

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

**by Chaim Kramer**

## **Essay #13**

The Torah reading of Lekh Lekha does more than introduce us to the individual who personifies the mitzvah of charity, the Patriarch Abraham (Avraham). It details several of the tests Avraham had to endure to show his love for God. In each instance, he gave of himself: he left the security of his homeland, he descended to the immoral Land of Egypt, his shepherds' called Lot's to task for thievery and Avraham battled the four kings to redeem his nephew Lot (despite Lot's having chosen to dwell amongst the wicked people of Sodom).

The concluding chapters of Lekh Lekha detail Avraham's faith in God and in His promises to give Avraham and his descendents the Holy Land, as well as Avraham's acceptance of the mitzvah of circumcision. Lekh Lekha also speaks of Yishmael's birth and Avraham's compassion for him, despite Avraham's prophetic visions that Yishmael's descendants would commit atrocities against Avraham's. We see again that the Torah promotes the concept of charity, this time with the merit of Avraham, or as we know it, the Patriarchal merit. With this idea of Patriarchal merit and the Holy Land, we conclude the last few essays based on *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #37.

To review: The ultimate purpose of the creation is "that we should know God." This can be attained by subjugating one's material cravings to one's spiritual desires. The "material" corresponds to darkness, forgetfulness, philosophy and death. The "spiritual" corresponds to light, Torah wisdom, memory and life. One can subjugate his material cravings by fasting. Fasting weakens one's cravings and allows his innate spiritual desires to develop. The person can then mature to the level of "human being." Rebbe Nachman teaches, charity is synonymous with fasting. Therefore, by giving charity, one can develop and mature into a higher being, "human being," the ultimate reason for the entire Creation.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that there are two types of charity. One is charity given in the Diaspora. The second, greater level, is charity given to the Holy Land. Rebbe Nachman taught:

There are two types of charity. There is charity given outside the Land of Israel and there is charity given to the Land of Israel. The charity that one gives to those in the Land of Israel is greater and loftier than that given outside the Land. Correspondingly, there are also two kinds of Torah, since "words of Torah spoken with breath tainted by sin is not like Torah spoken with breath untainted by sin." Strict judgments are mitigated and the world is sustained by the breath of the children which is untainted by sin when they recite words of Torah.

This untainted breath causes the Patriarchal merit to be revealed in the world to protect it. By giving charity in the Land of Israel you include yourself in the air of the Land of Israel which is one and the same as untainted breath. Thus charity to the Land of Israel is the

essential means of nullifying strict judgments, darkness, and forgetfulness from the world. It also subjugates secular ideologies and one thereby merits grasping the wisdom of the Holy Torah.

Furthermore through charity to the Land of Israel, one merits memory, which is compared to light, as well as all of the other aforementioned parallel concepts [e.g. life].

Reish Lakish, quoting Rav Yehudah Nesiah, said: "The world is sustained only in the merit of those young schoolchildren whose breath is untainted by sin." [Rav Papa and Abaye were leading sages of their generation.] Rav Papa asked Abaye, "But what about your Torah and my Torah?" Abaye answered, "There is no comparison between words of Torah spoken with breath tainted by sin to words of Torah spoken with breath untainted by sin" (*Shabbat* 119b)! "Untainted by sin" refers to children too young to experience the urge of sexual sin. "Tainted by sin" refers to those who are of age to entertain or experience sexual desire, even though they completely control their desires.

The Talmud's distinction between the two types of purity is the basis of the Rebbe's teaching us about the two levels of charity. Both are very effective, both are very great. Yet, the purity which is completely untainted and pure is far greater than the one that merely has the potential to be pure.

Reb Noson explains that the connection between the schoolchildren's untainted breath and the Holy Land is that both are rooted in the Sanctuary/Holy Temple (see *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #282 and *Azamra!*). The Sanctuary/Holy Temple were off limits to anyone who had even a slight impurity. This indicates that the Holy Temple corresponds to the "untainted air which is pure of sin."

The Torah commands us to give a half shekel to the Sanctuary/Temple in order to stave off death (*Exodus* 30:11-16). Thus our giving charity to the Holy Land is equivalent to giving charity to the Sanctuary/Temple. Simply put, by giving charity to the "untainted air" we attach ourselves to that same clean, pure air. We are more closely connected to the source of purity.

The above verses thus read, "There will not be a plague of death...to give the portion to God to effect forgiveness for your souls." This is because darkness, philosophy and forgetfulness are all associated with death. However, by raising the "soul consciousness" by giving charity, one counters death and its accompanying miseries. One is able to effect life, a "forgiveness for the soul," which is brought about when material cravings are subjugated to the higher soul, to one's spiritual desires (*Likutey Halakhot, Shechitah* 4:6, 13).

Reb Noson adds that charity has the power to help the person overcome his gluttony. Obviously, fasting is a means to control one's craving for food. Nonetheless, eating is obviously very important, because it keeps soul and body together. Eating reaches such importance only if one eats like a human being, meriting the level of "Adam" if he does not gorge his food. Eating like a human being also elevates one's soul and subjugates the cravings of the body.

In addition, we have seen that, "The merit of fasting is charity" (*Berakhot* 6b; Essays [#10](#) and [#12](#)). This assumes that one donates the cost of the missed meals to charity, giving his fast greater merit (*Maharsha, loc. cit.*). By giving charity, one merits peace. Thus, giving charity has the power to help subjugate the body to the soul, to help curb one's seemingly insatiable appetite and develop the desire for a higher soul consciousness. Furthermore, the charity is even more effective when it is given to the Holy Land,

whether to a worthy individual or a worthy institution. In that case, the giver merits even greater assistance in developing his spiritual growth (see *Likutey Halakhot, Shechitah* 4:16).

To briefly summarize: by giving charity one can transcend his base, animalistic cravings and merit the level of "Adam," of being human. This is made possible by giving charity anywhere, because the act of charity evokes a level of purity. However, charity to the Holy Land is more powerful, for by drawing on the essential purity of the Holy Land the material is more strongly subjugated to the spiritual and one attains a greater awareness of purity and of his soul's powers.

Nevertheless, giving charity invokes a pure atmosphere, whereby the person can come to recognize God (Who is pure), which is the main purpose for the entire Creation (see [Essay #12](#)).

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- [Home](#)
- [Blessed to Give Table of Contents](#)
- [Chapter #12](#)
- [Chapter #14](#)