

”ולא תקפוץ את ירך מאחיך האביון”

HKB"H Beseches Us Not to Disregard Our Righteous Mashiach Who Resembles "Your Destitute Brother" Longing to Redeem You

In this week's parsha, parshas Re'eh, we learn about the mitzvah of tzedakah (Devarim 15, 7): **”כי יהיה בך אביון מאחד אחיך לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפוץ את ירך מאחיך האביון, כי פתוח תפתח את ירך לו... נתון תתן לו, ולא ירע לבבך—בתוך לו, כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשיך ובכל משלח ירך”** **if there shall be a destitute person among you, any of your brethren in any of your cities, in the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him . . . you shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking.**

We must endeavor to explain the importance Scriptures attaches to the actual hand that fulfills the mitzvah of tzedakah. At first, the Torah warns: **”ולא תקפוץ את ירך”—do not clench (close) your hand.** Then the Torah commands a person to perform an outright action: **”כי פתוח תפתח את ירך”—you shall repeatedly open your hand.** Clearly, there are numerous mitzvos that we perform with our hands—such as milah, returning a lost object and taking and waving the four species. Yet, we do not find that the pesukim associated with these mitzvos specifically instruct us to utilize our hands in the fulfillment of said mitzvos. For, the essence of these mitzvos is not the hand's involvement; the hand is only the means and instrument used to perform the mitzvah. So, why does the Torah specify the action performed by the hand regarding the mitzvah of tzedakah?

The Divine Words of the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh

Let us begin our enlightening journey with the hallowed words of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. He views these pesukim as a reference to the Melech HaMashiach—who, in a sense, resembles **”אחיך האביון”—your destitute brother**—who yearns to come and redeem us. It is worthwhile for every single Jew to learn and review the sacred words, which emanate from this pure heart like inspirational flames:

”ובדרך רמז ירמוז להעיר הערה גדולה, על אחד המיוחד שבאומה שאליו אנו מקוים ומצפים מתי יבוא, והוא מלך ישראל משיחנו אשר הוא אביון, וכבר נמשל לעני כאומרו (זכריה ט-ט) עני ורוכב על חמור... גם רמז בתיבת 'בך' כי הוא אביון בנו שמתאוה מתי יבוא לגאלנו.

וצא ולמד ממה שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל במעשה רבי יהושע בן לוי, שכשראהו מלך המשיח שאלו על ישראל שבעולם, ואמר לו רבי יהושע בן לוי כי הם יושבים ומצפים ביאתו, וכששמע כן געה [משיח] החסיד בבכיה רבה מתשוקתו לבוא לגאלם. ולזה רמז באומרו מאחד אחיך, שהוא המיוחד שבאחיך...

ויצו ה' לכל איש ישראל שלא יאמץ את לבבו וגו', אלא יתחזק בכל עוז ותעצומות למלאות חשק האחד המיוחד באמצעות מעשה בני אדם, ובפרט במצות הצדקה דכתיב (ישעיה נד-ג) בצדקה תכונני”.

The destitute brother is an allusion to our long awaited mashiach; he is compared to a poor man riding on a donkey in Zechariah (9, 9). Our passuk describes him as 'בך', for he desperately longs to be among us—to come and redeem us. He relates the incident involving Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. He encountered the Melech HaMashiach, who inquired about the state and mindset of the people of Yisrael. He replied that they anxiously await his arrival. Hearing this, Mashiach let out a tremendous wail, demonstrating his great desire to come and redeem them. Thus, the passuk alludes to him as **מאחד אחיך**—for he is the unique, special one among your brothers. Hence, Hashem commands us not to refrain from welcoming him. Rather, we should do everything humanly possible to satisfy the unique one's wish—in particular, we should engage in the mitzvah of tzedakah.

