TORAH STUDIES

Toldot

Whose Money Is It?

Why Giving Isn't Generosity, but a Matter of Ownership

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Toldot

Isaac and Rebecca endure twenty childless years until their prayers are answered and Rebecca conceives. She experiences a difficult pregnancy as the "children struggle inside her"; G d tells her that "there are two nations in your womb," and that the younger will prevail over the elder.

Esau emerges first; Jacob is born clutching Esau's heel. Esau grows up to be "a cunning hunter, a man of the field"; Jacob is "a wholesome man," a dweller in the tents of learning. Isaac favors Esau; Rebecca loves Jacob. Returning exhausted and hungry from the hunt one day, Esau sells his birthright (his rights as the firstborn) to Jacob for a pot of red lentil stew.

In Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Isaac presents Rebecca as his sister out of fear that he will be killed by someone coveting her beauty. He farms the land, reopens the wells dug by his father, Abraham, and digs a series of his own wells. Over the first two there is strife with the Philistines, but the waters of the new wells are enjoyed in tranquility.

Esau marries two Hittite women. Isaac grows old and blind and expresses his desire to bless Esau before he dies. While Esau goes off to hunt for his father's favorite food, Rebecca dresses Jacob in Esau's clothes, covers his arms and neck with goatskins to simulate the feel of his hairier brother, prepares a similar dish, and sends Jacob to his father. Jacob receives his father's blessings for "the dew of the heaven and the fat of the land" and mastery over his brother. When Esau returns and the deception is revealed, all Isaac can do for his weeping son is predict that he will live by his sword, and that when Jacob falters, the younger brother will forfeit his supremacy over the elder.

Jacob leaves home for Haran to flee Esau's wrath and to find a wife in the family of his mother's brother, Laban. Esau marries a third wife—Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

If someone asked you for your best investment advice, what would you suggest?



G-d’s advice for financial success: give 10% of your earnings to *tzedakah*. It's the one investment that always pays back.



TEXT 1

Tosafot, Taanit 9a

הָכִי אִיתָא בְּסִיפְרֵי: "עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר אֵת כָּל תְּבוּאַת זַרְעֶךָ הַיּוֹצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה שָׁנָה שָׁנָה" (דְּבָרִים יד, כב).

אֵין לִי אֶלָּא תְּבוּאַת זַרְעֶךָ שֶׁחַיָּיב בְּמַעֲשֵׂר. רִבִּית וּפְרַקְמַטְיָא וְכָל שְׁאָר רְוָוחִים מְנַיִן?

תַּלְמוּד לוֹמַר: "אֶת כֹּל", דְּהַוָה מָצֵי לְמֵימַר "אֶת תְּבוּאָתְךָ", מַאי כֹּל? לְרַבּוֹת רִבִּית וּפְרַקְמַטְיָא וְכָל דָּבָר שֶׁמַּרְוִיחַ בּוֹ.

The *Sifrei* expands on the verse “Tithe, you must tithe, all the produce of your seeds that grow in your field year by year” (Deuteronomy 14:22).

This verse only speaks of an obligation to tithe our crops. Where does the Torah imply that we must also tithe profits earned from moneylending, business dealings, and all other forms of income?

The passage states “all” the produce. It could have said, “Tithe your produce.” Why does it add “all”? To imply that we must also tithe profits we earn from moneylending, business dealings, and all other forms of income.



Tithing, originally an agricultural law, is fulfilled today as a rabbinic requirement to donate ten percent of our profits to *tzedakah*.

TEXT 2

Talmud, Taanit 9b

אַשְׁכְּחֵיהּ רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן לְיַנּוּקָא דְּרֵישׁ לָקִישׁ, אָמַר לֵיהּ, אֵימָא לִי פְּסוּקֵיךְ.

אָמַר לֵיהּ: "עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר" (דְּבָרִים יד, כב). אָמַר לֵיהּ: וּמַאי "עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר"?

אָמַר לֵיהּ: עַשֵּׂר בְּשְׁבִיל שֶׁתִּתְעַשֵּׂר.

אָמַר לֵיהּ: מְנָא לָךְ?

אָמַר לֵיהּ: זִיל נַסֵּי.

אָמַר לֵיהּ: וּמִי שָׁרֵי לְנַסּוּיֵיהּ לְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא? וְהָכְתִיב "לֹא תְנַסּוּ אֶת ה'" (דְּבָרִים ו, טז)?

