

## You shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. (15:7)

*Tzedakah tatzil mimaves*, “Charity saves one from death.” Does this mean that one who gives charity will live forever? No. It is a powerful *segulah*, merit of good fortune, which may come in handy. It might very well be that one merit the individual needs to push him over to “life” side. A simple, practical analogy quoted by *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, illuminates this concept. Two misers were talking to one another. Reuven said to Shimon, “How miserable we are. Indeed, we have no *Olam Hazeih* (we do not allow ourselves to enjoy the pleasures of this world), and we have no *Olam Habba* (we are unworthy of reaping reward in the World to Come). We walk around in ragged clothes, eat foods that are easy to come by or leftovers from other people, we do not go anywhere for fear it might cost us. *Olam Habba*? We will not be allowed to get through the door. After all, what have we done to gain entrance?”

Shimon replied, “You are wrong. As far as this world is concerned, there is no greater pleasure than living a parsimonious lifestyle. Knowing that we are not wasting a penny generates such a good feeling. As far as *Olam Habba*, you are correct, it is a problem, but I have devised a way to circumvent the problem. I took an oath never to stretch out my hand to anyone, for anything. *Nu*? If I cannot stretch out my hand, I can hardly give *tzedakah*.”

Reuven countered, “What makes you think that your ruse will be accepted in Heaven? If you die before me, I implore you to appear to me and tell me what happened.”

Shimon left this world, and, after some time, he appeared to Reuven in a dream. His appearance was not good, his face quite darkened. It did not appear that he had been accepted in the Paradise he was seeking to enter. “Apparently, your ruse did not work,” Reuven commented.

“Well, it would have worked, had the Tribunal not recalled an incident that had occurred years earlier. I had gone to the beach to swim. I was swimming in the water when suddenly, the water became a whirlpool, sucking me in. I thought for sure that this was it; I was going to drown, when I sensed someone swimming towards me. He stretched out his hand to reach me, and I, in turn, stretched out my hand to connect with his. He saved my life.

“The Tribunal asked why I had violated my oath not to stretch out my hand. My response was simple: ‘My life was in danger. Had I not stretched out my hand, I would have drowned. My oath did not include matters of life and death.’ The Tribunal asked me, ‘Do you disregard Shlomo *Hamelech*’s maxim *Tzedakah tatzil mimaves*, “Charity saves (one) from death” (*Mishlei* 12:2)? Are you not aware that the poor man who is seeking alms benefits his benefactor even more than what the benefactor does for him?’

“There you have it. If you decide to take the oath not to stretch out your hand, I suggest that it is

best that you stay away from the water. You never know when you will need someone's help.”

This story is obviously anecdotal, but its message is very real. We have no idea concerning the benefits of sharing our good fortune with others less fortunate. It is much better to share and never have to discover what could have happened as a result of our non-compliance.