Furthermore, the Torah specifically alludes to the fact that we must show our destitute brother—the Melech HaMashiach—mercy here, with regards to the mitzvah of tzedakah. For, as the Ohr HaChaim explains, Mashiach is destined to come in the merit of the mitzvah of tzedakah. As the passuk states in Yeshayah (54, 13): **”בצדקה תכונני”—you shall be established through righteousness.** Similarly, the Gemara explains (Shabbas 139a): **”אין ירושלים נפדה אלא בצדקה, שנאמר (ישעיה א-כז) ציון במשפט**

"תפדה ושביה בצדקה"—Yerushalayim will only be redeemed in the merit of tzedakah, as it is stated (Yeshayah 1, 27): **"Tziyon shall be redeemed through justice and her penitent through tzedakah.** The Gemara also emphasizes this point in Bava Basra (10a): **"גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה—tzedakah is so essential, for it hastens the geulah.**

It appears that we can explain the connection between the two interpretations of the passuk: **"לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפוץ את ירך— you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother.** According to the simple, straightforward interpretation, the passuk is discussing a poor, destitute person, who is unable to support himself. According to the interpretation of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, the passuk alludes to the Melech HaMashiach—who resembles a destitute person, in that he yearns to come and redeem Yisrael. In the process, we will achieve a deeper understanding of the statement: **"tzedakah is essential, for it hastens the geulah."**

Now, HKB"H insured that there would always be poor, destitute people in our midst, as the passuk states (Devarim 15, 11): **"כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ—for destitute people will not cease to exist within the land.** This is necessary, because HKB"H wants them to serve as a constant reminder that the Melech HaMashiach resembles a destitute person. He sits and waits anxiously—like a poor person at the doorway—wondering when he will finally be allowed to come and redeem Yisrael. Hence, "le'atid la'vo," there will no longer be any poor people, as it is written (Zechariah 14, 21): **"ולא יהיה כנעני עוד בבית ה' צבאות ביום ההוא".**

The Gemara elucidates this passuk as follows (Pesachim 50a): **"אין כאן עני"—there are no poor people here.** In other words, the word "כנעני" is elucidated as an abbreviation for **"כאן עני"**—here is a poor person. According to the passuk, however, "le'atid la'vo": **"ולא יהיה כנעני"**—poor, destitute people will no longer exist among Yisrael. Seeing as the destitute are merely a reminder to have mercy on the mashiach, there will no longer be a need for them after the geulah.

The Gemara (Megillah 12b) provides us with an important principle: **"במדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו"**—in the manner a person deals with others, so will Hashem deal with him. Thus, by showing the destitute mercy—the living reminder in our midst of the destitute mashiach—by sustaining him with our tzedakah, we prompt HKB"H—midah k'neged midah—to also show the destitute mashiach mercy, by allowing him to come and redeem us. It turns out that both interpretations of **"אחיד האביון"—your**

destitute brother—convey the same message and achieve the same purpose. For this reason: **"Tzedakah is essential, for it hastens the geulah."**

We can also suggest another reason as to why tzedakah hastens the geulah, based on what we have learned in the Gemara (Yoma 9b): **"מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב, מפני שלשה דברים שהיו בו עבודה זרה וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים... אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ומצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב, מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם, ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם—כנגד שלש עבירות עבודה זרה גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים"**—the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because the people were guilty of the three cardinal sins—avodah zarah, immorality and murder; these sins were not prevalent during the times of the second Beis HaMikdash. It was destroyed because of "sin'as chinam"—baseless hatred.

This explains very nicely why the mitzvah of giving tzedakah to the poor and needy hastens the geulah. For, this charitable act is the opposite of "sin'as chinam"; it is a demonstration of "ahavas chinam"—loving one's fellow Jew unconditionally. The willingness to part from one's hard-earned money, out of love and mercy for a fellow Jew, constitutes a marvelous tikun for the terrible and tragic flaw of "sin'as chinam," which led to the destruction of Bayis Sheini.

