



## Why Does Giving to Others Engender Ultimate Healing?

### Healing Through the Happiness of Giving

As we approach the period of Purim, we enter 'Jewish giving season.' We begin to focus on how we can make our neighbors and friends happy with our special Purim gifts. In our community, we don't just make do with *Mishloach Manot* (Purim Gifts) by stocking up on candies and chocolate bars. We use our creativity to prepare meaningful, delicious, healthy treats that will truly be appreciated, rather than just left in a pile to change hands. There is a profound correlation between giving and receiving of healing. There is no greater recovery from trauma, loss and grief than through giving to others. The Purim story is about recovery from the trauma of the 'near-holocaust-experience' of our people. Therefore, we celebrate this holiday by exchanging gifts with friends and donating to the poor. Caroline, after losing her son, during her 39th week of pregnancy, found healing through volunteering. Her volunteer experience, which turned out to be pivotal in her healing process, involved creating a safe space for grieving parents to find comfort, support, and healing by giving to others. People feel a true sense of happiness, when working for a cause that is bigger than themselves, and truly engenders healing on all levels. Perhaps, this שמחה/*simcha* – 'happiness,' which emanates from the feeling of undivided devotion to a cause, helps remove the distressing stains of doubt. There is no greater joy than the resolution of doubt (*Metzudas Dovid, Mishlei* 15:30; *Pri Megadim, Orach Chayim*, 670, 682). We experience happiness when pressure is relieved. On Purim, we experience relief from the pressure of the negative forces of Amalek. The word עמלק/*Amalek* shares the same numerical value as the Hebrew word for ספק/*safek* – 'doubt' – 240. More than six centuries before Rabbi Nachman, Rambam explained the connection between healing and happiness:

"We are promised that if we fulfill the Torah with happiness and goodness of soul... Hashem will remove from us all the matters that prevent us from performing it, such as sickness, war, famine etc. (Rambam, *Hilchot Teshuva*, Chapter 9). Whenever I feel depressed, I try to reach out to someone in need. When I'm unable to visit the sick, bake cakes, take care of children etc., even just a caring phone-call to an older relative, who may be lonely or sick, can uplift both recipient and giver alike.

### By Offering Healing We Become Healed

*Parashat Terumah* teaches us that we receive more, when we give to others, for all that we truly have is that which we give away.

ספר שמות פרק כה פסוק ב דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ אִשֶּׁר יְדַבְּנוּ לְבוֹתָם וְיִקְחוּ אֶת תְּרוּמָתִי:

"Speak to the children of Israel and have them take for Me an offering; from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering" (*Shemot* 25:2).

When reading the Torah verse requesting donations for the Tabernacle from the Israelites, we notice the obvious question: The Torah says, וַיִּקְחוּ/*vayikchu* – "take" "they shall take a contribution," rather than וַיִּתְּנוּ/*vayitnu* – 'They must give.' Why does it state, "take" rather than 'give?' Aren't the Israelites supposed to give an offering rather than taking it? The Talmud answers simply that giving is taking. More than the calf wants to suckle, the cow wants to nurse. By bestowing milk to her

nursling, the mother receives even more pleasure than her calf. (*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim* 112a). This is the meaning of “take for Me an offering.” It is as though Hashem says, consider that which the Israelites take from Me, as if they gave Me an offering. I experience this Talmudic dictum throughout my life, as a mother, teacher and healer. There is nothing that makes me happier than being able to give in a way that is well-received. Conversely, there is nothing more frustrating than when the children won’t listen, students aren’t interested, and clients are blocked from receiving healing. Yet, by raising children we grow. By teaching, we come to be learned and by healing we become healed.

### Giving is Taking & Taking is Giving

When giving tzedakah, it is recommended to make a personal request in the merit of the donation, as it states: “The person who gives a coin in tzedakah (as a donation) in order that his son may live, is considered a complete tzaddik (righteous person), (*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim* 8a). You would think that the highest giving would be as a completely altruistic gift, without expecting anything in return. Yet, the path of serving Hashem requires that one raise oneself up, in order to draw down good influence to this lower world. Therefore, giving a coin to tzedakah, causes a unification above, that empowers the the upper worlds to bring down goodness to this world. This is what enables his son to live, i.e., our personal requests to be fulfilled. This is the meaning of “Take for Me an offering.” The word תְּרוּמָה/terumah comes from the root רָם/ram – ‘elevated,’ denoting that when we give, we ourselves become uplifted by elevating our lives. When we raise ourselves up to Hashem, then we are permitted to also take for ourselves all the good bestowals. This is the straight way of serving Hashem, causing Him the greatest pleasure (*Ohr Lashamayim, Parashat Terumah*).

