



WHO IS YOUR BEST FRIEND?

IT'S HIS, IT'S HIS

In this week's *parsha*, there is an interesting *passuk*. It says (*Bamidbar* 5:10): ואיש את קדשיו לו יהיה, and a person's *kodshov*, his sacred donations, *lo yihiyeh*, should be his, ואיש אשר יתן לכהן לו יהיה, and a person who gives something to a *kohen*, *lo yihiyeh*, it should be his.¹ Now, it sounds very strange. This *passuk* seems to imply that if a person designates *kodshim*, and he brings them to the *Beis HaMikdash*, or a person is *mafrish terumah*, and he designates them to the *Kohanim*, then "*lo yihiyeh*" means that they should be his. It says it twice. But the problem is that they are not his! They belong to the *kohen*. The *kodshim* go to the *kohen* and the *terumah* goes to the *kohen*. So what does that mean, *lo yihiyeh*, it's his? The *kohen* in the *Beis HaMikdash* is the one that receives them.

The *Chofetz Chaim* says that the Torah is telling us a tremendous *yesod* here. A person, from when he's very little, views his life as a series of actions of giving and taking. That's the name of a person's game.

Have you ever thought about that? From when you are a baby, and then as a child, you think of life as a game of taking. Your mother is giving you this. Tatty is giving you that. In life, everything, all our actions are about giving and taking. We think, naturally, that whenever we could reach out into somebody else's domain and take something from that person and bring it into our domain, that's called me taking something for myself. And anything that goes from my domain to somebody else's domain, whether it is because I'm giving it to that person, or because that person is taking it, is called giving.

But where does that feeling of taking or giving come from? What's the motivation behind a person taking something? The motivation is that a person has a desire to receive things that he values and that he views as something that is going to enhance his life. So, when you're a little kid, you might view taking candies as something that's going to enhance your life. Sadly, people take things without permission because they're driven by the desire to receive things, in order to enhance their life.

GIVING IS GAINING

People view giving something to others as something that they're giving up, that they're sacrificing. They're surrendering something that's theirs. And they have to make a *cheshbon*: is it worth it or not? Are there any benefits for me? The *Torah* teaches us in a Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 34:8): יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני, more than the wealthy person does for the poor person, העני עושה עם בעל הבית, the poor person is doing for the wealthy person.² By the way, this is a very foreign concept in the secular world. And because we all live in that world, at least to some extent, we are naturally influenced by those foreign ways of thinking.

And we all view that as preposterous. Try to picture a rich man. And everybody's standing in a line by his door. And you're viewing this, and you hear the guy writing out checks, so you're figuring out, should you get on line? Should you not get on line? And you are *chapping hana'ah* that these *aniyim* are all walking out with big smiles.

And then *Chazal* tell us that more than the *baal ha'bayis* is doing for the *ani*, the *ani* is doing for the *baal ha'bayis*. The *passuk* says that when somebody gives something, it's his (the person who gives it). *Lo yihiyeh*, it's going to be his. A person who gives something to the *kohen*, *lo yihiyeh*, it's going to be his.

That giving becomes something which truly becomes part of his "receivables" and it becomes *his*, the giver's, *l'netzach netzachim*.

Let's say a person gave *tzedakah* ten years ago - by now, he has forgotten about it like yesterday's snow. He doesn't realize that he invested in something everlasting. A lot of people can tell you how much money they made throughout the years. It's surprising to me, but people remember that information. They say, "Ten years ago I made this much." But what a person has to know is that when you invest in giving, and you give *tzedakah*, and you designate your money for *kodshim*, that becomes yours.