You Shall Open Your Hand to Him Repeatedly

Now, let us witness the wonders of Hashem's Torah! Based on the interpretation of the Ohr HaChaim, we can begin to comprehend why the Torah chose to warn us regarding the mitzvah of tzedakah in the following terms: **"You shall not close your hand against your destitute brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him."** Simultaneously, we will achieve a deeper appreciation for the significance of the statement quoted above: **"Tzedakah is essential, for it hastens the geulah."**

First, let us present a wonderful pe from the writings of the great Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bavel, zy"a, the author of the Ben Ish Chai, in his sefer Chasdei Avos, on the Mishnah (Avos 4, 1): **"איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו, שנאמר (תהלים קכח-ב) יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך—Who is truly rich? He who is happy and content with his lot, as it is said: "When you eat of the labor of your hands, you are praiseworthy and all is well."** He explains this Mishnah based on the Gemara's statement (Ketubos 50a): **"המבזבז אל—יבזבז יותר מחומש שמה יצטרך לבריות"**—one who lavishes money on tzedakah, should not expend more than a fifth of one's wealth, lest he become dependent on others for his own support.

We can suggest that HKB"ח alluded to this fact by the manner in which He created man's hand—the hand with which man earns his bread. The human hand was formed with four fingers adjacent to one another; the thumb, however, is separate and stands apart. This alludes to the fact that four fifths of a person's wealth belongs to him; the remaining fifth—represented by the thumb, which is isolated and stands alone—is designated as the poor man's portion; it is off limits.

This then is the interpretation of the Mishnah: **"איזהו עשיר"**—one should be content with the four-fifths of one's wealth represented by the four fingers of one's hand; they are his portion for his personal use. The remaining fifth belongs to the poor; this portion should not be touched. The Mishnah substantiates this point by quoting the passuk in Tehillim: **"יגיע"**—in other words, what you should consume and derive pleasure from in this world is alluded to by the palm of your hand; it has four fingers grouped together and a fifth which stands alone isolated. This is the gist of his explanation.

This provides us with a very nice understanding of the passuk's admonition: **"You shall not close your hand against your destitute brother."** We find that when one's hand is clenched together (in a fist), the thumb is not discerned as a separate entity from the other fingers. Furthermore, it is actually united with all of the other fingers. Therefore, the passuk provides a stern warning: **"Do not close your hand against your destitute brother"**—refraining from giving him tzedakah, ignoring the fact that the poor man's portion resides with you. **"Rather, you shall open your hand to him"**—this will insure that you see and remember that HKB"ח created the thumb as a separate entity, separate from the other four fingers. He wished to teach us that the poor person's portion is in our possession and we may not steal from it.

The Letter "Hei" Is Comprised of Two Parts

I have been inspired and moved by the words of the Ben Ish Chai. With them in mind, I would like to explain the statement in the Zohar hakadosh (Ha'azinu 292a) that **צדק"ה** can be viewed as **צדק ה'**. In Netivos Olam, the Maharal of Prague addresses the issue of not expending in excess of one fifth of one's wealth on tzedakah:

"ומה שאמר המבזבז אל יבזבז יותר מחומש... זה נרמז באות ה', כי כל האותיות הן גוף אחד חוץ מהאות ה' שיש בה שני חלקים, האחד הוא ד' והשני הוא הקו שהוא בתוך הד' עד שנעשה מזה ה', ודבר זה מורה לך כי החמישי נבדל מן הארבע, ויש להבדיל ולהפריש החמישי ולתת אותו אל השי"ת ולצדקה."

This issue is alluded to by the form of the Hebrew letter "hei" - ה'. All of the other letters of the alphabet are represented by a single, unified body; whereas the letter "hei" is formed by two distinct parts. The first part is a "dalet" - ד' (which possesses a numerical value of four)—and the second part is a small vertical line within the space of the "dalet." This structure indicates that the fifth is separate and distinct from the other four. The fifth portion is to be set aside and given to Hashem and to tzedakah.

