

Chapter Three

Huge Sums for Tzedakah

Profitable Investments

Rabbi Benzion Weiler, the manager of Reb Shmuel's business in the Diamond Bourse, related:

I noticed that often, Reb Shmuel withdrew tremendous sums of money from the bank. I once summoned the courage to ask him the reasons for these large withdrawals.

"I need a lot of money for a very profitable investment," Reb Shmuel replied calmly, but did not provide any further details. In time, I found out that the money was distributed to the needy. These donations were what he called very profitable investments!

So I Won't Profit for One Month...

Reb Yaakov Daskal, the oldest son of Reb Shmuel, related:

One day, my father heard about a family that was in dire financial straits and urgently needed an enormous amount of money. My father immediately decided that he would donate the entire amount, and remarked to me, "This is the equivalent of the amount that I earn in a month. So what will happen if I don't earn anything this month?"

Come Again, Don't Worry!

Reb Avraham Manowitz, the treasurer of the Bnei Brak Municipality, related:

Reb Shmuel's heart was open to everyone. Whenever I came to him to solicit money for the needy, he would give me an initial sum of one thousand dollars, a huge amount at the time. And he would regularly tell me, "If you need more funds, even if you'll need again tomorrow, don't hesitate. Don't tell yourself, 'I just asked him yesterday.' Feel free to come again, don't worry about it!"

Generous Sums for Kollel Chazon Ish

Pesach was drawing nearer, and every Jewish home was preparing for Yom Tov. During this time of year, Am Yisrael donates generously to *kimcha dePischa* funds, and *gabb'a'i tzedakah* are loaded down with work.



The Chazon Ish

Rabbi Yehoshua Cohen, a *masgiah* in Yeshivas Vizhnitz, related:

Each year, before Pesach, Reb Shmuel loaned us fifty thousand liras, which we distributed for *kimcha dePischa*. We then raised money from philanthropists to be able to return the loan, collecting the money with great effort and *mesirus nefesh*. One year, I came to Reb Shmuel's home together with Reb Yisrael Daskal to return a loan, and we placed the money on his desk.

At the same time, one of the heads of Kollel Chazon Ish came to collect money for the *kollel*. Without saying a word, Reb Shmuel took all the money that was on the desk and handed it to the man.

We were stunned. We could not comprehend how he was able to simply give away such a huge sum of money at one time!

Fill in the Check with the Amount You Asked For!

Reb Avraham Lehman related:

When a relative of mine passed away in 1978 and left behind considerable debts, a mutual relative asked me to go with him to solicit donations to be able to repay the creditors. I didn't know Reb Shmuel at the time, but one of our stops was at his house.

We explained briefly: "We are collecting money for Reb D.'s family; you knew him. He left many unpaid debts."

"Will five thousand shekels be enough for you?" he asked immediately.

We were speechless. Although this was a very large sum, it really was not enough. As we hesitated, unsure of what to answer, Reb Shmuel received a phone call. I whispered to my relative, "Hashem will put the right words into my mouth to answer correctly."

After Reb Shmuel concluded the conversation on the phone, he asked me, "Nu, do you have an answer?"

"If you're already asking," I replied, "I'll tell you the truth. There is a donor who gave us ten thousand shekels..."

Reb Shmuel didn't hesitate. He took a check out of his pocket and signed it, but didn't write an amount. Then he handed it over to me and instructed, "Fill in the amount you asked for."

A Memorial Candle for Half an Apartment

Reb Meir Wasserman of Kiryat Vizhnitz in Haifa, related:

When the loudspeaker came around announcing the passing of Reb Shmuel, I was in a relative's home. To my surprise, I saw that she was overcome with sadness upon hearing the news, and immediately lit a *lecht* for him.

"Why are you lighting a candle? What was your relationship to him?" I asked in surprise.

She replied, "When we needed to buy an apartment, we simply

couldn't afford it. We went to Reb Shmuel for help and he gave us thirty thousand liras, which comprised a significant amount of the value of the apartment. Of course I'm lighting a candle for him!"

There are dozens of such stories that remain untold and unknown to anyone but those who were involved.