¹ ואיש את קדשיו לו יהיו איש אשר יתן לכהן לו יהיה
² תני רבי! הושע, יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני העני עושה עם בעל הבית, שכן רות אומרת לנעמי: שם האיש אשר עשיתי עמו היום בעז

HE REPORTED HIS TRUE WORTH

My grandfather, the Lutsker Rav, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his *sefer*, *Oznayim LaTorah*, brings down a story about the famous *tzaddik*, Rav Shmuel Hanagid (993-1056). He was the finance minister in Spain. He was very *matzliach*, and he became very wealthy. Additionally, he brought *hatzlachah* to the region. And all the ministers were very jealous of this Jew. And they always complained to the king about this Jew. They said that he made his wealth from the *otzros hamelech*, from the storehouses of the king and that he skimmed from the king's wealth for his own pocket. Now, the head of the instigators against Rav Shmuel Hanagid was a famous *gallach*, a *rasha merusha*. In the beginning, the *melech* didn't listen to him because he saw Rav Shmuel was an *ehrlicher* person, an upright and honest person. So the king ignored the *gallach*. But the *gallach* would not let up. Finally, the *melech* decided he's going to call Rav Shmuel in for an investigation.

When Rav Shmuel stood before the king, the king asked him, "How much money do you have?" The king knew what he paid him, and he wanted to know how much money Rav Shmuel had. So he answered by saying a relatively small sum. The king got angry that he wasn't being honest with him. And he started to scream at him, "*It's a lie! You are lying! Look me in the face! How can you tell me this kind of falsehood?*" So the priest and the king decided that they're going to get rid of the Jew. *Shmuel Hanagid*, he was a classy man. So what did they decide to do? They decided they would throw him into a lime pit that was located outside the city. So the *melech* called two people and he said, "I'm appointing you to guard this *bor*, to stand there and watch over it. And the moment that a person approaches you and asks you the following question: 'Did you carry out the will of the king?' Grab the guy and throw him into the pit and make sure he dies there, no matter who he is, no matter what he is, just do it." Meanwhile, he turns to Rav Shmuel and says to him, "I'm sending you on a mission. I want you to go outside the city, to a certain place, and there's a pit over there. And I want you to ask the two servants, the two guards that are guarding the pit, the following question: 'Did you do the *ratzon* of the king?'" Okay, so the next morning, Rav Shmuel gets up and he heads towards that pit. On the way, he sees a Yid running. And the Yid comes running up to him and he says, "I need a favor from you. Today is the eighth day since my son was born. And I couldn't find a *mohel*, and I know you're a *mohel*. Could you please come and be the *mohel*?" So at first, Rav Shmuel refused. He said, "I'm on a *shlichus* from the *melech*." But the guy told him that a *shlichus* from the *Melech Malchei hamlachim* is more important.

So Rav Shmuel agreed and he accompanied the guy to his home and he performed the *bris*. When the *bris* was over, they had a *seudah*, and when the *seudah* was over, Rav Shmuel went running to the pit. *Nu*, he comes to the pit, he doesn't see anybody there. Nobody is standing there.

He looks into the pit and what he sees appears to be the remains of somebody that's getting dissolved in this pit. What happened? The priest couldn't wait to see if the mission was taken care of, the plan he made with the king. So as the day went on, he couldn't contain himself anymore. So he ran to the pit. He saw the two guards there, and he said to them, "Did you already carry out the will of the king?" They grabbed the priest, they dumped him headfirst into the lime pit and they left.

Meanwhile, Rav Shmuel comes before the king to tell him, "I went to do the *shlichus* and the guys weren't standing there. I couldn't ask him." So the king told him, "Don't worry about it." He sees the king *chapped* the *matziv*, and that the *gallach* was killed instead of him. *Nu*, but the king asked him a question. "I don't understand you," he said. "Why *taka* did you lie when I asked you how much money you have? I know you're a wealthy man." Rav Shmuel said, "I told you how much money I had that no one could take away from me, and that's the *tzedakah* that I gave. What I gave away, that's the only thing that's mine forever. And no king and no person can take it away from me. But all my other money could very easily be taken away from me."