Based on what we have learned from the Ben Ish Chai, we can add a small embellishment of our own. The two distinct parts of the letter "hei" correspond to the two distinct parts of the human hand. The "dalet," possessing a numerical value of four, corresponds to the four similar fingers; they represent the four fifths that belong to the person himself. The short "vav" within the framework of the "hei"—separate from the "dalet"—alludes to the thumb, which is shaped like a "vav." It is separate and somewhat isolated from the other fingers, because it represents the poor man's portion. This scheme is alluded to by the word tzedakah, which can be broken down to the components **צדק ה'**. This serves as a constant reminder to consider the structure of the letter ה' with its two distinct components. The ד' represents the four fifths a person keeps and utilizes for his own personal agenda and the small ו' corresponds to the thumb, representing the poor man's portion.

"When You Lend Money to the Poor Person with You"

Let us suggest another fantastic allusion concerning the passuk (Shemos 22, 24): **"אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך"**—**when you lend money to My people, to the poor person who is with you.** The Ohr HaChaim makes the following comment: **"פירוש, אם ראיית שהיה לך כסף יותר על מה שאתה צריך לעצמך, שאתה מלווה לעמי, תדע לך שאין זה חלק המגיעך, אלא חלק אחרים שהוא העני עמך, ובזה רמז כי צריך לפתוח לו משלך"**—if you see that your finances exceed your needs and you choose to lend money to My people, know full well that this portion (money) does not truly belong to you; it belongs, in fact, to the poor among you. This is a hint that you should open your hand and return to him that which was originally his.

Now, let us introduce an incredible idea presented by the Agra D'Pirka (276) in the name of the divine kabbalist, the Ramaz. He writes that the five fingers of the hand correspond to the five final letters **מנצב"ך**. The thumb, which stands apart, corresponds to the final "chaf" - כ'; in the aleph-Beis, it, too, is separate from the other final letters. The second and third fingers (referred to in Hebrew as the "etzba" and "amah," respectively), which are

adjacent to one another correspond to the final letters "mem" and "nun"—which are also adjacent to one another in the aleph-Beis. The fourth and fifth fingers (known as the "kemitzah" and the "zeret"), which are also adjacent to each other, correspond to the remaining final letters, "fei" and "tzadi"—"ז" and "ף"; they, too, are adjacent in the aleph-Beis.

Thus, we find that the thumb, which is somewhat isolated from the other fingers, corresponds to the final letter "chaf," which is also somewhat isolated from the other final letters. Let us explain the significance of this phenomenon based on what the Shela hakadosh writes (Vayeishev). The final letter "chaf"—"ך"—alludes to the mitzvah of tzedakah. The word "chaf"—"ח"—refers to the palm of one's hand. The Hebrew letter "chaf" appears in an open form (the final "chaf") and a closed form. Thus, the final "chaf," representing the opening of one's hand, symbolizes giving to the poor person. It is for this reason that the thumb, representing the poor man's portion, corresponds to the final "chaf." It signifies that a person should open the palm—"ח"—of his hand to give the poor person his allocated portion.

In fact, we can suggest that this amazing concept is alluded to by the passuk: "אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך". The word "עמך" employed by the passuk can be broken down to "עם"—meaning with the final "chaf." In other words, remember that the poor person's portion resides with the final "chaf"—the thumb set apart from the other fingers. The thumb corresponds to the final "chaf" so that you remember to spread open the palm—"ח"—of your hand to provide the poor person his designated portion.

Yisrael Are Compared to the Thumb

Continuing our journey, let us return our focus to the statement: "גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה"—**tzedakah is essential, for it hastens the geulah**. Concerning the passuk (Devarim 28, 1): "ונתנך ה' אלקיך עליו"—**Hashem, your G-d, will make you "elyon" (supreme)**—the Megaleh Amukos on Vaetchanan (147) cites a statement from our blessed sages in the Midrash Tanchuma (Eikev 4): "אמר רבי לוי מהו עליו, כאליון [כאגודל] הזה, אם זכית הרי אתה למעלה מארבע אצבעות, ואם לאו למטה מארבע אצבעות"—**Rabbi Levi said, "What is "elyon"? Like the thumb; if you are meritorious, you are superior to the four fingers; if not, you are inferior to the four fingers.**

The Megaleh Amukos comments that the four fingers that are adjacent to one another represent the four exiles: **Bavel, Madai, Yavan and Edom**. Accordingly, the baby finger, known as the "zeret"—"ז" —corresponds to the galus of Edom, which is Eisav.