Lofty Levels of *Tzedakah*

When Reb Dovid Hendler, one of the *gabbaim* of Harav Yehuda'le Horowitz of Dzhikov, came to be *menachem avel*, he told over this remarkable story:

Often, Reb Shmuel would travel to Yerushalayim to give a *kvittel* and receive a *brachah* from the Rebbe of Dzhikov.

The Dzhikover Rebbe had originally not wanted to accept the mantle of leadership, despite being a holy person who was a scion of holy Rebbes. Therefore, he did not accept *kvittlach* with a *pidyon nefesh*, a sum of money, despite the repeated urgings of *gedolei Yisrael*. But from Reb Shmuel, he did agree to accept *kvittlach* and a *pidyon nefesh*. Whenever he came, the Rebbe always welcomed Reb Shmuel with great joy.

Once, the Dzhikover Rebbe told Reb Shmuel about a needy Yid, a *rebbishe* descendant, who had incurred tremendous debts. "He needs ten thousand liras," he said.

At the time, this was a very hefty sum, but Reb Shmuel didn't think for a second. He pulled out his checkbook and on the spot, wrote out a check for the entire amount.

Time passed and Reb Shmuel came again. This time, again, Rav Yehuda'le shared the plight of this same needy Yid with Reb Shmuel; again he needed a huge sum of money. "The money you gave me last time unfortunately wasn't enough. They need fifty thousand liras." This was five times the original amount, but Reb Shmuel did not hesitate. He pulled out his checkbook and wrote a check for the entire sum.

That family's story did not end there. One day, a member of the family came crying to the Dzhikover Rebbe and related that the mon-

ey that Reb Shmuel had given was not enough. “We need another fifty thousand,” the man whispered miserably.

“Call Reb Shmuel Daskal,” Rav Yehuda’le instructed his *gabbaim*, but they felt very uneasy about asking again and again for such colossal sums of money. The Rebbe disagreed and said, “Reb Shmuel derives great pleasure from giving *tzedakah*.”

And that’s how it happened yet a third time that Reb Shmuel was asked to participate in this mitzvah. And Reb Shmuel didn’t just pay a part of what was being requested — he paid the entire amount!

A few months passed, and again, there were tears being shed in the Rebbe’s room. “It’s not enough, not enough...” the family member wept.

This time, the Dzhikover Rebbe asked me to deal with the problem in a thorough manner. I told Reb Shmuel about the family’s situation and made it clear to him. “We are not asking for more donations from you. You have given enough! But you’re an experienced businessman. We’d appreciate if you’d visit the family’s home and try to figure out why they do not seem to be managing despite these very large sums of money that are being given to them.”

Reb Shmuel set out, and I accompanied him. He went into their home, and I remained outside. I waited two entire hours for him. Finally, Reb Shmuel came out, his face suffused with satisfaction. “*Ba-ruch Hashem*, I took care of the whole thing.”

I was pleased. Indeed, he had been the right person to guide this family on the path to fiscal stability. He had surely taught them a thing or two about proper financial management!



Harav Yehuda’le Horowitz of Dzhikov

It did not enter my mind that while Reb Shmuel was sitting in the family's home, he realized that in order to turn over a new leaf, they had to first pay off all their debts, which still amounted to forty-two thousand liras! He gave them the entire sum, and that's how the story finally came to an end.

Of course, Reb Shmuel never disclosed what he'd done, but the story was eventually discovered through other channels.

A Contract with Reb Shmuel's Check

Reb Yitzchak Sheinfeld, a contractor, related:

My father, the well-known philanthropist, Reb Moshe Chaim Sheinfeld, a contractor of note in Bnei Brak, already knew that when *talmidei chachamim* and prominent *rabbanim* came to him to purchase apartments, they brought as a deposit a check from Reb Shmuel Daskal. The checks were usually written out for a tenth of the value of the apartment!

This became routine, as he got used to signing contracts with Reb Shmuel's checks.

Boundless Giving

Reb Chaim Greenberger of Kiryat Vizhnitz related to Reb Shmuel's son-in-law, Reb Elimelech Stern, a *maggid shiur* in Bobov, the following:

I often saw that when Reb Shmuel was asked to donate a sum of money, he stuck his hand in his pockets and whichever bills came out, he would hand over, without even counting them.