Rabbi Yochanan saw the son of his colleague Reish Lakish and said, “Tell me what you learned today.”

The child recited the passage, “Tithe, you must tithe.” The child asked, “Why does the word ‘tithe’ appear twice in this passage?”

Rabbi Yochanan explained, “[It means] tithe so that you will be wealthy.”

The child asked, “How do you know this?”

Rabbi Yochanan replied, “Go and test it.”

The child asked, “Is it permitted to test G-d? Doesn’t the Torah say, ‘Do not test G-d’?” (Deuteronomy 6:16)?

TEXT 2

Talmud, Taanit 9b

אָמַר לֵיהּ: הָכִי אָמַר רַבִּי הוֹשַׁעְיָא: חוּץ מִזּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הָבִיאוּ אֶת כָּל הַמַּעֲשֵׂר אֶל בֵּית הָאוֹצָר, וְיִהְיוּ טֶרֶף בְּבֵיתִי, וּבְחָנוּנִי נָא בָּזֹאת אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת, אִם לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֶת אֲרֻבּוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וַהֲרִיקֹתִי לָכֶם בְּרָכָה עַד בְּלִי דָי" (מַלְאָכִי ג, י).

Rabbi Yochanan replied, “This commandment is an exception. For the Torah says, regarding tithing, ‘Bring all the tithes to the storehouse so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now by this, said G-d, if I will not open for you the windows of Heaven and pour out for you a blessing without limit’ (Malachi 3:10).”

Giving a tenth of your income is a rabbinic obligation that brings the same blessings as tithing crops.



TEXT 3

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Igrot Kodesh* 3, pp. 423–24

בַּיִים אוֹיְבֶּערְשְׁטֶן אִיז דָּאךְ דָּא צְווֵיי וועֶגן: אֵיין דֶּרֶךְ אִיז, אַז פְּרִיעֶר גִיט עֶר גֶעלְט אוּן זֶעט וויפֶל מֶען שֵׁיידְט אֶפּ דֶערְפוּן אוֹיךְ צְדָקָה, לְפִי עֵרֶךְ. אוּן אַ צְווֵייטֶער וועֶג אִיז, אַז מ'גִיט אוֹיךְ צְדָקָה מֶער ווי מ'קֶען אוּן דֶער אוֹיְבֶּערְשְׁטֶער בְּלַיְיבְּט נִיט אַ בַּעַל חוֹב, אוּן גִיט דֶערְנָאךְ אוֹיךְ אֶפּ . . .

בְּמֵילָא קוּמְט אוֹיס אַז פַּאר יֶעדְן דָּאלֶער וָאס מ'גִיט מֶער, ווי עֶס וַיְיזְט זִיךְ אוֹיס, מֶער ווי לוֹיְט דִי כּוֹחוֹת נָאךְ, גִיט דֶער אוֹיְבֶּערְשְׁטֶער אַ חוּץ דֶעם דָּאלֶער נָאךְ כַּמָּה, וְכַיָּדוּעַ בְּכַמָּה סְפָרִים.

With G-d, there are two ways: The first is that G-d first gives us money and then sees how much of it we set aside for charity. The second is that we give charity beyond our means, and G-d doesn't remain indebted; He repays the debt generously. . . .

Therefore, it turns out that for every dollar that we give beyond what we think we can, the Almighty gives that dollar plus several more, as is brought in many books.



If tithing before receiving income brings a **guaranteed** return, then all the more so tithing from money we have already earned.

TEXT 4

Talmud, Bava Batra 10a

וְזוֹ שְׁאֵלָה שָׁאַל טוֹרְנוּסְרוּפוּס הָרָשָׁע אֶת רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: אִם אֱלֹקֵיכֶם אוֹהֵב עֲנִיִּים הוּא, מִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינוֹ מְפַרְנְסָם?

אָמַר לוֹ: כְּדֵי שֶׁנִּיצּוֹל אָנוּ בָּהֶן מִדִּינָהּ שֶׁל גֵּיהִנֹּם.

אָמַר לוֹ: אַדְּרַבָּה, זוֹ שֶׁמְּחַיֶּיבְתָּן לְגֵיהִנֹּם.

Turnus Rufus the Wicked asked Rabbi Akiva, “If your G-d loves the poor, why doesn’t He provide for them?”

Rabbi Akiva answered, “So that we, the givers, will be saved from being placed in purgatory.”

