

## What a man gives to the Kohen shall be his. (5:10)

Simply, this means that the man who gives of his material assets to the *Kohen* is not really giving it away; actually, it is an investment that will continue to give back. *Lo yihiyeh*, “it will remain his,” forever, in his stead. We have heard the maxim, *Tzedakah tatzil mi'maves*, “charity protects/saves from death.” It is not as if charity is an added therapy. It is actually a preventative agent that wards off the Angel of Death. It is an added antibody which fights and eradicates the disease which might take one’s life. Why? *Lo yihiyeh*, “it is his;” it remains with him, like a coat of protective armor. The *tzedakah* one gives never leaves him. One need not be sick in order to benefit from the panacea of *tzedakah*. *Lo yihiyeh*; it will always be there, just in case it is ever needed.

This does not undermine the *tzedakah* that one gives if, or when, he is in need of merit. That, too, will have a beneficial effect. It is just that therapy administered prior to an illness has a greater chance of effecting a propitious result than therapy administered when the patient is quite ill.

Furthermore, *tzedakah* is not necessarily measured by how much one gives, but rather, by how much the beneficiary benefits. *Tzedakah* requires no stories, nor do accolades even touch the overriding significance of *tzedakah* and how it changes lives. Nonetheless, if one person’s attitude will be altered as a result of what I write, it will be worth it.

I am presenting two examples of *tzedakah* which I came across during my years in *chinuch*. Obviously, these are not isolated cases. They have impacted me: the proof positive is that, after many years, they are still on my mind.

This is a contrast in parental example. I remember visiting a friend of mine, *Reb Yosef Feigenbaum, zl*, together with another *rebbe*. We were seeking support of a fledgling *mechanchim kollel* that we had initiated. It was 9:00 p.m., and his children – who were all of elementary school age – had already retired for the night. They were not sleeping, but they were in bed. As he was about to write the check, he asked his wife to call down all of the children to observe how one gives *tzedakah* – and to participate actively in the *mitzvah*. They came down in their pajamas, and sat at the table as Yosef wrote the check and handed it to us. He remarked that this was how his father gave *tzedakah* – in the presence of the children – to inculcate them with a positive attitude towards sharing with one’s brethren. Is it any wonder that it was Reb Yosef’s grandfather, *Reb Yitzchak Feigenbaum*, who opened up his modest house – first to *Telshé Yeshivah*, and later to the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland (now called Bais Chinuch Horav Dessler) In fact, the burgeoning of Torah in Cleveland rests solidly on his and his wife’s shoulders.

Now for the contrast. Two boys in middle elementary had a “disagreement” which led to physical blows, incurring a visit to my office. One boy was the son of a prominent lay member of the community, a well-to-do benefactor of *klei kodesh* and Torah institutions; the other boy was the son of one of the *klei kodesh* in the community. In the conversation that ensued with each individual boy, the son of the lay person said, “He will not amount to much. He will end up standing by my

father's door just like the other rabbis." Obviously, this boy was expressing what he had observed at home. Apparently, he did not receive the same instruction in the significance of *tzedakah* as the children in the first part of these contrasting stories had received. I can, however, add an addendum that, somewhere along the way, he did learn the importance of sensitivity to the plight of others, since he is today an amazing *baal tzedakah*.

Two fathers, both fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. One presented it as a privilege; the other probably viewed it as an obligation. At least, this is how his son perceived his father's actions. How can we prevent the attitude that accompanies the check from determining the enduring positive effect of the *mitzvah*?