



Tzedakah Hastens the Geulah

The Arizal Teaches Us to Have in Mind the Permutation of the Month of Tishrei when Giving Tzedakah

One of the most important of the taryag mitzvos, the mitzvah of giving tzedakah, appears in this week's parsha, parshas Re'eh. In the words of Chazal (B.B. 9a): "שְׁקוּלָהּ—צְדָקָה כְּנֹגֵד כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת"—tzedakah is commensurate to all of the mitzvos. Furthermore, it hastens the geulah, as we learn elsewhere (ibid. 10a): "גְּדוּלָהּ צְדָקָה שֶׁמִּקְרִיבָתָא אֶת הַגְּאוּלָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כֹּה אָמַר ה' שְׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּט וַעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה כִּי קְרוֹבָה יִשׁוּעָתִי לָבוֹא וְצַדִּיקִי לְהַגְלוֹת". Tzedakah is great, because it brings the geulah closer, as it is stated (Yeshayah 56, 1): "So said Hashem, 'Keep justice and do charity, for My salvation is near to come and My charity to be revealed.'" Additionally, we are taught (Shabbas 139a): "אֵין יְרוּשָׁלַם נִפְדָּה אֶלָּא בְּצַדָקָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר—צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפָּט תִּפְדָּה וְשִׁבְיָהּ בְּצַדָקָה"—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." Here are the sacred pesukim in our parsha related to the mitzvah of tzedakah (Devarim 15, 7):

"כִּי יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאֶחָד אַחֶיךָ בְּאֶחָד שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ, לֹא תִאֲמָץ אֶת לִבְּךָ וְלֹא תִקְפּוֹץ אֶת יָדְךָ מֵאֶחָד הָאֶבְיוֹן. כִּי תִפְתָּח אֶת יָדְךָ לוֹ וְהֶעֱבַט תַּעֲבִיטֵנוּ דֵּי מַחְסוּרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִחְסֹר לוֹ. הַשְׁמַר לְךָ פֶּן יִהְיֶה דִבָּר עִם לִבְּךָ בְּלִיעַל לֵאמֹר קִרְבָּה שְׁנַת הַשְּׁבַע שְׁנַת הַשְּׁמִיטָה, וְרַעָה עֵינֶיךָ בְּאֶחָד הָאֶבְיוֹן וְלֹא תִתֵּן לוֹ וְקָרָא עֲלֶיךָ אֵל ה' וְהָיָה בְּךָ חָטָא. נָתַן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא יִרְעַ לִבְּךָ בְּתִתֵּן לוֹ כִּי בְּגִלָּל הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְכָל מַשְׁלַח יָדְךָ."

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, do not harden your heart

and do not close your hand against your destitute brother. Rather, you must certainly open your hand to him . . . Beware lest there be a lawless thought in your heart . . . and you will look malevolently upon your destitute brother, and you will not give him; then he will call out against you to Hashem, and you will be regarded as sinful. You must certainly give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give to him, for as a consequence of this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking.

Now, initially, the Torah admonishes us: "You shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. Rather, you shall open your hand to him." So, why was it necessary for the Torah to add the second admonition: "And you will look malevolently upon your destitute brother, and you will not give him; then he will call out against you to Hashem, and you will be regarded as sinful"? This is indeed unusual. For, we do not find—in relation to any mitzvas asei or mitzvas lo ta'aseh—that the Torah adds a warning that if a person fails to perform that mitzvah of Hashem, he will be considered sinful. After all, it is obvious that if someone does not observe one of Hashem's mitzvos, it is a sin. Furthermore, why is the person considered sinful only if "he will call out against you to Hashem"? Even without the destitute person's calling out, the failure to give him tzedakah is a sin.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh Teaches that “Your Destitute Brother” Is the Melech HaMashiach

We will begin to shed some light on the subject with the enlightening words of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh. He interprets these pesukim as a “remez” to the Melech HaMashiach; he is viewed as **“your destitute brother,”** who yearns to come and redeem us:

The destitute brother is alludes to our long awaited mashiach; he is compared to a poor man riding on a donkey in Zechariah (9, 9). Why is he destitute? Our passuk says **‘בך’**—on account of us, since the lengthy galus is due to our iniquities. The term **‘בך’** also alludes to the fact that he desperately longs to be among us—to come and redeem us.