Turnus Rufus replied, “On the contrary, it is this commandment that sends to purgatory those who give [because they enrich the poor, whom G-d destined for poverty].”

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we give away money that we worked hard to earn?
2. If G-d wants to help those in need, why does He place that responsibility on us, even for people we barely know?

TEXT 5

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings 9:1

עַל שִׁשָּׁה דְּבָרִים נִצְטַוָּה אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן: עַל עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, וְעַל בִּרְכַת הַשֵּׁם, וְעַל שְׁפִיכוּת דָּמִים, וְעַל גִּלּוּי עֲרָיוֹת, וְעַל הַגָּזֵל, וְעַל הַדִּינִים. אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁכְּלָן קִבָּלָה הֵן בְּיָדֵינוּ מִמֹּשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ, וְהַדַּעַת נוֹטָה לָהֶן, מִכְּלַל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה יֵרָאֶה, שֶׁעַל אֵלּוּ נִצְטַוָּה. הוֹסִיף לְנֹחַ אֵבֶר מִן הַחַי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "אַךְ בָּשָׂר בְּנַפְשׁוֹ דָמוֹ לֹא תֹאכֵלוּ" (בְּרֵאשִׁית ט, ד); נִמְצְאוּ שֶׁבַע מִצְוֹת.

וְכֵן הָיָה הַדָּבָר בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם עַד אַבְרָהָם. בָּא אַבְרָהָם וְנִצְטַוָּה יָתֵר עַל אֵלּוּ בַּמִּילָה, וְהוּא הִתְפַּלֵּל שַׁחֲרִית. וְיִצְחָק הִפְרִישׁ מַעֲשֵׂר וְהוֹסִיף תְּפִלָּה אַחֶרֶת לִפְנוֹת הַיּוֹם. וְיַעֲקֹב הוֹסִיף גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה, וְהִתְפַּלֵּל עַרְבִית. וּבְמִצְרַיִם נִצְטַוָּה עַמְרָם בְּמִצְוֹת יְתֵרוֹת, עַד שֶׁבָּא מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ וְנִשְׁלְמָה תּוֹרָה עַל יָדוֹ.

Six Divine commandments were given to Adam: the prohibitions against (a) worshipping false gods, (b) cursing G-d, (c) murder, (d) sexual promiscuity, (e) theft, and (f) the obligation to establish laws and courts of justice. . . . The prohibition against eating flesh from a living animal was added for Noah, as the Torah states, "But don't eat flesh with its life, which is its blood" (Genesis 9:4). Thus, there are seven commandments.

These matters were binding on all people throughout the world until Abraham. When Abraham arose, he was commanded, in addition to these, regarding circumcision, and he ordained the morning prayers. Isaac separated tithes and ordained the afternoon prayer. Jacob added the prohibition against eating the sciatic nerve and ordained the evening prayers. In Egypt, Amram was commanded regarding other *mitzvot*. Ultimately, Moses came, and the Torah was completed through him.

TEXT 6A

Genesis 26:12

וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בָּאָרֶץ הַהִיא, וַיִּמְצָא בַּשָּׁנָה
הַהִיא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים, וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ ה'.

And Isaac sowed in that land, and he found in that year a hundredfold, and G-d blessed him.



The first in history to give a tithe was Isaac during a time of famine.

TEXT 6B

Rashi, ad loc.

"בָּאָרֶץ הַהִיא": אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֵינוֹ חֲשׁוּבָה כְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַצְמָהּ, כְּאֶרֶץ שִׁבְעָה גּוֹיִם.
"בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא": אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֵינָהּ כְּתִקְנָהּ, שֶׁהָיְתָה שְׁנַת רָעָבוֹן.
"מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים": שֶׁאָמְדוּהָ כַּמָּה רְאוּיָה לַעֲשׂוֹת, וְעָשְׂתָה עַל אַחַת שֶׁאָמְדוּהָ מֵאָה.

"In that land": though it was not as fertile as the Land of Israel—the land of the seven nations.

"In that year": though it was not as fertile as it should have been, for it was a year of famine.

"A hundredfold": they estimated how much the land was fit to produce, and for each measure they estimated, it produced one hundred measures.

Despite a famine and poor soil, Isaac's harvest was miraculously blessed, yielding **one hundred** times more than expected.



