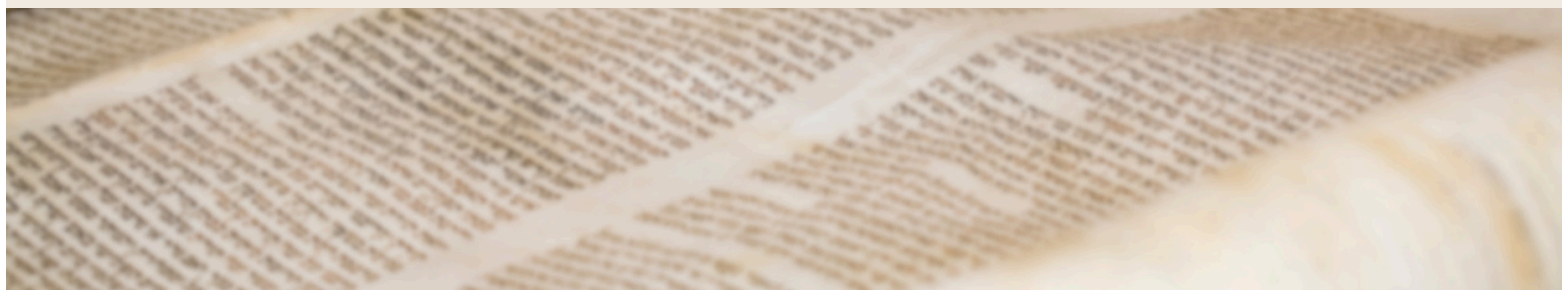


M'SHULCHAN HAPARSHA - FRESH TORAH FOR YOUR SHABBOS TABLE



This Week, That Thought

As Purim and Pesach draw closer, so does the annual surge of seasonal tzedakah. Baruch Hashem, many organizations step forward to support those who may benefit from their services, working to ensure that no one falls through the cracks.

But this effort often requires asking sensitive, direct questions: "Are you in a situation where this could help?" Finding the right language is difficult. If the person does need assistance, the question can feel exposing. If they do not, it risks sounding presumptuous.

This challenge extends beyond formal tzedakah to every act of chesed. There is always a giver and a receiver. We might say, "I want to make sure you have your Yom Tov meals. If it would help, we would love to host you." Or, "I know things are difficult right now. May we prepare supper for you?" Or, "Your family is going through a lot. Perhaps your children can spend some time with ours to give everyone a bit of breathing room."

Almost always, the recipient understands what lies beneath the offer. So how do we give without causing discomfort?

The answer may lie in conveying a deeper truth through our actions: I do not define you by your present circumstances. I see you as an equal. Just as I may need help in my own difficult moments, you may need it now. This is not charity bestowed from above, but one person offering another the dignity of shared support.

To sponsor or for comments/suggestions, email Rabbifedergrun@gmail.com.

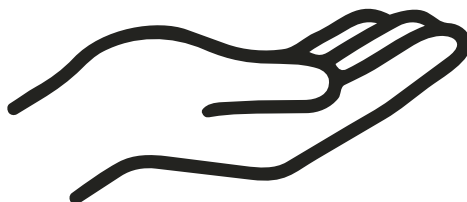
Between the Lines

Parshas Shekalim introduces the mitzvah requiring every individual to contribute a half-shekel to the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. Regardless of wealth or status, each person offered the same exact amount for this sacred purpose. Why specifically a half-shekel and not a whole?

Many explanations are offered. One powerful insight is that a Jew alone is incomplete. Each of us is but a half, requiring connection with another to become whole. True completion is not achieved in isolation, but in unity. What affects one Jew ultimately affects us all. We are bound together, and the half-shekel reflects this reality: it becomes whole only when joined with another.

"If someone does not close the Gemara to perform chesed, then even when the Gemara is open it is closed. And the reverse is true. When someone closes the Gemara to help another, then even when the Gemara is closed it is open."
-Rav Chaim Soloveitchik

Perhaps there is an additional lesson. Each of us is a half in another sense as well. We take pride in being givers, and the Torah commands us to give. Yet at the same time, we must acknowledge our own vulnerabilities. Today I may be able to contribute, but tomorrow I may stand in need. You and I are not fundamentally different. We are both halves, sometimes full and able to give, and sometimes empty and in need of receiving. Giving must never create distance between the giver and the recipient, for both stand in a similar position.



Pages of the Past

It was well known that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik taught his children that visitors and travelers were to receive priority for the seats and beds in his home. His son, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, later known as the Brisker Rav, recalled returning home to find a meshulach in his bed, leaving him to sleep on the floor.

Regarding orphans, our Gedolim knew no limits in their chesed. Rabbi Akiva Eiger, who guarded every moment of Torah learning, would check on the town's orphans after his morning shiur, ensuring they had comfortable beds, sufficient food, and warm clothing.

On one occasion, noticing a baal agalah wearing wet socks, Rabbi Akiva Eiger quietly removed his own and gave them to the astonished driver, who only later realized they were the gaon's personal pair.

While the Gedolim may operate on a higher plane, chesed is not an added level of piety for a Jew. It is ingrained in our being and forms an essential part of our identity.



For the Table

- As givers, how do we ensure that our support is conveyed with respect and preserves the dignity of the recipient?
- As recipients, can we learn to accept help without shame or embarrassment and what does that look like in practice?