HUGE WEALTH BUT IT'S ALL TRANSIENT

A person has to know that times have changed. I was reading an article by a very prominent accountant describing how dramatically the landscape has shifted. He recalled that when he began his career, he worked for chashuve people. In those days, a "chashuve deal" referred to something on the scale of ten million dollars. Some individuals invested in real estate, purchasing large apartment houses, while others acquired nursing homes. He described one case in which a man bought a single nursing home and was able to live comfortably from its income indefinitely. According to the accountant, that reality no longer exists. Today, deals begin at around one hundred million dollars, and he frequently encounters transactions in the range of 140 to 150 million. Ownership has also scaled accordingly: instead of a single nursing home, investors now acquire dozens at once - sometimes as many as fifty. Similarly, rather than purchasing individual apartment buildings, investors engage in multiple transactions worth several hundred million dollars.

The wealth that's out there these days is amazing.

And the *emes* is, when people become wealthy, they really don't become wealthy. You know why? When a person gets married, most of the time he starts out with nothing, or basically nothing. A *cheilek* of his life is building up his nest egg. You want to know what to talk to your wife about? If you're not learning *hilchos shmiras halashon* with her, if that's not your type of thing, so you're talking about the money, the budget, and the savings, "How much are we going to save? How much are we going to have? When do you think, by what age, will we have a hundred grand in the bank?" Today, a *shlepper yungerman* aims to have two hundred grand in the bank, or three hundred grand in the bank.

Another *shlepper yungerman* comes, he's *mamash a shlepper*. He's an *evyon*. I tell him, "How do you live, I don't see anything?" He said, "I have some money in the bank." I said, "Can I ask you how much?" He said, "Yeah, over half a million dollars." I said, "You're a *shlepper*, your wife's a *shlepper*. What, it was a *moifes*? *Hashem* pulled a *moifes*?" It was some *yerushah*, it doesn't make any sense. And people think that's what they have. I remember having a friend whose goal was to amass a million dollars in cash. He wanted a million dollars liquid.

And he got there. He called me up. He says, "Rabbi, I got there, I reached the top of the mountain." I said, "So now you're going to die? What are you going to do now? So you realize it was an imaginary climb that you went for. You realize you have nothing."

He says, "Rabbi, don't say that. I called you to make me feel good." I said, "You never feel good with money. The nature of money is that one second you don't have it, the next second you have it. You don't feel good, even if you have two million, or you have three million." If you have a hundred million, there's nothing you can do with yourself. If you went on a spending spree tomorrow, you couldn't spend a hundred million dollars. So you'll buy yourself a nice car, okay. So *Baruch Hashem* in Lakewood, you have people with nice cars. So, they have seventy-five thousand dollar cars, maybe hundred-thousand dollar cars. You don't see anybody in Lakewood driving Lamborghinis and these other kinds of cars that cost two hundred grand. When you go to a place like Florida, Bal Harbour, and you drive up with your brand new, spanking new Sienna, and they tell you to, "Park downstairs, please, in the back, with the help, you know. Don't come up the front to the hotel, because the help parks the cars in the back." You tell them it's a brand new car. One after another, *mamash*. I remember once asking a couple of the workers out front, "How do you feel about these cars?" "Oh we love driving them," he said. I said, "I'm surprised they trust you to park them, but they do." He says, "Our dream is to get one for ourselves." I said, "Keep dreaming. From being a guy who parks cars in front of a hotel, even if it's a fancy hotel, I don't think you're going to be driving a Lamborghini soon." But that's the *dimyon* that a person has and the person lives by. You have a kid going for Bar Mitzvah money, the hundred dollars, the two hundred dollars. Bar Mitzvah money, the five hundred dollars, Bar Mitzvah money. He *mamash* feels like a *quiv*. *Gornisht*. And it is *gornisht*.