TEXT 6C

Midrash, *Bereshit Rabah* 34:6

וְהָלוֹא אֵין הַבְּרָכָה שׁוֹרָה עַל דָּבָר שֶׁהוּא בְּמִשְׁקָל וּבְמִדָּה וּבְמִנְיָן, מִפְּנֵי מָה מָדַד אוֹתָהּ?

מִפְּנֵי הַמַּעֲשְׂרוֹת.

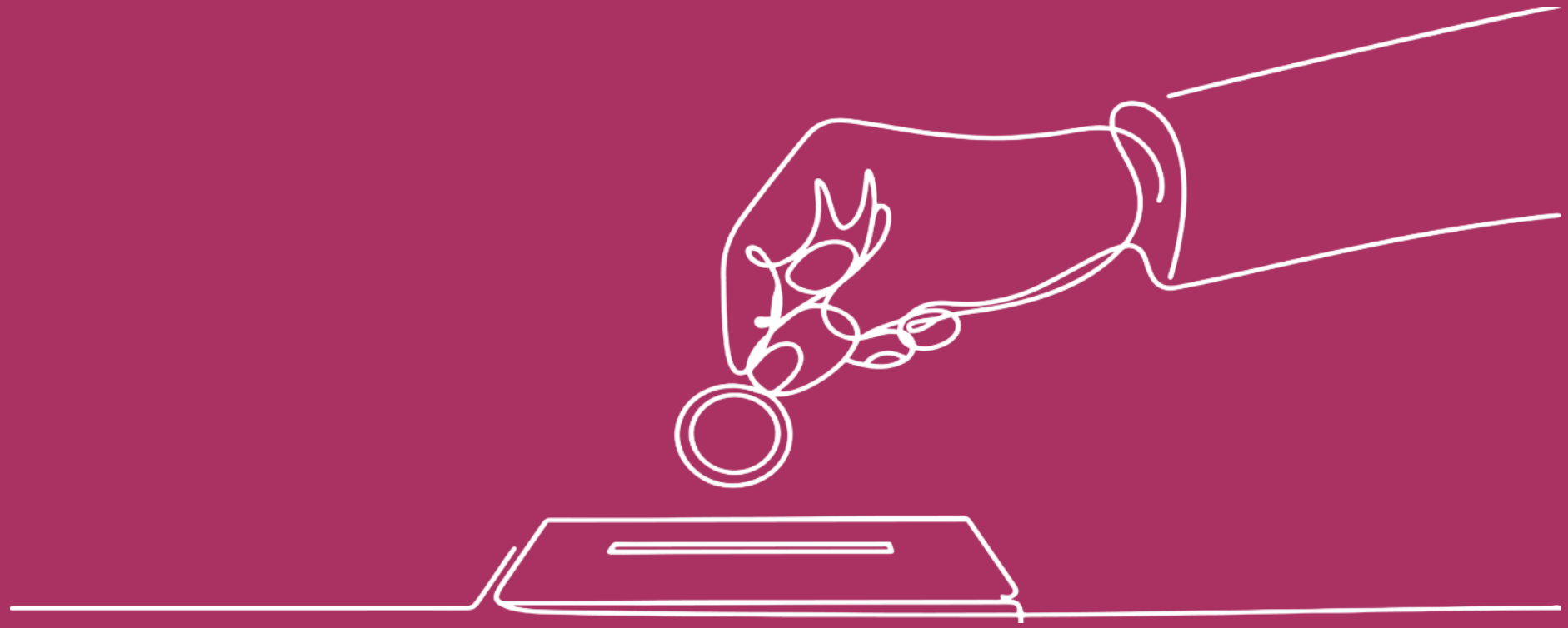
If blessing does not rest on something that is measured or counted, why did Isaac measure his crop?

To [know how much to] tithe.

Isaac began giving a tenth from the start of his harvest, even before seeing blessing. When his crop grew a hundredfold, he increased his giving accordingly.



The Torah tells us that Abraham had already given a tithe years earlier after returning from battle with the kings.



TEXT 7

Rabbi Avraham ben David, Commentary to *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings 9:1

הָיָה רָאוּי לוֹמַר [עַל אַבְרָהָם] וְהוּא הִתְפַּלֵּל שַׁחֲרִית וְהִפְרִישׁ מַעֲשֵׂר.

Maimonides should have said [of Abraham], “He ordained the morning prayer and separated a tithe.”

QUESTION

Why did Maimonides say Isaac was the first to tithe when Abraham did it first and Isaac only followed by example?