He relates an incident involving Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. He encountered the Melech HaMashiach, who inquired about the state and mindset of the people of Yisrael. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi replied that they anxiously await his arrival. Hearing this, the pious 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. It specifies that he is **“באחד עריך”**—teaching that he is the preeminent teacher and leader of the Sanhedrin (a reference to Yeshayah 11, 4). It also specifies that he will be **“בארצך”**—teaching that he will be conceived and born in the holy land of Israel.

The Ohr HaChaim goes on to explain that these pesukim urge us to hasten the coming of the Mashiach by performing good deeds and in particular the mitzvah of tzedakah. This is based on a teaching in the Zohar Chadash (Noach) that if a congregation is aroused to perform teshuvah, the son of David will come immediately. Hence, Hashem commands every Jew not to **“harden his heart”**—do everything humanly possible to satisfy the unique one’s wish—in particular, by performing the mitzvah of tzedakah, as it is written (ibid. 54, 13): **“בצדקה תכונני”**—**establish yourself through tzedakah (righteousness).**

According to many, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh felt that the neshamah of Mashiach was within him. In the sefer Segulat Moshe on the Ohr HaChaim, he provides us with the following tidbit: The name **“משיח”** is an acronym for **מ'שיח י'י ש'מו ח'יים**—**the Mashiach of Hashem, his name is Chaim.** In other words, there is a “remez” in the name **“משיח”** to a connection with the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh.

Tzedakah Has the Power to Hasten the Geulah

It is apparent that the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh draws a connection between the plain meaning of the text **“אחיק האביון”**—that it is speaking of a destitute brother who needs tzedakah—and the interpretation based on “remez”—that it is alluding to the Melech HaMashiach, who will come to redeem us in the merit of the mitzvah of tzedakah. For, as we have learned in the Gemara above: **“גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה”**.

Let us explain the connection based on the following Gemara (Yoma 9b): **“מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב, מפני שלשה דברים... אכל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצות 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; the people of that period engaged in Torah-study and performed mitzvos and acts of kindness. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of “sin’as chinam”—baseless hatred. This teaches us that “sin’as chinam” is equivalent to the three cardinal sins.

This explains very nicely why the mitzvah of tzedakah hastens the geulah. Giving of one’s money and wealth to a brother in need is a form of “ahavat chinam.” It illustrates that he cares enough about his fellow Jew to part with his own hard-earned money. As such, it constitutes the perfect tikun for “sin’as chinam,” which was the cause of the churban Beis HaMikdash. As a result of this tikun, we will be deserving of the geulah and the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

Let us embellish this thought based on the passuk (Shemos 17, 16): “וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי יָד עַל כֶּסֶּף מַלְחָמָה לֵּה בְעַמְלֶק מִדּוֹר” —and he said, “For there is a hand on the throne of ה'”; Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation.” Rashi comments: HKB”H swore that His name is not whole nor is His Throne whole until the name of Amalek is completely eradicated. As we have explained before, as long as a remnant of Amalek remains in the world, the letters “vav-hei” of the holy name Havaya will be absent.

This means that the future geulah depends on restoring the letters “vav-hei” to complete the name Havaya—the Tetragrammaton—with all four of its letters. We can suggest that this is alluded to by term גאולה—which is spelled with the same letters as גאל ויהי. In other words, we are anxiously awaiting and anticipating that HKB”H will redeem the letters “vav-hei” that are currently absent. This concurs with the interpretation of the Ba’al Shem Tov hakadosh, zy”a, in the sefer Ba’al Shem Tov (Beshalach) of the passuk (Tehillim 20, 6): “יִמְלֵא ה' כָּל מִשְׁאֲלוֹתֶיךָ”—Hashem will fulfill all of your requests. He interprets this as saying that all of your requests will be that HKB”H will complete (“ימלא”) the name Havaya with all four of its letters. Then, it will illuminate the world with the promise of the splendorous and glorious allusion associated with the first letters of its name: “יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתִגַּל הָאָרֶץ”—let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice.