Thus, we find the following allusion in the name "זר"ת. It is an acronym for (Iyov 38, 15): "זרוע רמה תשבך"—**the upper arm shall be broken**. It also alludes to that which we learn in the Midrash (S.R. 35, 5): Le'atid la'vo, HKB"H will accept korbanos from all of the nations with the exception of Edom, the descendants of Eisav. This is also alluded to by the name "זר"ת, which is an acronym for (Mishlei 21, 27): "זבח רשעים תועבה"—**the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination**.

On the other hand, the thumb alludes to Yisrael. This is conveyed by the Midrash regarding the passuk: "ונתנך ה' אלקיך עליון על כל הגוים"—**Hashem, your G-d, will make you "elyon" (supreme) over all of the nations**—you shall be like the thumb, which is superior to the other fingers. It is worth adding that this is why the passuk (ibid.) states that this is conditional on the observance of mitzvos: "והיה אם שמוע תשמע בקול ה' אלקיך לשמור לעשות את כל מצוותי אשר אנכי מצוך היום, ונתנך ה' אלקיך עליון על כל גווי הארץ"—**it shall be that if you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to observe, to perform all of His mitzvos that I command you this day, then Hashem, your G-d, will make you "elyon" (supreme) over the nations of the earth**. By separating themselves from all the other nations with regards to their good deeds, they will merit being like the thumb—which is separate and superior to the other four fingers.

Let us return to the words of the Megaleh Amukos. Applying this concept, he interprets the words of the following lament (Eichah 3, 3): "אך בי ישוב יהפוך ידו כל היום"—**only against me did He turn His hand repeatedly all day long**. During times of galus, HKB"H, so to speak, rotates His hand in such a manner that the four fingers—corresponding to the four exiles—are on top; whereas the thumb corresponding to Yisrael is on the bottom. This signifies the nations of the world's dominance and reign over Yisrael. This concludes the interpretation of the Megaleh Amukos.

This concept can also be applied very nicely to the passuk concerning the war versus Amalek (Shemos 17, 11): "והיה כאשר ירים משה ידו וגבר ישראל וכאשר יניח ידו וגבר עמלק"—**it happened that when Moshe raised his hand Yisrael was stronger, and when he lowered his hand Amalek was stronger**. Concerning this passuk, we have learned in the Mishnah (RH 29a): "וכי ידיו של משה עושות מלחמה או שוברות מלחמה. אלא לומר לך בזמן שישראל מסתכלין כלפי מעלה ומשעבדין את לבם לאביהם שבשמים היו נוצחות ואם לאו היו נופלות"—**do Moshe's hands actually determine the course of the battle? Rather, the passuk informs us that when Yisrael look toward the heavens and make themselves subservient to their Father in Heaven, they are victorious; when they fail**

to do so, they fall. Seemingly, the question still remains. Why does the passuk state: **"It happened that when Moshe raised his hand Yisrael was stronger"**? Clearly, the matter did not depend on the position of Moshe's hands.

