

You shall surely stand them up with him (22:4)

From the words *Hakeim takim imo*, we derive that the assistance we lend to someone in need should be carried out *imo*—with him. If the owner of the animal (providing that he is able) sits back and wants to watch as you do the lifting and carrying, you have no obligation to help. Our responsibility to help extends to one who is trying to help himself. If the owner sits idly by refusing to make an effort, the *mitzvah* no longer applies. We wonder why this is so. While it may be true that the owner, due to his lack of involvement, hardly needs our time, effort and perhaps empathy, but what about the animal? Do we simply ignore its pain, holding up a load that is too heavy for it? Why should we allow an innocent animal to suffer, just because its not-so-innocent owner could care less about it? Apparently, helping a person who refuses to help himself is more damaging than it is beneficial. All we are achieving by helping him is enabling him to take advantage of others, to use whatever assistance he can garner from well-meaning *ba'alei chesed* who empathize with his plight. We can help, or we can help responsibly. To help one who lacks the self-respect of helping himself only encourages him to continue his pattern of using others to make life easier for himself.

In life, we often come across people who are faltering under the burden of various challenges. For some, it is financial; for others, it is emotional and even spiritual. Our first instinct is to rush in without bothering to assess the situation, to study whether a pathology/ history underlies this person's challenges; are they self-inflicted, self-serving, or for real? Will our assistance uplift him, or will it empower him to continue with a life of dependence?

I present a story (fictional) which, sadly, is not unusual. The story of Chaim, a successful businessman whose kind heart and generosity have allowed him to be a source of support for the needy members of his community and beyond. He has a friend, Shlomo, who is always confronting a financial crisis. Every month (like clockwork), Shlomo calls in desperation, claiming that he cannot meet his rent payment, that the gas and electric companies are threatening to shut off his power. He sees no end in sight to his mounting troubles. Kind-hearted Chaim, always one to reach into his checkbook to generously help, is beginning to wonder whether he is actually helping. He has repeatedly given Shlomo money. At one point, he had even shown him how to live within a budget—to no avail. He has found him a number of jobs, for which he has an equal number of excuses not to accept. Chaim is beginning to wonder whether Shlomo really wants independence or whether he enjoys taking from others.

One is supposed to help someone rise up. If he is willing to struggle, make the effort to help himself, then we are enjoined to help him. If, however, he chooses to lie beneath his burden and watch as we do everything for him, helping him only encourages further stagnation of his return to living as an independent, contributing member of the community.