But if a person gave money to *tzedakah* or thought, "How do I take my money and make it mine? How do I make it mine?" Rav Yankel Galinsky (1921-2014) said that he was once in jail. And in the jail, there was a rich guy. And this rich guy, who was a famous *quiv* told Rav Yankel that he's very upset at the *Ponevezher Rav*. So he said, "Why, what did the *Ponevezher Rav* do to you? He's the nicest man around." He said, "He used to visit me in my house to collect money and I gave him a nice check and he thanked me profusely and he left. I'm *mamash* angry at him. Why didn't he force me to give more?" He said, "He should have taken a gun and put it to my head and said, 'You'd better cough it up or else.' See, that's exactly what happened to me. The communists came into my house." The communists said to him, "Now it's communism, everything belongs to the government." He said, "No way! Over my dead body." They pulled out a gun and told him, "We'll be happy to accommodate you." So he gave them all his wealth, and he ended up with nothing, and they threw him into jail, because he didn't give it *b'leiv shaleim*. Yeah. He said, "All my toil – of mine, and my forefathers, and my family, went straight into the pockets of Stalin."

Years later, Rav Yaakov Galinsky was in Eretz Yisrael, and he bumped into the *Ponevezher Rav*. And he tells him, "You know, I met a man in jail who was very angry at you." And he tells him the whole story of why he was angry. So he said, "Yeah, I remember this *Yid*." He says, "Every time I asked him for money, he would tell me, 'If I'm going to give you what you're asking me for, I'm going to be left with nothing. I'm not going to give you the full amount that you are asking for, but I'm going to give you a nice check. I can't give you what you're asking me for because, you know...'" I told him, "*Aderaba*." I used to say to him, "*Aderaba*, whatever you'll give me, that's the only thing that's going to remain with you." And he smiled at him, the *Ponevezher Rav*. That's what a person has to know.

THREE FRIENDS FOR LIFE

The *Chafetz Chaim* says an amazing *mashal*, in *Cheilek Gimel of Ahavas Chesed*.³

A person had three friends. One he loved very much. The second one he loved, but not that much. And the third one he didn't love and didn't consider him anything special. Once, he was called before the court on charges. The king's officers showed up by his

door, they put him in chains, they brought him before the king. And the guy was *mamash* petrified that maybe somebody had told something to the king about him, that maybe he's going to get killed. So he said, "I had better call my friends, and ask them to say good things about me and make the king see me in a positive light." So he contacts his friend, he says, "Come to the king with me, please. You are my best friend," he says, "Come, come say some good words for me."

³ ומשלו במדרש (פרקי דרבי אליעזר פרק ל"ד בקצת שנוי), משל לאדם שהיה לו שלשה חברים: האחד אוהבו מאד, השני אוהבו ולא כל כך, השלישי לא היה אוהבו, ולא חשבו למאומה. פעם אחת שלח המלך לקרא לאותו אדם, וסריסי המלך הבהילוהו להביאו לפני המלך. והיה זה האדם מפחד ומתירא ואומר: שמא השלישי לפני המלך ויהרגני; אין לי טוב כי אם לקרות לחברי אוהבי, אשר בטחה נפשי בו, ואוליכנו עמי לפני המלך, כדי שיליץ עלי טובה לפני המלך. הלך וקרא אוהבו הראשון, שהיה אוהבו יותר מהשני, וספר לו הענין. ולא אבה ללכת עמו, ולא השגיח עליו. עזבו, והלך בפחי נפש. אמר: אלך אל החבר השני, ואבקש ממנו ללכת עמי לפני המלך. הלך ובקשו. אמר לו: לפני המלך לא אכנס עמך, אבל אלך עמך לשמרך בדרך מפגעים רעים, וכשאגיע לחצר המלך, אעזבך ואלך לדרכי. הלך אצל שלישי, שלא היה חושבו לכלום, ובקש ממנו לילך עמו לפני המלך, וספר לו כל מה שארעו על עם שני חבריו. אמר לו: אל תירא, אני אלך עמך ואכנס לפני המלך ואליץ בערך עד שתנצל מיד המלך. הלך עמו לפני המלך ולמד עליו זכות, והצילו מיד המלך. החבר הראשון, שהיה אוהבו ביותר - הוא הממון, שהיה חביב לו מכל דבר שבעולם, הוא שעזבו ביום פטירתו, ולא יולץ בידו מאומה, שנאמר (תהלים מ"ט י"ח): "לא ירד אחריו כבודו". החבר השני - הם הבנים והקרובים, שמלוין לאדם עד הקבר, ולאחר שנקבר, נפרדו מעליו ועזבוהו. החבר השלישי, שהליץ בעדו טובה - הם התשובה ומעשים טובים, שהולכין עמו בפטירתו הליץ בעדו, שנאמר (ישעיה נ"ח ח'): "והלך לפניך צדקך". והמלך שלח אחריו הוא מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא, שאין לפניו משוא פנים, ולא מקח שחד, ולא ינצל אדם מדינו, כי אם בתורה ובמעשים טובים, עד כאן לשון המדרש. (אהבת חסד, חלק שלישי פרק ד' אות ט')