TEXT 8

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likutei Sichot* 5, p. 70

דִּי אַלְגֶעמַיינֶע בַּאדַייטוּנְג פוּן מִצְוַת מַעֲשֵׂר וְואס מֶען דַּארְף גֶעבְּן צוּם לֵוִי (אוּן עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה מַעֲשֵׂר כְּסָפִים וְואס מֶען דַּארְף גֶעבְּן אוֹיךְ צְדָקָה), אִיז — "לַה' הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ" (תְּהִלִּים כד, א). אַז אַלְץ וְואס אַ אִיד פַּארְמָאגְט גֶעהֶערְט צוּם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶן.

אוּן דֶּעריבֶּער דַּארְף עֶר צוּם אַלֶעם עֶרְשְׁטֶן אָפְּגֶעבְּן אַ צֶעהְנְטֶל, אוּן דֶּער צֶעהְנְטֶל דַּארְף זַיִין מִן הַמּוּבְחָר, צוּם לֵוִי, וְואס "ה' הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ". אוּן עֶרְשְׁט נָאךְ דֶּעם, נוּצְט עֶר דִּי אַנְדֶּערֶע טֵיילְן פַּאר זַיֶּינֶע אֵיגֶענֶע צְווֶעקְן.

The general significance of agricultural tithing—giving 10 percent to the Levite (and similarly tithing from our income, which one gives to the poor)—is encapsulated by the passage, "The earth and all that fills it belongs to G-d" (Psalms 24:1). That is, everything a Jew possesses belongs to the Almighty.

Therefore, first and foremost, we must set aside a tenth, and that tenth should be of the finest quality, given to the Levite [or the poor person], of whom it is said, "They inherit from G-d" (Deuteronomy 18:2). Only after this may we use the remaining funds for ourselves.

צְדָקָה—Justice

Tzedakah

The first fundamental of *tzedakah* is that G-d gives me success and entrusts me with money, leaving 90% and asking that 10% be passed on to His children. It is not generosity, but **justice**: giving others what is rightfully theirs.

ANSWER 1

We give away money because we didn’t earn it alone: G-d is our partner in our success. He gives us our abilities and opportunities, and even though we work, He is the main source of what we earn. He could take most of it, but instead He leaves us the majority and asks us to pass on a small share to others.

TEXT 9

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, ibid., p. 72

. . . בַּיי אַ מִלְחָמָה פּוּן צְווייַ צְדָדִים, אֲפִילּוּ וואָן אֵיין צַד אִיז פִּיל שְׁטַארְקֶער פּוּן צְווייטְן, קֶען מָען קֶיינְמָאל נִיט זַיין זִיכֶער וואָר עָס וועט מְנַצֵּחַ זַיין . . וַיייל לִפְעָמִים קֶען דֶער שְׁוואַכְערֶער צַד זִיךְ שְׁטַארְקֶן אוּן מְנַצֵּחַ זַיין. וואָס דֶעריבֶּער אִיז אַלֶע מָאל וואָן מָען זִיגְט אִין אַ מִלְחָמָה, אֲפִילּוּ וואָן סְ׳אִיז מְנַצֵּחַ דֶער שְׁטַארְקֶערֶער צַד, דַּארְף דֶער מְנַצֵּחַ אָפְּגָעבְּן אַ סְפֶּעצִיעֶלְן שֶׁבַח וְהוֹדָיָה צוּם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן.

עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה אִין פַּאל וואָן דֶער נִצָּחוֹן אִיז לְמַעְלָה מֵהַטֶּבַע לְגַמְרֵי, אַזוֹי וויִ אִין דֶער מִלְחָמָה פּוּן אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ, וואָן גָּעצַיילְטֶע מֶענְטְשֶׁן הָאבְּן בַּאזִיגְט פִּיר שְׁטַארְקֶע מְלָכִים.

. . . וַיייל בְּדֶרֶךְ הַטֶּבַע, אִיז לֹא יִמָּלֵט אַז עָס זָאל נִיט שַׁאטְן עֶפֶּעס אוֹיךְ דֶעם צַד וואָס קוּמְט אַרוֹיס בְּנִצָּחוֹן גָּמוּר. . . . קוּמְט דָּאךְ אִין אַזַא פַּאל גָּאר אַ סְפֶּעצִיעֶלֶער שֶׁבַח וְהוֹדָיָה צוּם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן.