The Focus of the Arizal Associated with the Mitzvah of Tzedakah

We will now continue to explain why our sages said: “גְּדוּלָה צְדָקָה שֶׁמְקַרְבֶּת אֶת הַגָּאוּלָּה”. Our master, the Arizal, teaches us that when giving tzedakah, we should focus on the four letters of the blessed name Havaya. This is explained in Likutei Torah in relation to the passuk (Yeshayah 32, 17): “וְהָיָה מַעֲשֵׂה הַצְדָּקָה שְׁלוֹם”—the product of tzedakah (righteousness) will be shalom (peace). Here is a concise translation:

In galus, as a result of our many sins, the “vav-hei” is separated from the “yud-hei.” Yet, one who does

tzedakah connects the “vav-hei” and elevates them to the “yud-hei.” My teacher of blessed memory taught the following symbolism regarding tzedakah. The outstretched arm of the giver represents a “vav”; the five fingers giving the tzedakah represent a “hei”; the coin is a “yud”; and the five receiving fingers represent a “hei.” Altogether we have the letters וְהָיָה (the four letters of Havaya), which establish shalom via the act of tzedakah—“וְהָיָה מַעֲשֵׂה הַצְדָּקָה שְׁלוֹם”.

The Arizal is teaching us that by fulfilling the mitzvah of tzedakah, we are unifying the name Havaya, so that it is complete with all four of its letters. In this light, we can interpret Chazal’s statement: “גְּדוּלָה צְדָקָה שֶׁמְקַרְבֶּת אֶת הַגָּאוּלָּה”. As mentioned above, the word גאולה can be broken down into the words גאל ויהי. Thus, they are stating that one of the beneficial effects of tzedakah is that it restores the letters “vav-hei” to their rightful place; this results in joy on earth: וְתִגַּל הָאָרֶץ. This will bring about the complete geulah and the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

Let us add our own tasty tidbit to this explanation. Note that the Arizal teaches us that the unification of the name Havaya via tzedakah is based on the permutation וְהָיָה—the outstretched arm of the giver is a “vav,” the five fingers of the giver are a “hei,” the coin is a “yud,” and the five fingers of the receiver are another “hei.” Why specifically this permutation of the name Havaya?

We can suggest an answer based on the passuk in our parsha. It emphasizes that tzedakah must be given gladly and with a good heart: “נָתַן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא יֵרַע לִבְךָ בְּתֵתָךְ לוֹ כִּי בְגִלָּל” —you must certainly give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give to him, for as a consequence of this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking. Furthermore, the Gemara teaches us (B.B. 9b): “כָּל הַנּוֹתֵן פְּרוּטָה לְעֵנִי מִתְבָּרֵךְ” —anyone who gives even a perutah (a small coin) to a poor person is blessed with six berachot. And one who comforts him is blessed with eleven berachot.

Now, we are familiar with the teaching in the Midrash (B.R. 42, 3): **Wherever** (in Scripture) **it says** “ויהי”, **it expresses misfortune, and when it says** “והיה”, **it expresses joy.** They bring the following proof text (Zechariah 14, 8): “והיה ביום ההוא יצאו מים חיים מירושלים”—**it shall be on that day, spring water will flow out of Yerushalayim.** This is also evident from the passuk (Yeshayah 27, 23): “והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול”—**it shall be on that day that a great shofar will be blown.** From this perspective, we can comprehend the revelation of the Arizal. When giving tzedakah, one should have in mind the permutation ויהי as it appears in the passuk: “והיה מעשה” —teaching us that one must give tzedakah with simchah and a happy, willing heart.

It also provides us with a very nice interpretation of the passuk: “השמר לך פן יהיה דבר עם לבבך בליעל לאמר... ורעה עינך.” It states explicitly that if you look upon your destitute brother scornfully and either refrain from giving him tzedakah or give to him unwillingly, “והיה בך חטא”—it will be considered a sin. For, you have failed to give tzedakah in the spirit of the passuk: “והיה מעשה הצדקה שלום”.

