

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

SEAT OF HONOR

Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Liefkorte boarded an El Al flight and found himself seated in an aisle seat next to two middle-aged women, one Israeli and the other American. The women's facial expressions made it obvious that they were not pleased to be seated next to a religious rabbi.

Rabbi Liefkorte greeted them politely and made small talk for a few minutes in both Hebrew and English. Then he said, "Ladies, I am sitting in the 'excuse me' seat."

They both looked at him quizzically.

"That means," he explained, "that it is a seat that is a privilege, but it also comes with great responsibility. If you need to get up, just ask me to excuse you, and I will be happy to let you through as many times as you need. Please feel free even to wake me up if you need to get up."

The flight passed uneventfully. After disembarking, Rabbi Liefkorte was waiting in the parking lot for his rental car when a loud shriek echoed from behind him. He turned around just in time to see a car come to an abrupt halt beside him. Inside the car was his Israeli seatmate, along with a tall paratrooper who was clearly her son.

"Zeh harav! Zeh harav!" she shouted excitedly in Hebrew. "This is the rabbi I was telling you about! If more people acted like him, we would have no problems!"

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OF THE WEEK

CHARITABLE ATTITUDES

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

"Ki yihiyeh becha evyon" is not something you say to an individual, because the duty of caring for the poor falls equally upon everyone. This mitzvah's requirements cannot be met by the individual alone, nor by the community alone. Both must work side by side.

The *pasuk's* next instruction, *lo se'ameitz es levavcha*, literally means "do not harden your heart." When Jewish hearts are given free rein, they naturally do good; only calculated selfishness can suppress that impulse. Jewish hands are open to the poor.

Again and again, the poor man is referred to as *achicha*. Every needy person, even if you don't know him, is your brother, a child of your Father in heaven. The duty to provide for the poor means that they are the concern of every Jewish community. A community is even allowed to force its members to donate. But the cultivation of Jewish benevolence depends on two factors.

In Jewish thought, *gemilus chasadim* is considered *tzedakah*. One who does not help the poor to the extent of his ability commits a sin. This approach

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

VEDIBARTA BAM:
NIGHT AND DAY



There is a mitzvah to speak about *divrei Torah* all the time, at home and on the road. There is a Gemara featuring a halachic discussion between Rabbi Akiva, Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua while shopping for meat for Rabban Gamliel's son's wedding. From this *pasuk*—*b'shachbecha uv'kumecha*—we learn the mitzvah to say Shema twice a day. Although the evening Shema can be said at any time in the night, the daytime Shema must be recited before a quarter of the daylight time is over. One should check a *zmanim* calendar frequently to ensure that they are always aware of the constantly changing *zman krias Shema*.

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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FEELING THE FEAR OF HEAVEN

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

Last week, we posed a startling question. This, Shabbos we will *bentch* Rosh Chodesh Elul. Although the Yamim Noraim are weeks away, few people are overcome with anxiety over the life-and-death judgment they will soon undergo. How can we understand that logically?

Rav Itzele Peterburger asks this question in an all-encompassing manner. Why is it that when we believe that we are in danger, we are afraid, but even solid emunah that Hashem sees all that we do and rewards or punishes our deeds does not seem to cause people to live in a state of perpetual fright?

Imagine someone sitting and learning in a *beis midrash*. Suddenly, he hears the voice of the *rav* yelling “Fire! Fire! Everyone out!” Adrenaline immediately begins pumping, and he runs from the building as quickly as possible.

Does he know with certainty that there is actually a fire in the building? He has not seen any flames or smelled smoke. Why is he afraid? Because he *believes* that there is a fire somewhere in the building.

Do we truly believe in our *mesorah*? Certainly! Most of us we would give our lives *al kiddush Hashem* if called upon to do so. So we surely do believe. We are confident that our every deed is witnessed by the Creator, with infinitely great consequences. Yet somehow we manage to sin, failing to feel the awesome fear of Gehinnom or the infinite reward of Olam Haba. Why?

The answer is complex, and would not lend itself well to a quick explanation in a few lines of a column. We will begin to explore some factors in the coming weeks, *b'ezras Hashem*. However, it is important to know that it is possible to develop a level of *yiras shamayim* that results in one fearing Hashem as one fears fire.

To be continued. 


makes “doing good” independent of the donor’s mood, and instead classes it as an obligation. The recipient is thus spared humiliation, since he does not receive “alms,” gifts of mercy.

Additionally, Chazal set the minimum amount of *tzedakah*: one must give to *tzedakah* one tenth of all yearly income. Every Jew becomes the administrator of a charity fund entrusted to him by Hashem. These assets are no longer his; hence, he is pleased when he finds an opportunity to do a good deed with them.

Under Jewish law, support is assured to every poor person. *Tzedakah* does not shame the recipient who needs it. Moreover, one who cannot work, but refuses his rightful *tzedakah* out of pride, is called a *shofech damim*.

However, the same law attaches great value to self-sufficiency. A person should be prepared to live on bare necessities and work menial jobs to avoid charity. Some of our heroes—Hillel, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Chanina, Rav Sheishes, Rav Oshiya, Rav Huna—eked out a living as woodcutters, blacksmiths, water carriers. “Skin a dead animal in the marketplace and be paid,” Chazal tell us. “Do not say, ‘I am a priest and a scholar; such work is beneath me.’”

Chazal tell us that one who does not need *tzedakah* but takes it anyway will not leave this world without having to resort to it—but one who is entitled to charity and yet manages to live without it will not leave this world without having supported others.

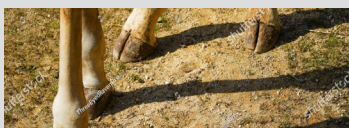
With *tzedakah*, the community can rest assured that no one will be driven to crime. Through the joint efforts of the community and the individual, everyone can earn an honest living, saving society from the degeneration of the masses into crime. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.




wonder WORLD

EATING THE PEACE



What makes an animal kosher?

Parshas Re'eh teaches us how to tell which animals are kosher: they must have split hooves and chew their cud. But what do those signs mean, and how do they work in the animal world? Animals that chew their cud have special stomachs with multiple chambers. They swallow their food almost whole, then bring it back up, chew it again, and swallow it into another stomach. This slow, repeated digestion helps them get every bit of nutrition out of grasses and leaves. Split hooves help these animals walk steadily on rough ground, like hills or rocky paths. Goats, sheep, and deer use their hooves to grip uneven terrain. These two signs are clues that the animal is peaceful, not a predator or scavenger. These are the types of *middos* we want to absorb from our food. 

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