In a war between two sides, even when one side is much stronger than the other, one can never be certain who will be victorious . . . because at times the weaker side can rally and prevail. For this reason, whenever a victory is achieved in war, even when the stronger side wins, the victor must offer special praise and thanksgiving to G-d.

All the more so in a case where the victory is entirely beyond nature, like the war of Abraham our patriarch, when a small number of people defeated four powerful kings.

. . . By natural means, it is impossible that there be no losses at all, even on the side that emerges with a complete victory, . . . which is why an especially great praise and thanksgiving are certainly due to the Almighty.

ABRAHAM

- Gives from all his wealth after experiencing open miracles
- An act of gratitude

ISAAC

- Sets aside a portion even before seeing any blessing
- An act of measured, structured giving

ANSWER

Isaac lived through hardship and didn't see open miracles, yet he still recognized that everything comes from G-d, and He set aside a tenth even when expecting little. Abraham gave after experiencing open miracles. Isaac teaches that even in difficult times, we remain G-d's partners. Therefore it is linked to him.

TEXT 10

Midrash, *Tanchuma*, Mishpatim, ch. 9

אָמַר דָּוִד לִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא: רִבּוֹן הָעוֹלָם, "יֵשֵׁב עוֹלָם לִפְנֵי אֱלֹקִים" (תְּהִלִּים סא, ח), תְּיַשֵּׁב עוֹלָמְךָ בְּשָׁוֶה, הָעֲשִׁירִים וְהָעֲנִיִּים.

אָמַר לוֹ: אִם כֵּן, "חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת מַן יְנִצְּרֵהוּ" (תְּהִלִּים סא, ח)? אִם יִהְיוּ כֻּלָּם עֲשִׁירִים אוֹ עֲנִיִּים, מִי יוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד?

David said to G-d, "Master of the universe, 'May the world sit [equally] before G-d' (Psalms 61:8): make your world equal, either rich or poor."

G-d replied, "If I do that, 'Who will preserve kindness and truth?' (ibid.) If everyone were rich or everyone were poor, who would perform acts of kindness?"

ANSWER 2

G-d could provide for everyone directly, but He created a world where people have different amounts so kindness can exist. Those with more give to those with less, and through this He connects people. So we are responsible even for those we don’t know, as part of His system of giving.

TEXT 11

Rabbi Moshe Alshich,
Deuteronomy 15:10

דַּע לְךָ כִּי הֲלֹא לֹא מִבִּלְתִּי יְכוֹלֶת ה' חָלִילָה לֹא הֶעֱשִׁיר אֶת הַדַּלִּים, וְלֹא יִצְטָרְכוּ לָךְ . . . כִּי מָה שֶּׁלֹּא נָתַן לָהֶם הוּא לְמַעַן זְכוּתְךָ לְהֵיטִיב לָךְ.