So the guy says to him, "I'm sorry, I can't do that. You know why?" He says, "You want me to get involved? The next thing I know, they'll be knocking on my door. I'm sorry, I just can't help you. So he walks out as disappointed as he can be, and he goes to the second friend.

And he says, "Could you come and put in a few words for me, maybe something positive?" The guy says, "I'm very sorry, I can't come with you. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll come to visit you. I'll visit you, but I can't get involved. But the second after I'm coming to visit you, I'm getting out of there." So he goes to the third friend who he thought was a nothing, and he tells him, "Could you come with me maybe?" He tells him the whole story of what happened with his first two friends. He says, "Don't worry about it. I'm going to come with you. I'm going to accompany you. I'm even going to go to the king and talk on your behalf. I'm going to try to save you as best as I can." He goes, and he's *melameid zechus* on him, and because of the third friend, the person is saved.

THE FIRST FRIEND

The *Chafetz Chaim* says, do you know what a person's best friend is? It's everybody's best friend. When you were a little kid, what was your best friend? Your money. Your money was your best friend. It was *choviv* to you from anything else. You never left home without it. You always made sure you had enough of it. And if you thought you had enough, you always wanted more. You wanted to *zein dem Bubbe* (see your grandmother) when it came to a birthday, you wanted to go visit your grandmother. Was it to give them *nachas*? No, you went there to get one thing, *ka-ching, ka-ching*. "Haynt, today it is my birthday. I'm getting older now. The couple of dollars you used to give me last year doesn't cut it anymore. I've got to get a raise."

THE SECOND FRIEND

And your second-closest friends are your family and your relatives. *Nu*, they accompany you till the *kever*. When they take you away to the Yom Hadin, so all your family goes with the tissues and they walk you to your *kever* and they say goodbye, "We ain't going with you. That's as far as we go." And Rabbi Akiva Eiger adds, you know what they do? They turn back, turn their backs on you. If you left them some money, *Rabbi Akiva Eiger* says they say *Shehecheyanu b'chavana gedolah*. Ever see a guy say *Shehecheyanu* by his *bris*? He's crying! It's hurting, his baby's getting cut, he's crying. But when they say *Shehecheyanu* when somebody dies and leaves them a nice chunk of change, it is *Shehecheyanu v'kiyemanu*. It's a *halachah*, after *baruch Dayan Ha'emes*, you have to say *Shehecheyanu* upon receiving a *yerushah*.

THE THIRD FRIEND - YOUR BESTIE

Nu, and the third friend is the *mitzvos umaasim tovim* that you did. They're the only ones that will accompany you into the grave, and all the way to the judgment, as the pasuk says, *V'halach l'fanecha tzidkecha*, and your righteousness shall go before you. And the Melech who sent for you is the *Melech Malchei hamlachim*. And Hashem says: *Nu*, what do your *maasim tovim* have to say about you?

The *Chofetz Chaim* says, that's what's alluded in this *passuk*: ואיש את קדשיו לו יהיה. The only ones that are going to be loyal to you, the only ones that are going to stand by you, are your *kodshim* - the holy things that you did.