The Creation of the World and the Future Geulah Are Both Associated with Tishrei and Nissan

Following this path, I would like to present to our royal audience a novel explanation regarding the Arizal’s teaching that one should have in mind the permutation ויהי when giving tzedakah. We will begin with a dispute in the Gemara (R.H. 10b): “תניא רבי אליעזר אומר בתשרי נברא העולם... בניסן נגאלו, בתשרי עתידין ליגאל, רבי יהושע אומר בניסן נברא העולם... בניסן נגאלו, בניסן עתידין ליגאל.” It was taught in a Baraisa: **Rabbi Eliezer says: The world was created in Tishrei . . . in Nissan, they were redeemed** (from Mitzrayim); **in Tishrei, they are destined to be redeemed.** **Rabbi Yehoshua says: The world was created in Nissan . . . in Nissan, they were redeemed** (from Mitzrayim); **in Nissan, they are destined to be redeemed.**

The Gemara (ibid. 11b) presents each one’s rationale. Rabbi Eliezer opines: “בתשרי עתידין ליגאל, אתיא שופר שופר, כתיב:

הכאתקעו בחודש שופר, וכתיב התם ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול. רבי יהושע אומר בניסן נגאלו בניסן עתידין ליגאל, מנלן אמר קרא ליל שמורים, ליל “המשומר ובא מששת ימי בראשית”. In Tishrei, they are destined to be redeemed. This is derived (by means of a gezeirah-shavah) from “shofar,” “shofar.” It is written here (regarding Rosh HaShanah; Tehillim 81, 4): “Blow a shofar at the renewal of the moon,” and it is written there (regarding the future geulah; Yeshayah 27, 13): “On that day, a great shofar will be sounded.” Rabbi Yehoshua says: In Nissan, they were redeemed; in Nissan they are destined to be redeemed (again). From where do we know this? The passuk states (regarding the geulah from Mitzrayim; Shemos 12, 42): “It is a night of anticipation.” They expounded: It is a night that has been anticipated from the six days of creation onward.

Tosafos ask why the divine poet Rabbi Elazar HaKalir holds like Rabbi Eliezer in one place (that the future geulah will be in Tishrei) and like Rabbi Yehoshua in another place (that the future geulah will be in Nissan). They conclude in the name of Rabeinu Tam that both opinions are correct: HKB”H created the world in thought in Tishrei and in actual deed in Nissan.

Apropos this matter, we find a tremendous chiddush in the teachings of our master, the Arizal, in Pri Eitz Chaim (Sha’ar HaShofar, Chapter 5). He also concludes that both the opinions of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua regarding the month in which the world was created are divinely correct. According to his sacred explanation, the conception and gestation of the world was on Rosh HaShanah, in Tishrei, while its birth was in Nissan.

Let us compare these two explanations. According to Rabeinu Tam, the world was created in Tishrei only in terms of spiritual planning and conception in preparation for the actual physical birth in Nissan. According to the Arizal, the conception of the world was in Tishrei as a preparation for the actual birth in Nissan. In other words, in Nissan, the concept conceived in Tishrei became a reality.

It now pleases me immensely to introduce an idea from the Shem MiShmuel (Rosh HaShanah 5672). Based on

the chiddush of Rabeinu Tam, he explains the rationale for Rosh HaShanah in Tishrei being designated as a day of judgment (“din”) as opposed to the month of Nissan being a month of compassion (“rachamim”). He refers to Rashi’s comment on “בראשית ברא אלקים” (Bereishis 1, 1): The opening passuk of the Torah employs the name Elokim rather than Havaya; this indicates that the Creator initially intended to create the world based on the midah of “din.” He foresaw, however, that the world could not survive based on this strict standard. Therefore, he preferentially partnered the midah of “rachamim” with the midah of “din.” This partnership and preference for “midas harachamim” are evident in the passuk (ibid. 2, 4): “ביום עשות ה’ אלקים ארץ ושמים”. (Note that in this passuk both divine names are employed, but the name of rachamim precedes the name of “din.”)

Hence, in the month of Tishrei, when the world was conceived intellectually, the world is judged with “din”—in keeping with HKB”H’s initial design. In contrast, in the month of Nissan, when the world was actually created, it is judged with “rachamim”—in keeping with HKB”H’s ultimate design. This explains why the permutation of the name **Havaya** that is operative in Nissan, the first month of the year, is the permutation with all four letters in their proper order—the manifestation of total “rachamim.”

