

“You shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for because of this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you.” (15:10)

The Torah is teaching us a significant lesson: Tzedakah is our insurance policy. It protects us, as it circumvents any evil from coming close to us. The following story is one of countless episodes that recount the remarkable consequence of giving tzedakah. We must add that, as in all instances, there are many variables which play a role in a given situation. We do see, however, in the following episode, how giving tzedakah with mesiras nefesh, utter devotion and self-sacrifice, saved a life.

A poor woman once knocked on the door of the home of a very special Torah scholar, a kollel-fellow who devoted himself to Torah study to the fullest extent. It was a very special home – but, alas, a very poor one. The couple had been blessed with fourteen children. Obviously, money – and even food – was at a premium at this house. Answering the woman’s knock was the kollel fellow himself. “I need a piece of chicken,” cried the woman. “I am terribly sorry, my dear woman, but I cannot help you. I have two chickens in the refrigerator which I have put away for the upcoming Yom Tov, so that my family can enjoy the festival with a small piece of meat as prescribed by halachah. This is all we have for the entire family.” “Please, I am begging you, I have not had a piece of meat in such a long time. I crave a small piece of chicken,” she implored. A few moments passed and the young man decided this woman’s health was certainly more important than his children’s simchas Yom Tov, celebrating the festival amid joy. If she was so obsessed with eating a piece of chicken that she would beg him so profusely, then she should get it. “Ok, I am going to give you a piece of chicken,” he said as he left her to go to the refrigerator for a piece of chicken.

Suddenly, there came forth a heart-rending shriek from the kitchen, as the young man opened the refrigerator door and beheld the most bone-chilling, shocking sight. His three-year-old son had somehow gotten into the refrigerator and was trapped inside. His lips were already blue; his skin the pallor of death; his breathing shallow and labored – but, he was still alive! A miracle! Hatzalah, the emergency rescue team, was immediately summoned. They began to resuscitate the child, as they hurriedly transported him to the hospital. With the help of the Almighty, they succeeded in saving his life. All because of a piece of chicken. The gesture of giving tzedakah, going out of his way to help a woman in need, saved the life of his child. We do not need proof to substantiate Chazal’s dictum, “Tzadakah tatzil mimaves, charity saves (one) from death,” but such an incident is encouraging and gives one hope. We also derive from here another important lesson: One never loses by performing a mitzvah. To paraphrase Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, “You gave away a quarter of a chicken; you received a child as a gift.”