

With the help of God

# ***More Blessed to Give Rebbe Nachman on Charity***

by Chaim Kramer

Introductory Essay—May 2002

There is a well-known adage "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—which is easily understood. Who doesn't want to be in the position to be able to give to others, rather than having to be the recipient of another's pity, compassion and/or charity. And it's also simple to understand the benefits to the beneficiary, for once he receives his gift, he is happy (at least for the moment). But what happens to the benefactor? Why is it "More Blessed to Give?" What benefits does he or she gain by giving charity, other than performing a mitzvah, an act of kindness, or a socially accepted deed? Does there exist a greater benefit other than just the monetary value of one's gift? Is the mitzvah of charity limited to monetary gifts or are there other philanthropic deeds which count as charity and which might have an even greater value? Can charity extend its beneficence beyond the circle of who gave and who received?

In this new series of essays, the precursor of a book on this subject, we will, God willing, explore the mitzvah of giving charity and doing acts of kindness. We will look into charity as the mitzvah from the Torah, and as it is described in our Sages teachings from Talmud, Midrash, Zohar and the Kabbalah. We will study its basic requirements as prescribed by halakhah (Jewish Law). And, we will delve into Rebbe Nachman's insights into the power of charity: we will learn of charity's impact upon, and value for, the giver, as well as seeing its power to increase one's material, as well as one's spiritual wealth! We will come to understand that charity is the force which can open all doors, for one's self as well as for others, and how charity saves from sin! And much, much more.

---

The idea for this book came to me some ten years ago, but due to other previous projects it was put on the back burner until now. By giving "birth" to Breslov Research Institute in 1979, we also earned the responsibility of nurturing it and raising it from infancy to its present stage of early adolescence. Having said this, we've been in the fund raising end of Breslov Research ever since its inception and many of the questions and ideas presented in this book are a result of the challenges we've faced during these past twenty-three years. How often have I stood riveted and dumbfounded, wondering why this or that person would actually part with some of their hard earned money and give it away to charity, especially in trying times.

"I descended to the grove of nuts to see the fruits of the valley..." (*Song of Songs* 6:1). The Midrash comments (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 6:1), Why are the Jews compared to a nut grove? Just as there are several types of nuts: a) soft-shelled nuts, b) medium-shelled nuts and c) hard-shelled nuts, so too, there are several types of Jews. There are those who are charitable of themselves and constantly give. There are those who will donate to charity when approached, but not before. And, there are those who, like the hard-shelled nuts, will just not give. Yet, it still never ceases to amaze me, how charitable people are

(even when they do not contribute to Breslov Research!). In a certain way, it's easier to understand the non-giver than the giver and these ideas will be discussed in these essays.

Still, the Jewish Nation is special—very special—as Reb Noson points out: "Your Nation are all Tzaddikim" (*Isaiah* 60:21). The Midrash describes a tZaDdiK [righteous person] as having one of two attributes: a high degree of morality, or those who engage in acts of tZeDaKaH, i.e., charitable deeds (thus the implication of the word tzaddik includes both and the Jews are called tzaddikim because of their moral and social attitudes). Reb Noson continues: The Jews are people who perform acts of kindness, and they are the descendents of those who have always performed acts of kindness, even under the most troublesome circumstances. Even poor Jews give to charity as we have often seen... There is no nation that performs acts of kindness comparable to the Jewish Nation... In fact, all their funds are considered sanctified, comparable to charity, since even their daily expenses to comply with their religious beliefs are compared to giving charity—they are always giving something away for God! (*Likutey Halakhot, Kiddushin* 3:12).

But just admiring the donor for their self-sacrifice left me with a sort of a funny feeling, "how does one properly acknowledge a donor for his/her contribution?" The result is this series of essays, which, eventually, will emerge as a book, hopefully within the next year or so. (At present, we are collating our earlier essays, [This Land is My Land](#), and putting a book together on that subject.) For your information, this series is NOT meant as an appeal (if, God forbid, the need arises, we'll keep an appeal separate.). It is meant to make the reader aware of how much his or her gift means—not only to the recipient—but to themselves! Yes, to themselves.

I will admit that my purpose is not completely altruistic. Our Sages explain that during the times of the Temple, when Jewish life was lived as it was meant to be, there was no poverty at all in Israel. "King Solomon placed silver in the streets as [if it were valued like] stones" (1 *Kings* 10:27). But, after the destruction of the Temple, the channels of bounty were plugged and rearranged. Instead of sanctified monies being readily available to perform mitzvot, wealth is extremely difficult to come by, especially the great sort of wealth known in Temple times. As Rebbe Nachman taught, "It descended PeLa'im (immensely)," (*Lamentations* 1:9). PeLa'iM has the same letters as AlaPhiM (thousands), for the alaphim, the immense wealth that was available then, is not currently available to the vast majority of people and won't be until Mashiach comes (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #4). Instead, in this present era, the obstructed channels cause the flow of bounty to the Other Side, where wealth is, for the most part, misused and abused, while those who seek God are impoverished, being given only a tamzit (a summary or small taste) of that great wealth. As we return to God, channels of bounty become straightened out and reopened, returning bounty to those who will use it for benevolent purposes for mankind and for those who seek Godliness. Charity is a main vehicle with which to open the doors to return bounty to all of us. Then bounty will flow directly and great wealth will once again be "as common as stones." To open the channels of bounty for everyone, is a major reason why I thought to write this book. After all, I'm also included!

Secondly, as I see it, if all we're getting as a nation is the "summary" of bounty, then how much can be left over for charity? After all, each person has to live too. And, as there are so many areas of charity where one can give—where one should give—the choices are bewildering at best. Then why give to any particular charity? And why Breslov Research? So I figured that if we can get more people to get interested in giving charity for their OWN benefit, there'll be more of that "summary" money going to charity. Maybe, we too, will share a bit of what others receive.

A third reason is that it finally hit me that I'm past the halfway mark of my sixth decade. How many more years do I really think I can go on fund raising? So, if we stir up interest in charity, it might make my job easier. Then I'll be able to spend more time writing additional books based on Rebbe Nachman's teachings. (I can dream, can't I?) And, it will make my successor's job a lot easier, if we leave him/her a larger group of people interested in giving charity. Hence, I may not be all that altruistic, but at least I'm honest about it.

Thank God, though, that the first reason, to increase the amount of people giving charity, to explain the areas of importance and learning to prioritize are the real and main intentions of writing this book. Unlike the "This Land is My Land" series, which lent itself to satirical and perhaps cynical commentary—considering the cast of international characters that participated in developing the mid-eastern muddle—a book on charity requires a more serious presentation. Also, the groundwork for charity must be established by introducing some of its laws and benefits, before we can enter into its "soul"—into the deeper meanings and benefits of charity. I hope you'll have the patience to bear with me for the first few weeks, and allow this series the place of import it deserves to develop properly and beneficially, especially for the benefactor.

Best wishes and kol tuv,  
Chaim Kramer

Copyright © Breslov Research Institute 2002

- [Home](#)
- [Blessed to Give Table of Contents](#)
- [Chapter #2](#)