

Tzedaka

And you may say in your heart, "My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!" (Devarim 8:17)

There is sometimes an inversely proportionate relationship between giving *tzedaka* (charity) and having money. The richer a person becomes, the more he is likely to view his wealth as his and not His. God warns of this hazard. Money, like any other resource, is God's gift to be used in serving Him. The richer you are, the more money you have, the more *chesed* (kindness) you can do. Why? Because you are meant to do more *chesed* – know you are not doing anyone a favor, you are fulfilling an obligation. God is showing you favor by putting His money in your care, just like a trust fund.

Likewise when doing any *chesed*. We are all merely tools of *chesed*. We are conduits, agents. We are vestibules through which God's *chesed* passes. We must never be haughty or lord it over others because we have helped them out. We may be in a better position to help others, but this is not necessarily through our own efforts or merit – it is the way God chooses to run His world. We must always look upon our ability to help others as a favor God has bestowed upon us. And we must never forget it.

"Every commandment between man and his fellow man is based on a single premise," says R' Wolbe in his classic *Alei Shur* (Part I, page 190). That foundation is "To bring light to the lives of others" (*Chinuch in Turbulent Times*, page 25).

... for your benefit. (Devarim 10:13)

To the same extent, then, that man accustoms himself to practice the virtues of goodness and kindness throughout his life, will he enjoy the goodness and abundant *chesed* of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in this world and the next (*Ahavath Chesed*, page 16).

[From *A Portion of Kindness*, by Rosally Saltsman]