Yet, based on what we have learned, we can propose an explanation. When Yisrael made themselves subservient to their Father in Heaven, HKB"H supplied Moshe with power—which was transmitted to all of Yisrael. This enabled him to raise his hands so that the thumb would be higher than the other fingers. This constituted a "poel dimyon"—a symbolic gesture—indicating that Yisrael would rise above all the nations of the world. This is the significance of the statement: **"It happened that when Moshe raised his hand Yisrael was stronger."**

In this vein, the passuk continues: **"וכאשר יניח ידו וגבר עמלק"-and when he lowered his hand Amalek was stronger.** If Yisrael, however, failed to commit themselves to their Father in Heaven, Moshe did not have the power to keep his hands elevated. When he lowered his hands, Amalek became stronger. For, when he rested his hands, the thumb was no longer higher than the other fingers. Consequently, Amalek, who incorporates all four regimes--as attested to by the passuk (Bamidbar 24, 20): **"ראשית גוים עמלק"—Amalek is the first among nations—**gains power in all four fingers, allowing them to gain superiority over the thumb, representing Yisrael.

"Arise Hashem G-d Raise Your Hands"

We can suggest that this is what David HaMelech prayed for when he proclaimed (Tehillim 10, 12): **"קומה ה' אל נשא ידיך אל תשכח ענוים—Arise Hashem! G-d raise your hands; do not forget the humble.** The Zohar hakadosh explains (Lech Lecha 82b) that David HaMelech himself will be the Melech HaMashiach. Hence, he prayed for the geulah as follows: **"Arise Hashem! G-d raise your hands"**—toward the heavens, so that Yisrael will be on top, like the thumb which is higher than the other four fingers. **"Do not forget the humble"**—your children Yisrael, who have been subjected to the four exiles.

We can now better understand the relationship between the mitzvah of tzedakah and the future geulah, as expressed by the statement: **"גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה"—tzedakah is essential, for it hastens the geulah.** Concerning the mitzvah of tzedakah, the passuk states: **"Do not close your hand against your destitute**

brother; you shall open your hand repeatedly for him." As explained, this means that one should open one's hand in order to reveal the thumb—the portion of the poor man, separated from the other four fingers of the hand. This is designed to teach us that it is prohibited to utilize the poor man's portion for our own personal needs. With this action we also bring about the geulah. For at the time of the geulah, Yisrael—who resemble the thumb—will finally be elevated above all the nations and all regimes. Therefore, the sages stated quite appropriately: **"גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה"—tzedakah is essential, for it hastens the geulah.**

Lastly, let us combine the explanations of our three great luminaries—the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, the Megaleh Amukos and the Ben Ish Chai—to expound on the passuk: **"כי יהיה בך אביון—if there shall be a destitute person among you, any of your brethren in any of your cities, in the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you.**

As we have seen, this passuk incorporates two distinct interpretations. According to the simple interpretation, it refers to a destitute person who has nothing of his own. According to the method of allusion—"remez"—the passuk refers to the Melech HaMashiach. As we learned from the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, he resembles a destitute person; for he is needy, longing to finally come and redeem Yisrael from galus. This prompts HKB"H to plead with us: **"לא תאמץ את לבבך"—do not harden your heart—**do not turn away and ignore these two destitute persons. Additionally, **"ולא תקפוץ את ירך מאחיד האביון"—**do not clench your fist and refrain from giving him tzedakah. As we learned from the Ben Ish Chai, his allocated portion is represented by the thumb, which stands apart from the other fingers.

If you clench your fist, chas v'shalom, in the face of your destitute brother, you will prevent him from fulfilling his dream and his heart's desire. For, he is David HaMelech, our righteous Mashiach. He prays: **"קומה ה' אל נשא ידיך"—Arise Hashem! G-d raise your hands.** He beseeches Hashem to place Yisrael in a position of supremacy and dominion—like the thumb—over the four regimes—as we learned from the Megaleh Amukos. Therefore, we are asked to remember: **"כי פתוח תפתח את ירך לוי"—**to give tzedakah to our destitute brother, whose portion is the thumb. If we do so, we will also be giving tzedakah to the Melech HaMashiach, empowering him to come and redeem us swiftly, in our times. Amen.

Donated by Dr. Ralph and Limor Madeb
For the Refua shelema of Refael Gavriel Simcha Chaim Ben shulamit

To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com