Giving Tzedakah with the Permutation of Tishrei ו-ה-י-ה Is a Preparation for the Geulah with the Permutation of Nissan ו-ה-י-ה

It appears that just as the explanations of Rabeinu Tam and the Arizal—concerning the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua about the creation of the world—are divinely correct; the same holds true concerning their dispute about the time of the future geulah. In Tishrei, the world was conceived intellectually, while it was actually created in Nissan. So, too, the future geulah will be conceived in the month of Tishrei, and it will actually come to fruition in the month of Nissan.

This explains magnificently the prophecy of the navi regarding the future geulah (Zechariah 14, 9): “והיה ה’

—Hashem will be King over all the land; on that day, Hashem will be one and His name will be one. Note that this passuk opens with the words “והי’ ה-י-ה-ו-ה”—the two permutations of Havaya associated with the months of Tishrei and Nissan, the months of the future geulah conceptually and in actual reality.

Accordingly, we find that the future geulah will mirror the creation of the world. The intellectual conception of both is associated with the month of Tishrei and “midas hadin,” whereas the fruition and actual reality of both are associated with the month of Nissan and “midas harachamim.” The following passuk confirms that the geulah will be with “rachamim” (Yeshayah 54, 6): “כי ברגע קטן” —for but a brief moment have I forsaken you, and with abundant mercy (“rachamim”) will I gather you in.

This helps us understand why the permutation of **Havaya** for the month of Tishrei is ו-הי”ה and why the Arizal advises us to focus on this permutation when giving tzedakah, in keeping with the passuk: “והיה מעשה הצדקה” —שלום”. For, we find that tzedakah possesses the power to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” Rashi attests to this in his commentary (Bereishis 18, 16): **Any “השקפה” mentioned in Scripture has a negative (bad) connotation, except for** (Devarim 26, 15): “השקיפה ממעון” —קדשך”; for so great is the power of gifts to the poor that it transforms the divine attribute of anger into “rachamim.”

Now, since HKB”H will initiate the future geulah in thought in the month of Tishrei—which He initially associated with “midas hadin”—HKB”H provided us with a remedy. He illuminated the world with the permutation ו-הי”ה in the month of Tishrei. As we have learned, if we focus on this permutation while giving tzedakah, so that we give tzedakah with simchah, we prompt HKB”H to transform the “din” of Tishrei into total “rachamim.” Thus, not only will the actual birth of the geulah in Nissan be characterized by “rachamim,” but so will its conception in Tishrei.

From this perspective, we can understand the gravity and significance of the warning (Devarim 15, 9): “השומר לך פן יהיה” “דבר עם לבבך בליעל לאמר קרבה שנת השבע שנת השמיטה”. This passuk alludes to the future geulah in the seventh millennium. It admonishes us not to give reluctantly with an evil heart. “ורעה עינך באחיק האביון”—**and not to look askance at your destitute brother**—which according to the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh refers to the Melech HaMashiach. “ולא תתן לו”—causing you to refrain from giving tzedakah with the focus of והי”ה, which would mitigate and sweeten the harshness of the “din” of Tishrei. In that case, HKB”H will initiate the geulah in thought with “midas hadin.” Hence, the passuk goes on to say: “וקרא עליך אל י-ה-ו-ה והי”ה בכ חטא”—that the Melech HaMashiach will complain to HKB”H: Why didn’t Yisrael give tzedakah in such a manner that He would bring the geulah with “rachamim” from start to finish?

“וקרא עליך אל י-ה-ו-ה”—here the Torah specifically employs the permutation of the month of Nissan. The

Mashiach is asking why the complete geulah has not come yet. “והיה בכ חטא”—here the Torah specifically employs the permutation והי”ה insinuating that your sin is the failure to give tzedakah with simchah. Consequently, you failed to sweeten the harshness of the “din” of Tishrei, which would have prompted HKB”H to conceive of the geulah even in thought with “rachamim.”

The advice the Torah gives us is explicit: **“Do not harden your heart and do not close your hand against your destitute brother”**—the Melech HaMashiach. **“Rather, you must certainly open your hand to him”**—give tzedakah with him in mind willingly and gladly with the permutation והי”ה in mind. This will sweeten the harshness of the “din” of the month of Tishrei. As a result, the geulah will come with total “rachamim”—from its conceptual beginning in Tishrei to its actual fruition in Nissan—swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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