Where Is Mr. Daskal?

Mrs. Fuchs of Neve Achiezer related:

Reb Shmuel was once standing in the wine cellar together with a neighbor and preparing wine. Anyone who didn't know him would have never recognized him as the millionaire from the Bourse. A needy Yid entered the cellar and began looking for Reb Shmuel.

“That’s Daskal,” someone pointed out.

The man could not believe it. Reb Shmuel quickly abandoned the wine and took the guest over to a corner. The man began to pour out his tale of woe at length, but Reb Shmuel did not allow him to demean himself to the point of begging. “How much do you need?” he interrupted, taking out a bundle of bills bound in a rubber band from his pocket. “Here,” he said matter-of-factly, handed over the bundle, and then went back to his wine barrels as though nothing had happened.

K’dei Shetisasher

Harav Yisrael Friedman related:

My father, Rav Yitzchak Friedman, the son of the Pashkaner Rebbe, who was very friendly with Reb Shmuel, once traveled to the Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz. My father asked the Rebbe to instruct Reb Shmuel to reduce the sums of money he distributed to *tzedakah*.

“Reb Shmuel gives too much *tzedakah* — more than a fifth — and *Chazal* say that one must not give more than a fifth. As a friend of his, I am really afraid for Reb Shmuel’s money,” my father explained to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe smiled and wisely answered: “Harav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev asks about the *nusach* of the *brachah* we make on Yom Kippur, ‘*Melech mochel vesolei’ach la’avonoseinu*.’ How can we say so confidently that Hashem forgives us if we can’t be sure, since Yom Kippur only atones for those who repent?

“Replied the Berditchever, ‘We make the *brachah* with the Name of Hashem, and Hashem does not want us to utter His Name in vain, and therefore He forgives and has mercy on us above and beyond what is warranted.’

“Reb Shmuel does the same thing,” the Rebbe explained. “First, he



Reb Shmuel with Reb Yitzchak Friedman



The *tziyun* of Harav Levi Yitzchak
of Berditchev

gives a sum to *tzedakah*. Then, so that he does not transgress what *Chazal* say — that one should not give more than a fifth to *tzedakah* — Hashem increases his fortune based on the amount of *tzedakah* he has given, so that it should increase to be five times as much as the donations!”

It should be noted that when his family asked Reb Shmuel why he gave more than a fifth, he would reply wittily, “*Chazal* said ‘He who wastes should not waste more than a fifth,’ meaning that only someone who feels that *tzedakah* is a waste is not allowed to give more. But someone who knows that *tzedakah* is not a waste, but rather a true investment, is permitted to invest more than a fifth.”

I Cannot Fathom This Yid!

Rav Zalman Leib Weiss, the *gabbai* of the Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz, related:

I asked Reb Shmuel, “Why do you spend all your money on others? Keep it! Look for ways to invest it securely, because *Chazal* have said, ‘A person should always divide his money into three: a third in land, a third in business, and a third at hand.’ *Chazal* taught that a person needs to ensure that his money does not get lost and *chalilah* used up.”

“I’m not worried,” Reb Shmuel would reassure me with a smile. “I was born into a poor home. For many years, I lived in poverty, so if poverty does come upon me, *chalilah*, it does not frighten me. Right now, HaKadosh Baruch Hu has granted me great abundance, and His intention is that I should share it with others. The money is not mine, it’s a *brachah* from Hashem! HaKadosh Baruch Hu chose me to be a

conduit to give money to people who need it. Should I withhold it from them because of my concerns about the future? Everything is from Him, and the One who raised me to sit alongside the wealthy philanthropists will surely not abandon me in the future.”

“But *Chazal* said, ‘A person should always divide his money into three?’” I countered once again.

Reb Shmuel replied simply. “*Chazal* said ‘*ma’osav*,’ his money, but this is not my money. I have no money of my own; it’s only a deposit! Does a *gabbai tzedakah* who is given money to distribute to the poor have a right to look for ways to invest it?”

The feeling that the money was not his was a fundamental basis for all his acts of *tzedakah* and *chessed*. It was not for naught that the Imrei Chaim said to me a number of times, “I cannot fathom this Yid!”