

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XLV: Va'etchanan (Deut. 3:23–7:11)

Essay 12. We will have charity from the L-rd

"**וְצַדִּיקָה** תִּהְיֶה־לָנוּ כִּי־נִשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת", מהו "וְצַדִּיקָה תִּהְיֶה־לָנוּ"? וְיֵשׁ לּוֹמֵר שֶׁהַכְּתוּב אוֹמֵר "וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ מִשְׁמַעוֹ אֶל־מִצְוֹתַי . . . וְנִתְתִּי מִטְּר־אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ" וְכוּ' וְאִם חָס וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא נִשְׁמַע אֶל מִצְוֹתַי וְעֲצַר אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם" וְכוּ'. וְאִם כֵּן, אִם נִשְׁמַר מִצְוֹתַי נַעֲשֶׂה צַדִּיקָה לַעֲצָמֵנוּ כִּי אִזְ יִהְיֶה לָנוּ מְזוֹנוֹתֵינוּ מֵה שְׁאִין כֵּן אִם חָס וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא נִשְׁמַע.

“And we will have charity, if we observe to do all this commandment before the L-d our G-d, as He has commanded us” (Deut. 6:25).¹ What is this “and we will have charity”? It can be said that in Scripture it says, “If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the L-rd your G-d and serving Him with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in season . . .” (Deut. 11:13-14). But if, G-d forbid, His commandments won’t be obeyed, “He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain” (Deut. 11:17). If so, if we keep His commandments, we will perform charity for ourselves, because then we will have our sustenance, which is not true if, G-d forbid, [His instruction] is not heard by us.

וְעוֹד אֶפְשָׁר שָׁבַא לְרִמּוֹז לְמֵאֵי דְאִיתָא בְּפִרְקָא ד' דְּכַתּוּבָתָא² "הוֹן־נִעֲשָׂר בְּבֵיתוֹ וְצַדִּיקָתוֹ עֹמְדָת לְעַד", חָד אָמַר זֶה הִלּוּמֵד תּוֹרָה וּמִלְמִדָּה וְכוּ'. וְכֵן אָמְרוּ ז"ל עַל פְּסוּק "רְאֵה לְמִדְתֵּי אֲתָכֶם חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵי" מֵה אֲנִי בְּחֻנָּם אֶף אֲתָם בְּחֻנָּם. וְמִי שֶׁמְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה לְאַחֵרִים, צַדִּיקָה תִּחְשַׁב לוֹ, וְזֶהוּ "וְצַדִּיקָה תִּהְיֶה־לָנוּ". וְאִימְתִי יִהְיֶה זֶה "כִּי־נִשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת" וְכוּ' כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּנוּ בְּחֻנָּם אֶף אֲנִי בְּחֻנָּם.

It’s also possible that this terminology, “and we will have charity,” came to hint at what is brought in the fourth chapter of tractate Ketubot (50a) on the verse, “Wealth and riches are in his house, and his charity lasts forever” (Ps. 112:3). “Rav Chuna and Rav Chisda [discussed this, for if one’s wealth and riches remain untouched in his house, how can he at the same time be charitable]? One said: This is [referring to] one who studies Torah and teaches it. [I.e., he loses nothing of his own, while his charity toward others will endure.] And one said: This is one who writes [scrolls of] the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, and lends them to others. [The books remain his property, but others gain from his charity.]” Similarly, [the rabbis] of blessed memory

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¹ All translations of Deut. 6:25 render the word *zedakah* as “righteousness”, but it makes sense in this essay to render it as “charity,” as will be seen.

² The first edition quoted Ps. 106:3 at this point, in addition to quoting it a few lines later. It appears that this first quotation was a mistake, and the translator has deleted the first quotation from the text.

said on the verse, “See, I have imparted to you laws and rules, as the L-rd my G-d has commanded me, for you to abide by in the land that you are about to enter and occupy” (Deut. 4:5), “[G-d said:] **Just as I [teach you] for free, [without payment,] so too you also [shall teach] for free**” (Nedarim 37a). Regarding **one who teaches Torah to others, it will be considered charity to him, and this is the meaning of “and we will have charity.” When this one will fulfill the words “to observe faithfully” (Deut. 6:25), as He commanded him, just as he [teaches Torah] for free, so too we should do it for free.**

ועוד יש לומר דהתם נמי אמרינן "אשרי שמרי משפט עשה צדקה בכל-עת", וכי אפשר לאדם לעשות צדקה בכל עת? אלא זה הוון בניו ובנותיו כשהם קטנים. ופרש רש"י ז"ל שתמיד יום ולילה הם עליו והיא צדקה שאין עליו חיוב בהם.

It can also be said that there it also says, “Blessed are those who act justly, who perform charity at all times” (Ps. 106:3), **but is it possible for a man to perform charity at all times?** I.e., is he always in the presence of paupers? Therefore, our Rabbis in Yavne taught, and some say it was Rabbi Eliezer: **This is referring to one who sustains his sons and daughters when they are minors.**³ **Rashi, of blessed memory, explains that they are with him always, day and night, and [the care he provides] is charity in which he has no obligation.**⁴ That is, the rabbis declined to state that a father is obliged to provide support for his minor children, and during times of great persecution, some fathers would refuse to support their children, so that they would instead become a burden upon the community.⁵ Nevertheless, the rabbis strongly encouraged men to support their children, saying that the support of children is like continuous charitable acts.⁶

ולכן אמר הכתוב כשאנו עושים רצונו של מקום נהיה כמו בנים הסומכים על שלחן אביהם דאנו כמו קטנים. דגדול הסומך על שלחן אביו מקרי קטן. ועוד דגדול ואינו יודע במילי דאבוה קטן קרי ליה, ואף אנו אין אנו יודעים במילי דקב"ה כלום. דאמר ר' מאיר בפרק קמא דברכות "ונחתי את-אשר אהו" אף על פי שאינו הגון וכו', וכן על דרך זה יש צדיק נטוב לו, צדיק נרע לו.

Therefore, Scripture says that when we do the will of the Omnipresent, we will be like sons relying on the table of their father, in that we are like minors, i.e., immature. That is, Scripture says, “The L-rd said to me, ‘You are my son’ ” (Ps. 2:7); and “You are children of the L-rd your G-d” (Deut. 14:1). We also know that **an adult who relies upon the table of his father is called immature.**⁷ **Also, an adult who does not know his father’s [business] matters is called immature,**⁸ **and we certainly don’t know the matters of the Holy One, Blessed be He, at all. For Rabbi Meir said in the first chapter of tractate Berachot (7a), discussing the verse, “And I**

³ Ketubot 50a.

⁴ Rashi on Ketubot 50a.

⁵ Ketubot 65b.

⁶ Ketubot 49b, 50a.

⁷ Bava Metzia 12b. This gemarah is also discussed by Zera Shimshon in Chapter 35 (Naso), Essay 12.

⁸ Shevuot 42a; Ketubot 18a; Gittin 50a, 51b.

will be gracious to whom I will be gracious” (Ex. 33:19), that in His mercy, G-d bestows His grace upon every person, **even though he is not worthy. Nevertheless, there is a righteous man who will experience good** in his life, **while there is a different righteous man who will experience bad** in his life.⁹ We do not understand this, and thus, we do not know the “business” matters of our Father in Heaven. Thus, we are considered “immature.” As the rabbis termed the support a father gave to his minor children as charity, thus the support we receive, as “immature” children of a Father in Heaven, should also be considered as charity. Therefore, “we will have charity, if we observe to do all this commandment before the L-d our G-d, as He has commanded us.”

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⁹ Berachot 7a.