

# SICHA SUMMARY

## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 34

*Re'eh - Elul*

### The Context:

Parshas Re'eh includes the mitzvah of giving tzedaka to those in need: "If there will be among you a needy person... you shall not close your hand from your needy brother." (Devarim 15:7) Because this parshah often coincides with the beginning of the month of Elul, there must be a deeper connection between the mitzvah of tzedaka and the month of Elul.

### The Explanation:

In his laws of Teshuva, Rambam writes: "Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if the shofar's call is saying: Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator.

For these reasons, it is customary for all of Israel to give profusely to charity, perform many good deeds, and be occupied with mitzvot from Rosh HaShanah until Yom

Kippur to a greater extent than during the remainder of the year. During these ten days, the custom is for everyone to rise while it is still night and pray in the synagogues with heart-rending words of supplication until daybreak. (Teshuva, 3:4)

The month of Elul's focus on repentance is similar in kind to the ten days of repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If tzedakah is a priority during those ten days, as Rambam writes, it stands to reason that it is important for the month of Elul as well.

### The Question:

In his formulation of this law, Rambam separates tzedakah from the general category of good deeds and mitzvos, "For these reasons, it is customary for all of Israel to **give profusely to charity**, perform many **good deeds**, and **be occupied with mitzvot** from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur to a greater extent than during the remainder of the year."

Why is tzedakah uniquely appropriate for this time of year, more so than other mitzvos?

### **The Explanation:**

There are two justifications to request sustenance from G-d. 1) To appeal to G-d's limitless kindness and charity, even if we are undeserving. 2) To request what we have rightfully earned through our divine service.

Generally, only the flawless righteous can demand their due from G-d. But during the period of Divine judgment of the High Holiday season, we might assume that all of us need to increase our good deeds so that we can be found meritorious in G-d's judgment. Still, the Rambam prefaces that we "give profusely to charity" to stress that the very notion that our actions can be found worthy in G-d's eyes and elicit blessing for us is itself an uncalled for kindness of G-d. G-d is transcendent from the realm of human action and there is nothing that this action on its own terms can offer G-d. Yet G-d chooses, out of compassion, to grant our actions meaning.

Thus, we increase our charity during this time of the year to remind ourselves that even if we are ostensibly appealing to G-d's judgment, we are really always calling on His kindness.

### **The Deeper Dimension:**

Rosh Hashanah has two aspects. From G-d's perspective, it is the day where humanity requests Him to act as king of the world. From humanity's perspective, it is the day when we are judged by G-d. The two aspects in the Rambam's depiction of the ten days of repentance align with these objectives.

The fact that we increase in "good deeds, and are occupied with mitzvot" better our position before G-d's judgment. But the fact that we "give profusely to charity" out of a recognition that we are always unworthy and request G-d's limitless kindness arouses G-d to descend into our world and be king of the universe.

\*\*\*