

When you lend money to My People. (22:24)

Lending money should be simple. After all, if I have and he does not have, why not share? There is always the slight issue of being paid back, but that usually happens. The Torah says, *Im kesef talveh es ami*, “When you lend money to My People.” The *halachah* is that if one has some money available for lending purposes, and he has the option of lending either to a Jew or a gentile, he should lend *Ami*, My People. A Jew precedes a gentile. Naturally, since we are open - minded, progressive, independent individuals, we might question this *halachah*.

It is after all my money, which I earned legitimately through hard work. I should be able to decide with whom I would rather do business. Indeed, if I lend to the gentile I may charge interest and make a few dollars (of which I will certainly contribute a portion thereof to *tzedakah*, charity), while, if I lend to my Jewish brother, I may do nothing of the sort. Additionally, so many laws are involved in lending to a Jew. If he does not have the money, I cannot even bother him for it. How can such a headache be imposed upon me and my money?

Horav Ezra Barzel, zl, begins by quoting the *Baal Haturim*, who comments concerning the opening words of our *parsha*, *V'eileh ha'mishpatim asher tasim lifneihem*; “And these are the statutes that you shall place before them” (*ibid.* 21:1). The word *ha'mishpatim* is an acronym for “*ha'dayan metzueh she'yaaseh psharah terem yaaseh mishpat*.” When the litigants stand before a judge, he should encourage them to be flexible, and both should compromise. Rather than execute the law (whereby one wins and one loses), they should both sit down, talk it over and come to a meeting of the minds in a compromise. Why? If it is my money, then I should not have to give up one cent of that which belongs to me. Why should I compromise with one (one whom I consider to be) a thief?

Furthermore, we find in *Sefer Devarim* (14:21), “You shall not eat any *neveilah*, carcass; to the *ger* (*toshav*), stranger, who is in your cities shall you give it that he may eat it.” The *ger* in our *parshah* is a full-fledged gentile who, because he accepts upon himself to observe the *sheva mitzvos bnei Noach*, seven Noahide commandments, receives the title of *ger toshav* (resident convert). Thus, he is allowed to live among the Jews. As a result of his unique status, we are commanded to give him the *treifah*, carcass (unslaughtered non-kosher animal) without charge. The law is quite specific that we should extend ourselves toward the *ger toshav*, to the point that if we have the option of selling the carcass to a gentile or giving it to a *ger toshav*, we give it away. “Why is this?” the owner complains. “I can make a few dollars off of the gentile. Instead, I have to give it away to the *ger toshav*.” We are only too happy to be nice, welcoming and kind, but to lose easy money? Why?

Rav Barzel gives one answer to all of these questions. Indeed, if the money/possessions belonged to the person, it is agreed that he has a right to decide how he wants to spend his money. The money, however, does not belong to us. It belongs (all of it) to Hashem *Yisborach*. *Li hakesef v'Li hazahav ne'um Hashem*. “To Me (belongs) the silver; to Me (belongs) the gold, says Hashem” (*Chagigi* 2:8). Hashem is in control. It is His money, which He permits us to use in

accordance with His rules.