



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT TERUMAH

Judgy?

We know that a big theme in Judaism is bestowing people with benefit of the doubt. Our Sages tell us (Avot 1:6): הו"ד – את כל האדם לכך זכות favorably.

Interestingly, the terminology here in Hebrew for 'favorably' is 'l'kaf zechut / 'לכף זכות' (to the side of merit). Literally translated, though, the word "kaf / כף" means a spoon. What does a spoon have to do with judging others positively?

R' Shlomo Landau once shared a beautiful novelty. Chazal were subtly communicating a deeper truth behind giving benefit of the doubt. Similar to when one samples a pot of cholent and stirs around a few times with a big spoon to look for the delicious, soft piece of meat at the bottom, judging others favorably may sometimes inevitably present as a challenge. It may be really hard to find the good or put a positive spin on things, and one might have to "stir up the pot" a few times to look for it. Eventually, though, you'll find the good in another person, and nothing could be more delightful than that...

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei

Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Avigail Bat Tehila Frida Bat Yaffa
Yehuda Yaakov Ben Chaya Liba Moshe Ben Moriah
Noach Yisrael Ben Victoria Yaffa Miriam Bat Bakol
Chana Bat Malka David Ben Rivka Rena Bat Bakol
Ariella Bat Hila Yitzhak Ben Naama Eliron Ben Leah
Yehoshua Ben Miriam Svetlana Tzivya Bat Esther
Rachamim Ben Shifra Dora Devora Bat Marusia Mazal

Thanks to those keeping the website running for another year!!

Gabby Roshodesh | Michael Suleymanov | Yoni Kosowsky | Maor
Naim | Malky Mandel | Yehoshua Sionov | Chaim Akilov |
Ephraim Gurell | Mazal Malayev | Ilana Mordukhayeva | Daniella
Mordukhayeva | Anonymous | Anonymous

"Before you complain about the difficulties in life...
remember that a director always gives the hardest roles
to the best actors."

Giving for a Living

Eli Rowe, the founder of Hatzolah Air [1], once said something incredibly profound in one of his interviews. "There are only 2 types of people in this world: givers and takers." He continued to share a personal, touching sentiment. "Every morning, I do the same routine. I go to the window, look up, and say, 'Hashem, there are only two types of people in this world: givers and takers. I beg you, let me be a giver today.'"

This Shabbat is Rosh Chodesh Adar – the time that we usher in one of the most auspicious and joyous of months. Purim, which is the highlight and center of the month, is among the happiest days in the Jewish calendar. It's no surprise that 2 out of the 4 primary mitzvot of the big day – *mishloach manot* and *matanot la'evyonim* – involve the act of giving. There couldn't have been a more appropriate assignment to correspond with the general theme. This has been a timeless truth that we have known since the beginning: nothing quite gladdens the soul like being a giver.

In this week's Parsha, the Torah describes the construction of the Tabernacle along with its various components in great detail to serve as a portable manifestation of G-d's Presence while the Jews were to traverse the desert before entering the Promised Land. It opens (Exodus 25:1-2): "G-d told Moshe, saying: *Tell the Israelite People to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart is so moved.*" Obviously, it wasn't out of G-d's ability to have a fully-loaded, ready-to-go *mishkan* miraculously descend from Heaven. Instead, in His abundant love and kindness, He gave us an even better option – the privilege to personally contribute.

We may not all have the same capacity, but that's what makes our nation so incredible. When we each utilize our own individual talents and abilities for the purpose of making the world a better place, the unity amplifies all individual efforts. Regardless of one's financial means, there's always *something* everyone can do for *someone*. There's no shortage of opportunities to give and perform acts of kindness. When we stop focusing on ourselves and instead look for how we can help others, life itself just becomes more amazing. This is true not just from a 'religious' outlook alone but even in the scientific perspective. "Helper's high" is a scientifically recognized phenomenon where acts of generosity trigger the brain's reward system, releasing dopamine and endorphins, leading to feelings of joy and reduced stress. Studies even show that regular giving can enhance mental well-being and even improve physical health by lowering blood pressure and inflammation [2]. And for those of us who are in the business of giving and may feel burnt out, remember that the ability to give – in whatever capacity – is the biggest privilege that must be begged for. Cherish the blessing. It often gets difficult, but there is truly nothing more rewarding.

No one could put it better than R' Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory: "*To give is to show we are not prisoners of what we have. Generosity enlarges the spirit and lets us see beyond ourselves. The paradox is that in giving, we ourselves are enriched, for love is the only thing that grows when it is given away.*"

[1] Hatzolah Air is a nonprofit emergency medical aviation service providing rapid air transport for critically ill or injured patients, primarily serving Jewish communities worldwide.

[2] A 2016 study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* found that older adults who engaged in regular volunteering had lower levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), a key marker of inflammation. Another study in *Hypertension* (2013) showed that spending money on others rather than oneself was associated with lower blood pressure in adults with high baseline BP.