzedaka*, and without money! Without a doubt you merit the mitzvah of *tzedaka*, and without a doubt, and the "fruits" will be great and "tasty."

Never think that *tzedaka* and *chessed* can be done only for the poor and destitute. It can be done for the wealthy, too, for neighbors and for business partners, for brothers, sisters, spouses, parents and children. A caring smile, a compliment, a word of encouragement or any other good word – it is all *tzedaka* and can help to nullify the evil decree. (*Sha'arei Armon*)

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