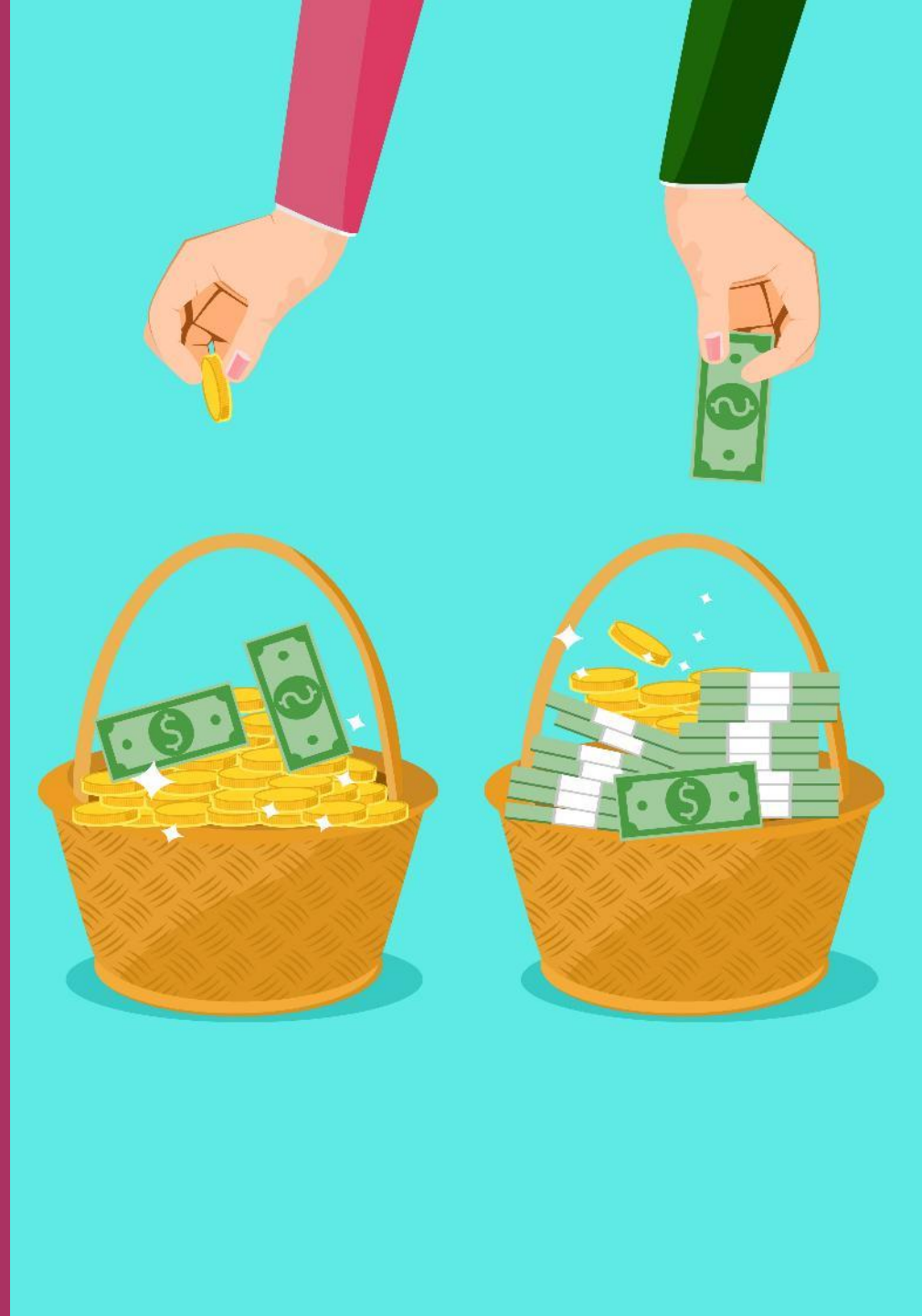
. . . וְחֵלֶק הֶעָנִי נָתַן לֶעָשִׁיר נוֹסָף עַל חֶלְקוֹ. נִמְצָא כִּי מִשֶּׁל הֶעָנִי נוֹתֵן לוֹ. וְזֶה יֹאמַר "נָתוֹן כו'" (דְּבָרִים טו, י), לוֹמַר הַנָּתוֹן שֶׁהוּא עָלַי לַעֲלוֹת מְזוֹנוֹ, תֵּן לוֹ. וְלֹא יֵרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִתְּךָ לוֹ, כִּי הֲלֹא מִשֶּׁלּוֹ אַתָּה נוֹתֵן לוֹ.

Know that it is not because of inability, Heaven forbid, that G-d does not enrich the poor so that they don't need you. . . . He does it for your sake, to reward you.

. . . G-d gives to the wealthy the portion of the poor in addition to their own portion. Therefore, when you give to people experiencing poverty, you are giving them *their* money.

G-d placed the money in your hands to pass on: it was never truly yours but meant for others.

Tzedakah is not voluntary kindness but justice: you are a custodian passing on what belongs to its rightful owner.



TEXT 12

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Igrot Kodesh* 7, pp. 130–131

אִיךְ בִּין גֶעווֶען צוּפְרִידֶען צוּ בַּאקוּמֶען אַ גְּרוּס
פוּן אַיְיךְ . . . אוּן פוּן דֶּער גוּטֶען אָנְגֶענוּמֶענֶעם
בַּאשְׁלוּס, אִין אַ גוּטֶער גְּלִיקְלִיכֶער שָׁעָה, אַז פוּן
דֶּער הַכְנָסָה וָואס וֶועט זַיְין בְּעֶזְרַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ
פוּן דִּי קְוַואלֶען פוּן דֶּער "בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע
קָאמְפַּאנִיעֶ" זָאל אַווֶעקְגֶעגֶעבְּן ווֶערֶען אַ
גֶעוּוִיסֶער טֵייל פַאר דִּי פֶערְשִׁידֶענֶע צְדָקוֹת.