### Receiving a Gift Fulfills the Purpose of Creation

Why does the verse specifically use the expression, “take for Me,” connoting that the taking of the contribution should be for G-d’s sake? The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* explains that, this teaches us that the poor person who receives tzedakah, must accept it for the sake of heaven. The entire reason that Hashem created rich and poor people, is for the sake of the healing that tzedakah and kindness bring to the world. Therefore, if you are on the receiving end, like many of my single students, who often receive Shabbat invitations from various families in our community, don’t feel bad, because the guest actually does more for the host than the host does for the guest. It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua: More than the householder does for the poor, the poor does for the householder, for so Ruth said to Naomi, “The man’s name for whom I wrought.” She did not say, “Who wrought for me,” but “...for whom I wrought.” I wrought him many deeds and benefits in return for the one morsel of food that he gave me (*Midrash Vayikra Rabbah*, 34:8). Therefore, the intention of the poor person, when receiving a contribution, must be to accept it, not only because he needs it, but also because through his acceptance he is fulfilling the purpose of creation.

### We Have What We Give

I don’t recall where I originally heard the story about the little old lady with her cookie-bag, which I often tell, to illustrate that it is only what we give that we can truly call our own. Here is what I recall of the story: An old lady clutched a bag of cookies in her hand. When people asked her for a cookie, she refused. These were all she owned, and she believed that she would need them in the hereafter. Yet, one small girl, with hungry eyes, was able to penetrate her heart. When she asked, “pleaaase give me a cookie!” the little old lady opened her bag and gave her two cookies. Later, when the old lady entered the world-to-come, she couldn’t find her cookie-bag. The only thing that remained for her in the afterlife, were the two cookies that she had selflessly given away. The principle, that we only have what we give is illustrated by the palindrome וַנִּתְּנוּ/vanatnu – “they shall give.” The letters ו-נ-ת-נ-ו – vav/ nun/taf/nun/vav – spell the same backwards and forwards. Thus, when we give, we receive in turn.

## Giving with Our Full Hearts

Rebbe Nachman explains that there is something special about giving generously with all our hearts. When we open our heart to give, our heart remains open to receive from above. What we receive in return is more precious than metals, gems or any other offerings. When we open our hearts to give, we receive abundance from the "Supernal Heart," which is an aspect of Hashem, called the *Noam HaElyon*, (the Divine Pleasantness); (*Likutei Moharan* II:71).

Giving is good, even if you give because it's a mitzvah, although you don't really "feel" it. You do the right thing, but your heart isn't in it. But, there is something so much more about giving with all your heart. Not only do you receive blessings and bounty in the material sense, but you also receive inner joy.

## Redemption is the Ultimate Universal Healing

Redeeming a captive is the greatest form of tzedakah. It is compared to Redemption, because a captive suffers every imaginable disgrace, including the possibility of being murdered. Moreover, when we help anyone in need, we 'redeem' that person. If we redeem others, then measure-for-measure, G-d redeems us. This explains why any kind of tzedakah brings about redemption, as it states, that Israel will be redeemed by its acts of tzedakah:

ספר ישעיה פרק א פסוק כז ציון במשפט תפודה ושביה בצדקה:

"Tzion will be redeemed through justice and those who return to it through tzedakah" (*Yeshayahu* 1:27).

Rabbi Yehuda says: Great is tzedakah for it brings the redemption, as it is stated: "So said Hashem, keep justice and practice tzedakah, for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed" (*Yeshayahu* 56:1). Tzedakah saves a person from death, as it is written: "Tzedakah delivers from death" (*Mishlei* 10:2, 11:4); (*Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra* 10a). Likewise, "Yerushalayim will only be redeemed through tzedakah" (*Ibid. Shabbat* 139a).

Redemption is the ultimate universal healing. This is because true healing is when the soul illuminates the body completely, without any blocks preventing the soul from shining through every part of our body. Since Hashem is the Soul of the world, universal healing is when Hashem's Presence illuminates the world entirely. Then, it opens all the blocks that prevents His Shechina from illuminating the entire universe. At the final redemption, the concealed aspect of Hashem will be completely revealed, as the world become healed from the blocks that prevent the Shechina from shining through every far-flung shard of our planet. This is the ultimate expression of Divine tzedakah.