Whatever you gave to the *kohein*, you should know that's the only thing that's going to be with you. When you create *malachim*, they're the only ones that are going to be with you forever in your *chevra*. So therefore, the *Chafetz Chaim* says, get your head on straight and start to make a *cheshbon* of how much you have.

2.5% — THAT'S ALL

I once was at a *simcha* and there was a very wealthy Yid in attendance, too. The guy had become fabulously wealthy. He had created a machine that was needed all over the world. It was the only machine of its kind in the world, it was very unusual. I was standing at a *simchah* and I met him.

I said, "My friend, tell me, can I ask you a question? You don't have to answer me, I'm just curious. What does the machine cost you to produce?" He said, "Honestly, ten thousand dollars." I said, "How much do you sell the machine for?" He said, "Three seventy-five." I said, "How many machines do you sell?" He said, "I could sell till time immemorial. As long as time is running, I can sell these machines." So I said, "Wow, that's impressive." I told him, "Can I ask you, how are you with your *tzeddakah*?" He says, "I can't stand it. They bother me by day, they bother me by night. I come home late at night, and they're waiting by my door." So I wondered why these people are waiting by his door, "Is he such a *baal tzeddakah*?" So there was a man standing next to him, I said, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm his accountant."

I said to the wealthy man, "Would you mind if I ask him a question?" "No." I asked the accountant, "Would you say he gives, like, fifty percent of his income to *tzeddakah*?" "No." I said, "Would you say he gives forty percent?" "No." "Does he give thirty percent?" "No." "Does he give twenty percent?" I see the *gvir* looking at the accountant in shock, like, "I don't give twenty percent?" "No." I say, "Does he give fifteen percent?" "No." "Does he give ten percent?" "No." I said, "You don't give ten percent?" I said, "You're a cheapskate." I said, "You're a cheap Jew. Does he give five percent?" I was sure he was going to say, "Yes." He said, "No." I said, "What does he give?" The accountant says, "Between one and a half and two percent." I said, "That's a shame."

I mean, the guy bought himself yachts. I mean, started living the life of a super Russian oligarch, you know? That's who he was. But to give *tzedakah* like a piker? He's a pauper, a real pauper.

ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE ZECHUS

That person wasn't *zocheh*. He was *mamash* a pauper. He has no *zechus*. A person should know that. A lot of these *gvirim*, they have no *zechus* whatsoever. All you have and all that remains of your wealth is the merits of the money you gave to *tzedakah*. *Rabbosai*, you have to get this into your *kishkes*!

And then you see this *shlepper*, a *yungerman*, giving his *maaser* or his *chomesh* properly. And *taka* when he is going to come to *Shamayim*, they're going to say: "Wow, on that salary he gave *maaser* and *chomesh*?! *Pshh*. Everything else is *gornisht*." "Wow!" Hashem thinks to Himself *kaviyachol* "If I would have given you more money, you would have given more *tzedakah*. So you're going to get *zechus* as if you gave more."

IN CONCLUSION

When discussing a person who designates *korbanos*, the *pasuk* enigmatically says twice, *Lo yihiyeh*, "It shall be his." It makes us ask, "Who exactly do the *kodshim* and *terumah* belong to?" The answer is that obviously those portions of the *korbanos* belong to the *kohen*, but there is a hidden message for the person doing the giving. The *Chafetz Chaim* helps us understand that what we give away is actually all we get to keep. The things we rely on most in *Olam Haze*, money and our family or friends, cannot support us and be with us in the stage of "forever" that is *Olam Haba*. The only things that are ours forever and that we can take along, are the "*kodshim*," that which we make holy by giving it away. In fact, those *mitzvos umaasim tovim* are *ruchani* and so they last forever, unlike wealth, which is transient. This week I will, (*bli neder*,) think about whether I am giving *maaser* in the way that *halachah* directs. If there is something I can do to improve how I give *tzedakah*, I will set the wheels in motion to make an improvement. I will be *machshiv* my giving by investing time to note how much I give, for awareness is the beginning of improvement.