וֶוען אַ אִיד דָּא לְמַטָּה, נֶעמְט אָן אַ גוּטֶען
בַּאשְׁלוּס צוּ גֶעבֶּען צְדָקָה אִין אַ גְּרוֹיְסֶען סְכוּם,
אִיז וֶוען אֲפִילּוּ בִּשְׁעַת מַעֲשֶׂה, זֶעהְט עֶר נִיט דִּי
מֶעגְלִיכְקַיְיט ווִי עֶר וֶועט דָּאס קֶענֶען
פַארְווִירְקְלִיכֶען בְּפוֹעַל, אִיז אָבֶּער לְמַעְלָה,
וֶוערְט גְּלַיְיךְ פַאר עֶם אָפְּגֶע'פַּסְקְ'נְט, פַּרְנָסָה
בְּהַרְחָבָה אִין אַזַא מָאס אַז עֶר זָאל קֶענֶען טַאקֶע
בְּפוֹעַל מַמָּשׁ אוֹיְסְפִילֶען זַיְין גוּטֶען בַּאשְׁלוּס.

I was most pleased to receive your regards . . . and to hear of your good decision, taken at an auspicious and happy hour, that a certain portion of the income to be generated with G-d's help from the oil wells of the Be'er Sheva Company will be donated to various charities.

When Jews on earth choose wisely to give large sums to charity, even if they cannot foresee in the moment how they might earn such vast sums, G-d in Heaven immediately decrees that they should receive abundant livelihood to the extent that they can fulfill their good decision.

...

TEXT 12

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Igrot Kodesh* 7, pp. 130–131

אוּן אִיךְ בִּין זִיכֶער, אַז אוֹיְךְ אִין אֵייֶער אוֹפֶן, חָאטְשׁ בִּיז יֶעצְט אִיז דָּאס נָאךְ נִיט גֶּעווֶען, אָבֶּער ווִיבַּאלְד אַז אִיר מִיט אֵייֶער שׁוּתָּף, הָאבֶּען אָנְגֶּענוּמֶען מִיטְן גַאנְצֶען הַארְצֶּען דִּי גּוּטֶע הַחְלָטָה, אִיז גֶּעווִיס לְמַעְלָה שׁוֹיְן אָפְּגֶע'פַּסְק'נְט גֶּעווָארֶען, אוֹיְף צוּ גֶּעבֶּען אַיְיךְ פַּרְנָסָה בְּהַרְחָבָה וּבְהַצְלָחָה, אַז אִיר זָאלְט קֶענֶען פַארְווִירְקְלִיכֶען אֶייֶער גוּטֶען ווִילֶען מִיט אַ פְרֵיילִיכֶער הַארְץ אוּן בְּיָד רְחָבָה.

I am certain that this will also prevail in your case. Although this was not yet realized until now, since you and your partner have wholeheartedly accepted this good decision, it has certainly been decreed above that you will receive abundant livelihood and success. This will enable you to fulfill your good wish with a joyful heart and with an open hand.



The safest “investment” is *tzedakah*, because G-d guarantees it. He entrusts people with money to pass on to others, and when they do so faithfully, He gives them more.

TEXT 13

Talmud, Bava Batra 10a

תַּנְיָא, רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: גְּדוֹלָה צְדָקָה שֶׁמְּקָרֶבֶת אֶת הַגְּאוּלָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כֹּה אָמַר ה', שִׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּט וַעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה, כִּי קְרוֹבָה יְשׁוּעָתִי לָבוֹא וְצִדְקָתִי לְהִגָּלוֹת".

Rabbi Yehudah says, “Great is charity for it advances the Redemption, as the Torah states, ‘So said G-d: uphold justice and do charity, for My salvation is near to come and My righteousness to be revealed’ (Isaiah 56:1).”

Tzedakah brings blessing not only to those who give, but to the entire generation.



KEY POINTS

1. The lion's share of our success is due to G-d. We make the effort, but He ensures the success of our efforts.
2. As a partner in our success, G-d is entitled to at least 50 percent of our earnings, if not more. He kindly asks that we give Him only 10 percent.
3. G-d doesn't need money, so He directs us to give it to His children who are in need.
4. G-d could distribute wealth equally to everyone. To give us the blessing of kindness, He gives the wealthy more than they need. These extra funds belong to people with low incomes. It is given to the wealthy to distribute to them.
5. Thus, charity is not a kindness in the Jewish formulation but an act of justice. To withhold it is an injustice.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