

Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take for Me a portion. (25:2)

Shlomo Hamelech says in *Sefer Koheles* (12:1), *U'z'chor es Borecha b'yimei bacharusecha, ad asher lo yavou yimei ha'raah, v'higi shanim asher tomar ein li bahem cheifetz*, "So remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the end days come, and those years arrive of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" Mar Ukva says (*Kesubos* 67b), "Bring me my charity records... my provisions are light and the way is long..." He went ahead and lavished half his assets on charity. The *Maharasha* explains that *tzedakah*, giving charity (as in *v'yikchu li terumah*, "Take for Me a portion"), saves one from the judgment of *Gehinnom* (it will spare him from Purgatory) in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. Thus, Mar Ukva was concerned that he had not given sufficient *tzedakah*.

The story is told concerning a *Rosh Yeshivah* from *Eretz Yisrael* who traveled to America to raise badly needed funds for his *yeshivah*. He visited a prominent philanthropist who had in the past given him a fairly decent sum. This time, the *Rosh Yeshivah* asked him to raise his contribution. The response was negative. The man claimed that he had already allocated his funds to other *yeshivos*. He had limited funds to go around. (We must underscore that the man's funds were not that limited. He, however, had placed a limit on his charitable contributions.)

A number of years passed, and the *Rosh Yeshivah* made another trip to America. He once again met with the same philanthropist. This time the man was only too pleased to open up his wallet and give a sizable contribution. Surprised, the *Rosh Yeshivah* asked, *Mah nishtanah?* "Why is this time different than other instances when I asked you for an increase and the response was negative? My *yeshivah* has not changed. Indeed, my needs are greater, but I am certain that is not the reason that you are granting me the increase."

When the man heard the question, he replied, "Let me share with you an incident that altered my entire perspective on *tzedakah* allocations. I realized that the money I have accrued in my life has a higher purpose than I had originally planned. I am in the linen business. I purchase expensive linen in Asia, then refine and remanufacture it in the states. On my last trip to India, I was involved in a bad car accident (apparently, he did not have his identification with him,) during which I sustained a serious brain injury which impaired my memory. For an entire year, I had no idea who I was and from where I originated. Someone informed my family (based upon the misinformation in India) that my injuries had been fatal. My children were sad and promptly proceeded to divide my holdings, which were extensive.

"One year passed, and, after treatment, my memory returned. I flew back to my home. My first stop was to a *shul* to *bentch gomeil*, recite the blessing of thanksgiving. I noticed a sign that had the rate schedule for *Kaddish* recital by the *shul's sexton*. (Many of these synagogues financed their operations through the funds generated by the recitation of *Kaddish*.) For five hundred dollars,

Kaddish was recited for the entire year of mourning. This included annual *yahrzeit Kaddish* and *tikkun* (cake and beverage on that day; *I'chaim*, wishing another Jew "to life" is considered a worthy merit for the deceased). Two hundred dollars covered *Kaddish* for the year, but did not include *yahrzeit*. One hundred dollars would garner *Kaddish* for the *shloshim*, first month, accompanied by some *Mishnayos* study. Twenty dollars would cover *Kaddish* for a month with no accompanying Torah study. How shocked I was to see that my sons had 'splurged' and paid a paltry twenty dollars for *Kaddish*. That is all I was worth to them, despite the millions that I had left to them. At that moment, I decided that I would no longer concern myself with providing for my children's financial stability. I would now start worrying about myself. This is when I decided to open up my coffers and contribute more to *tzedakah*.

"When my children discovered that I was actually alive, their looks of joy were marred by ambivalence. On the one hand, they were happy that I was alive; on the other hand, their financial portfolios were about to decrease greatly. I compromised by taking a little from each one of them, and Hashem guided and blessed my investments, returning me to my previous state of wealth. I now plan for my future, and there is only one way to do this: by giving *tzedakah*."