

Integrity Before Charity

The Rabbi knocks gently on the door. The man of the house opens the door and greets the Rabbi with a big smile.

"Shalom Rabbi Yosher, how are you? I must compliment you on your punctuality."

"Thank you very much Mr. Finagler. I am fine, how are you?"

"Wonderful. To what do I owe the honor of this special appointment?"

"This is the time of year that you give your annual donation to the Yeshiva, Mr. Finagler. Every year you give \$500. Will you be able to help us this year, also?"

"Rabbi, this year I would like to give \$10,000 to the Yeshiva."

Rabbi Yosher is very pleasantly surprised.

"Mr. Finagler, that is fantastic! *Tizke li'mitzvos* (may you merit to have mitzvos)!"

"Thank you Rabbi. I just made a great profit on big business deal, and I want to share my good fortune with the Yeshiva. I am in a new business. Some say it is not so legal. My lawyer had to bend some laws, my bookkeeper funneled some money from here to there without recording it, and my C.P.A. did some creative accounting work. But that's business, Rabbi. All is fair as long as it works out in the end, right? Give me a minute while I get my checkbook."

Rabbi Yosher has a few minutes to think. How will he inform Mr. Finagler of his mistake?

"*R*abbi Yosher, I am sorry to keep you waiting. Whom shall I make the check out to?"

"Mr. Finagler, do you have a minute for a Devar Torah first?"

"Of course, Rabbi."

"Last week we read Parashas Mishpatim, which details many monetary laws: to safeguard your possessions from damaging others, to not steal, to treat servants fairly, to properly watch other people's possessions, to not charge exorbitant prices, to lend money (interest free) to fellow Jews in need, and to judge cases fairly in *Beis Din* (court of Torah law). This week's parasha, Trumah, deals with donations to build the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Torah was not written haphazardly. Parshios were written in a specific order for a reason. The Beis HaLevi explains why parashas Trumah follows parashas Mishpatim. Before a person gives tsedaka from his money, he must first check to make sure that there was no stealing involved in acquiring this money. Why? Tsedaka given from stolen money is a '*mitzvah habbo bi'veyra*' (a mitzvah that comes about via a sin). It is like a stolen lulav. The Mishna (Succah 3:1) states that a stolen lulav is *possul* (unfit), and cannot be used for the mitzvah. Simi-

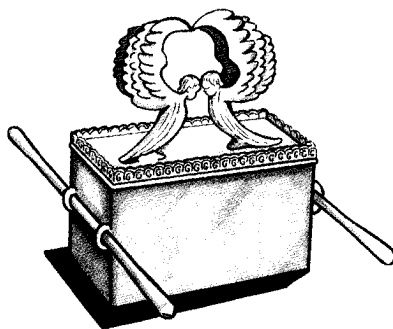
larly, tsedaka given from stolen money will not earn you a mitzvah. Therefore, examine your business dealings, and then give tsedaka, as the verse states, 'Observe justice, and perform righteousness' (Yishaya 56:1)."

"Rabbi Yosher, I am truly sorry. I never realized that business and tsedaka were connected."

"I understand, Mr. Finagler. Your desire to do the mitzvah will help you. May Hashem give you *Siyata Di'shmaya* (Heavenly Assistance) to make a big profit without bending any laws. Then we will look forward to your donation." "Amen."

Kinderlach . . .

Stealing is an aveyra (sin). Therefore, stolen money cannot possibly be used for a mitzvah. That is like trying to use dirt to wash yourself clean. No matter how much dirt you put on your hands, they will never become clean. More dirt will only soil them more. So too, you cannot clean up stolen money by giving it to tsedaka. You will not receive any mitzvah from this. The only way to correct the problem is to go to the source and return the stolen money to its rightful owner. Then use money that was acquired honestly for tsedaka. Remember, integrity before charity.



Inside and Out

"*A*nd so we see that this p'shat in Rashi can answer the thirteen questions that we asked from these seven Gemorahs."

The talmidim look at each other in amazement.

"That shiur (lecture) was absolutely brilliant."

"I agree. It was a masterpiece. The Rebbe is a true talmid chochom in every sense of the word. We have not discovered any subject in Torah that he does not know fluently."

"It's no wonder. He learns day and night. He delves into every gemora deeply and reviews it many, many times."

"I have another way to identify him as a true talmid chochom."

"What is that?"

"He has exemplary *middos* (character traits). He is so patient with all of the

talmidim (students). Although they are far below his level in Torah learning, he takes the time to patiently explain even the simplest points to them."

"Now that you mention it, I notice other outstanding *middos*. He is warm and friendly to everyone, greeting them with a smile. He is so reserved, never asserting his authority or flaunting his greatness. Even his movements are so gentle and thought out. He carries himself so humbly."

"He is like the Aron Kodesh!"

"What an unusual statement. Why do you say that? And furthermore, what do his good *middos* have to do with his being a talmid chochom?"

"*T*he two questions have one answer. Look in the parasha, where the Torah describes the Aron Kodesh. 'You shall make the aron of shittim wood...ad you shall coat it with pure gold outside and inside' (Shemos 25:10,11)."

"One minute. I understand the reason for the outside coating of pure gold. It will beautify the Holy Ark. However, why does the inside have to be gold? No one ever sees that."

"Brilliant! The Gemora (Yuma 72b) addresses this point. 'Any talmid chochom whose inside is not like his outside is not a talmid chochom.' What are the inside and outside referring to? The Keli Yakar on the parasha elaborates. Those who learn Torah must take special care to purify their hearts. Hashem Alone can look into a person's heart. A person must sincerely become an embodiment of the wisdom that he learns. That is a truly wise man, a genuine talmid chochom."

"I see. One's thoughts, emotions, and actions must be as well thought out as his Torah learning. Giving a brilliant shiur is only part of the story. One must be brilliant in his *middos* also."

"Well said. We should all become living examples of the Aron Kodesh - inside and out." "Amen."

Kinderlach . . .

Growing up to be a talmid chochom is a lofty goal in life. You should merit achieving it. As you know, much serious learning is required. Just as important is the work on perfecting ones middos. Patience, mercy, kindness, perseverance, understanding, seriousness, as well as many other middos all require effort to improve. That is part of growing in Torah. A true talmid chochom is as brilliant in his middos as he is in his Torah knowledge. Become a real talmid chochom - inside and out.

Parasha Questions

- Which different materials were accepted as Trumah? (25:3-7)
- What were the dimensions of the aron? (25:10) The shulchan? (25:23)
- What did the *keruvim* look like? (25:20 and Rashi 25:18)
- How many arms did the menorah have? (25:32)