

“You shall tithe the entire crop of your planting.” (14:22)

Chazal teach us *aseir bishvil sheh'tisasheir*, “tithe so that you will increase your wealth.” There is a distinct corollary between the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, charity, and wealth. One who gives will be worthy of receiving. One who does not give has no merit for which to receive. When we think about it, what really is wealth? Better yet, how do we estimate one's worth? Usually, the idea of evaluating one's worth is a reference to his financial assets. Actually, that approach identifies a very limited perspective of one's true worth.

We measure one's worth in spiritual terms. It is not what we have that matters. That can all change in an instant. What counts is who we are. One can amass great wealth but still remain a pauper in character, still have little value in terms of what he provides for others. One who assumes his responsibilities in life has worth. A person should ask himself: What am I worth to my family? What am I worth to my community? What am I worth to myself? What am I worth to Hashem? If a person can find a positive value in all these questions, then he has value. If his responses are negative, then of what value is all the wealth he has amassed? He is truly destitute.

One of the great millionaires of the early twentieth century writes in his autobiography that when he was yet a young man he had accumulated his first million dollars. Excited, he went to his father and shared with him his good fortune. His father was a wise man and told his son, “I am not impressed.” The son was taken aback. “Father,” he said, “I am not yet thirty- years-old, and already I have made my first million – and you are not even happy?”

“No, my son,” answered his father. “I am not impressed. What I want to know is how will you spend the money you have earned?”

Money is intrinsically neither good nor evil. It has potential to be both. It can be used for the greatest good, or it can catalyze the most devastating evil. It all depends upon how it is used. We can act with indifference, with interference, or with intelligence. The manner in which we apply our wealth will define our morality and ethicality, indicating our true net worth.