

More Blessed to Give Rebbe Nachman on Charity

by Chaim Kramer

Last essay finished with our speaking about tithes, so this essay will discuss some lessons concerning tithes. Rebbe Nachman teaches:

By giving a tithe to charity, a person is saved from enemies. This is because the Holy One shelters him with His hand and saves him. For "God sides with the oppressed" - even if the righteous man oppresses the wicked! This is the aspect of "In the shadow of My hand I sheltered you" - that the Holy One shelters him with the shadow of His hand and saves him. Thus when the oppressed is a tzaddik, who is close to God, God saves him with His hand, due to his being close by.

What, however, if the oppressed is a wicked individual? This person is far from the Holy One. How does God conceal with His hand the wicked person who is distant from Him? God will save him, because "God sides with the oppressed." In such a case, God "enlarges" His hand - He extends His hand and covers the person, even though he is far from God.

And it is through giving tithes that the "large and extended" hand is made. This is because the "large hand" is the aspect of contentment, as it is written, "Were the sheep and the cattle slaughtered for them, would it suffice them? Were all the fish of the sea... would it suffice them?" which Onkelos renders as: "would it content them?" And God answered Moshe, "Is God's hand too short?" Thus it is that the aspect of the "large hand" represents contentment; consequently, the aspect of contentment is the aspect of the "large hand."

And it is through giving tithes that one conceptually attains contentment. "For a person dies without even half his desires fulfilled, because if he has one hundred, he wants two hundred..." (Midrash Kohelet). No matter how much he has, it will not bring him a contented life. However, regarding tithes it is written, "Bring the tithe to the treasury. Please, test Me with this... I will pour down blessings for you until **BLiY dai** (they can no longer be contained)." And our Sages expounded: "Until your lips **YiVLu** (wear out) from saying '**Dai!** (Enough!)'." Thus it is that tithes represents the idea of contentment of the large hand. And through this God stretches out His hand and shelters him, saving him from enemies (*Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #221*).

Elsewhere, Rebbe Nachman teaches that an enemy need not take human form. An enemy can be any obstacle or difficulty that confronts a person (*Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #179*). Thus, the "enemy" might manifest as a health problem, financial difficulty or emotional low point. As the Rebbe teaches in the lesson quoted above, giving tithes arouses God's extended hand and creates a shelter that can provide some protection and comfort during difficult moments; eventually giving tithes will extricate the person from his difficulties.

Since we are approaching Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Days of Judgment, it would also be appropriate to speak a little about the power of charity and its effects on our judgment. First and foremost: If we erred during the year (probably), aggravated an already difficult situation with a "slipped tongue" (probably), or, even worse, sinned (very possibly), how can we approach God to ask His forgiveness? So, first we have to repent. Admit our mistakes. Then we can ask forgiveness. Wouldn't it be nice - for a change - to not make these errors, mistakes or sins? Rebbe Nachman teaches:

One who gives charity is spared from sinning. This is because "whoever shows compassion for God's creations, is himself shown compassion from Heaven" (*Shabbat* 151b). Yet, "when one lacks *daat* (holy knowledge), it is forbidden to show him compassion (*Berakhot* 33a) [for that compassion is wasted].

Thus, when one gives charity, he is displaying compassion. "Whoever has compassion, Heaven must show him compassion." Therefore, it must be that the person is given *daat*. He is not a fool. He is thereby spared from committing a sin. "For a man does not sin unless a spirit of folly has entered him." But when he has *daat*, he is spared from sinning. Amen, so may it be His will (*Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #116).

Thus charity arouses God's compassion. By drawing this compassion, we can attain *daat* and be spared from sin! Rebbe Nachman warns, however, that by committing a sin, God forbid, a person opens the doors for subsequent sins (*Avot* 4:2). These sins create avenging angels who demand sustenance from the person. This is a legitimate claim. By sinning, one has created these avenging angels; it is as if they are his "children" for whom he is responsible. What can a person do to protect himself from these avenging angels and do away with the first sin which brought the other sins in its wake? The Rebbe continues:

The remedy for this is to learn about, and observe, the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy (see *Exodus* 34:6-7). By engaging in acts of compassion, one stimulates the Divine Attributes of Mercy which have such awesome strength to be able to remove even that very first sin which does away with the avenging angels and powers of destruction, arousing even greater compassion from which all mankind can benefit from (cf. *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #89)!

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