

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Gemilat Chasadim—Performance of Kindness

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

During this month of Adar we read the Torah portion of Mishpatim in the book of Exodus. In this portion, which contains many laws governing the life of Jewish people, we find the Mitzvah of lending money (without interest) to a fellow person.

The Midrash states that every commandment G-d issued to the Jewish people is observed by G-d himself. He tells us to do and keep what he himself keeps. Thus it follows that G-d also observes the precept of lending money to "His" people.

A loan is given to someone even if he doesn't deserve it. Nonetheless, it is not a gift; the borrower must ultimately repay the loan.

G-d, too, provides the human with various abilities he does not necessarily deserve. He demands, though, that his loan be repaid — that the abilities be utilized for the realization of one's mission in life.

There are two types of loans: loan of an object and loan of money. The difference between them is that in the first case the borrower must return the same object, for it does not become his property. A monetary loan, however, is given to be spent; it becomes the property of the debtor and he may use it any way he desires.

When G-d provides the person with abilities it is like a monetary loan. Man chooses how he will use these abilities. Will he use it just to further his own purpose or will he use it to realize his mission in life?

A loan, even of abilities, is given to be spent. Every person could utilize it for his personal affairs. However, he must bear in mind the ultimate purpose for which the loan was intended.

Practically speaking, the Midrash comments the lending money to the poor is tantamount to lending to G-d. Furthermore, in Proverbs it says, "He that is gracious to the poor, lends to the Eternal and He will repay him..."

When G-d pays back his debt, though, He does so according to his measure. Just as G-d is infinite, He recompenses without limit.

Charity is equivalent to all mitzvot. Among the various levels of charity, the highest is

gemilat chasadim — performance of kindness. In colloquial usage, this term usually refers to granting interest-free loans.

Our sages say that *gemilat chasadim* is more superior than charity, for charity can be given only to the poor while free loans are given to both the poor and the rich. *Gemilat chasadim* is not limited.

A fabulous story is told about a man who once appeared before the court of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. The man claimed that he had left his home in a state of poverty a year earlier. His destination was unknown to him, but he went on the road to look for some chance to make it back on his feet.

Before he left, he concocted a story that he was sent by a famous company as a business agent, and told his wife that the company would pay his salary.

The following Friday the woman appeared at the corporate office and asked for her check; the bookkeeper checked the records and found nothing in her husband's name. The woman refused to accept the words of the bookkeeper and began to shout at him. The owner of the company heard the shouting and inquired what the noise was about. When he heard the story of the poor woman, he turned to the bookkeeper and said the lady is right; somehow it must have slipped my mind, but from now on have her check ready every Friday.

After a year the poor man had succeeded in earning some wealth and returned to his home town. When he discovered that his wife was receiving weekly paychecks for his so called work, he quickly ran to the owner and pleaded his forgiveness and proceeded to promise that he will return all the money.

The owner refused to hear him and said, "I do not know you at all. You do not owe me a thing; all I gave was a loan to G-d and he has repaid me more than double." The poor man ran to the court of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok with the money and asked him what to do. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok ruled that the money should be used to benefit other poor people in town so that they too could get on their feet.

Conversion of Jewish Orphans in Yemen is Tragedy

TEL AVIV (JTA) — The forcible conversion of orphaned Jewish children in Yemen has led to tragedy, according to reports brought here by members of a pro-Israel Japanese sect, Makopya, who had recently visited Yemen.

They said a young Jewish girl jumped off a cliff after she and her brothers were forced to convert to Islam, following their

parents' murder by highway robbers.

The incident occurred in Bilad-Anis, a town 50 miles south of Sana, the capital.

The Uri-Teyman (Awaken Yemen) Association here, which tries to rescue Jews remaining in Yemen, confirmed that 47 Jewish boys and girls between ages 10 and 14 have been converted to Islam in the past three

months.

According to Yemeni law, an unmarried orphan automatically belongs to Islam. The 15 Jewish children, whose parents were murdered, came to the attention of a religious Moslem, Ahmed Midani el-Maz'aki, the Japanese travelers reported. He had them converted under duress and afterward adopted them.

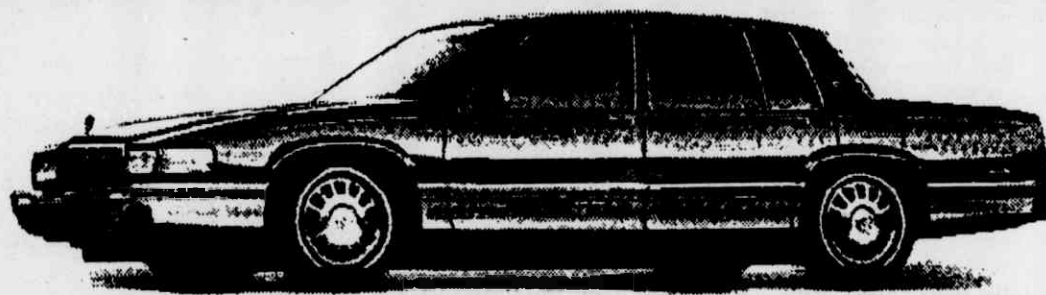
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Our son is six years old. Many of his friends are involved in organized athletics, such as soccer and basketball. Our son wants to play team sports also, but we wonder if a child his age is ready for competitive sports.

Organized athletics can offer your son many positive opportunities. He can learn to face challenges and risks and overcome them, experience winning and losing in a supportive group, develop a cooperative spirit, and improve gross motor skills. Most importantly, he can have fun!

You, as parents, can help

make the experience a positive one by realizing that your child is playing a game. Be certain that your expectations are appropriate. Stress cooperation rather than competition. Recognize the efforts made by your son and his teammates, whether they win or lose. If winning becomes your goal, the experience will no longer be the healthiest one for your son.

Your questions are invited. Please address all inquiries to:

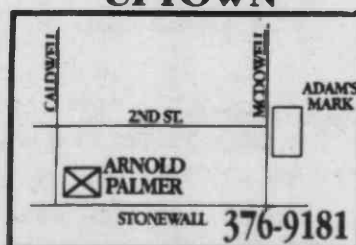
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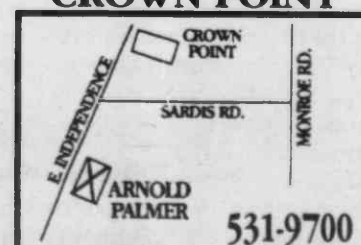


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