



**Partners In Torah**  
**San Diego-Los Angeles**  
**Study Guide**

*Reeh*  
*תשפג*

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*Partners Detroit*

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## *Partners In Torah*

### *Mission Statement:*

## **Hello, Welcome!**

**Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant. Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.**

*Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.*

**Thank you for coming!**

**Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we may grow together as a community.**

When contemplating the motives and goals of the authors of the United States Constitution , we need look no further than the Constitution's preamble :

***We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.***

The Constitution that follows spells out exactly how to accomplish the abovementioned goals. How blessed we are to live in a country founded by men with such clarity of purpose and good intentions for the rights and safety of the citizens of our great country. We experience the benefits of their wisdom and foresight every day.

Similarly, if we want to understand Hashem's goals for creating the world at large and the Jewish Nation in particular, we need look no further than the Torah, His guidebook for us. In the Torah, our Creator provided the framework for a perfect life on this earth. As the Torah so frequently informs us, if we follow all of Hashem's laws, He will bestow abundant blessing upon us and life will be perfect. Hashem created this world to bestow kindness upon His creations both in this world and in the next.

King David in Psalms 89:3 epitomized this idea in one verse.

(ג) כִּי אֶמְרֵתִי עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבְנֶה

*Hashem has said: The world is built on lovingkindness.*

The Midrash teaches us (Tanchuma Vayera 1).

א"ר שמלאי תדע שכל דרכיו חסד שהרי בתחלת התורה קשט את הכלה  
דכתיב ויבן ה' אלהים את הצלע וגו' (בראשית ב) שכן בכרכי הים קורין  
לכלה בונה ובסופה קבר את המת ויקבר אותו בגי (דברים לד)  
ובאמצעיתה בקר את החולה כיון שמל אברהם בא הוא ופמליא שלו ובקרו  
ממה שקראו בענין וירא אליו ה

*Rabbi Simlai said: I will prove to you that all of Hashem's ways are kindness. In the beginning of the Torah Hashem beautified Chava and brought her to Adam ... in the end of the Torah he buried Moshe... and in the middle He visited the sick, Avraham.*

This week's portion Reeh has many examples of Hashem's care for His creations, particularly, the poor and needy.

Hashem created each person with a unique mission. His every characteristic is designed for his mission, Hashem having given him the necessary tools to deal with the full gamut of challenges that he will confront to live an upstanding and meaningful life. No two people are the same; nor were there, or will there ever be.

This means that some people will be very wealthy, and some will be very poor, with everything in between. In an amazing story, the Talmud (Taanit 25a) brings out this point.

רבי אלעזר בן פדת דחיקא ליה מילתא טובא עבד מלתא ולא הוה ליה  
מידי למטעם שקל ברא דתומא ושדייה בפומיה חלש לביה ונים אזול רבנן  
לשיולי ביה חזיוהו דקא בכי וחייר ונפק צוציתא דנורא מאפותיה כי אתער  
אמרו ליה מאי טעמא קבכית וחיית אמר להו דהוה יתיב עמי הקדוש ברוך  
הוא ואמרי ליה עד מתי אצטער בהאי עלמא ואמר לי אלעזר בני ניחא לך  
דאפכיה לעלמא מרישא אפשר דמתילדת בשעתא דמזוני אמרי לקמיה

כולי האי ואפשר אמרי ליה דחיי טפי או דחיינא אמר לי דחייית אמרי לקמיה  
אם כן לא בעינא

*Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat was extremely poor. He let blood (a common practice in those day thought to be beneficial to one's health), and he was so poor that he nothing in the house to eat. (One must eat something immediately after the procedure.) All that he could find was a piece of garlic, which he threw into his mouth. It weakened him and he fell into a coma. When the Rabbis came to visit him, they saw that he cried, laughed, and then, a ray of light shone from his forehead. When he came to, they asked him, "Why did you cry and then laugh?" He answered. "I was sitting with Hashem and I asked Him, 'How long am I going to suffer with this poverty?' He answered me, 'Elazar my son, would you like me to recreate the world and **perhaps** you'll be born to have wealth?' I said to Him, 'All this, and it's only a **maybe**? Have I lived most of my life, or is the majority of my life ahead of me?' 'You are past the halfway mark.' Hashem responded. 'Then don't do it,' I said.*

*Hashem promised him great reward in the World to Come for his response, and that was the source of his crying and laughing. He cried when he learned that he was past the half-point in his life, but he laughed when he heard of the great reward that awaited him.*

Why would Hashem have to recreate the world to accommodate Rabbi Elazar's request? And why couldn't Hashem be sure that Rabbi Elazar wouldn't be poor in the new creation?

Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler זצ"ל answers these question in his book *Michtav MeEliyahu*.

From the beginning of creation, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat was selected for the job of being the poorest person in the world. This would be his station in life, and his challenge was to maintain his love and trust of Hashem despite his extreme poverty. He was doing his job admirably, but if he “wanted out,” Hashem would have to look back at creation and see if there is another person capable of handling this extreme test. Hashem wasn’t sure that He could find that person, so He told Rabbi Elazar that he may end up in exactly the same place in the world’s next iteration since there may be nobody but him capable of fulfilling this role.

But why must there be poor people altogether? Why can’t everyone be born with sufficient assets? The following story from the Talmud (Bava Batra 10a) answers this question.

וזו שאלה שאל טורנוסרופוס הרשע את ר"ע: אם אלקיכם אוהב עניים הוא,  
מפני מה אינו מפרנסם?  
א"ל כדי שניצול אנו בהן מדינה של גיהנם

*This is the question that the evil Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva.*

*“If your G-d loves poor people, why doesn’t He give them their sustenance?”*

Rabbi Akiva responded. *“So that through them, we should save ourselves from gehinam.”*

There are two identical verses (Proverbs 10:2, 11:4) that inform us,

וְצִדְקָה תִּצְּלֵל מִמָּוֶת

*2) And charity saves from death.*

One verse is to tell you that charity saves from death, and the other is to teach you that it also saves from the difficult judgment of *Gehinam* (hell).

There must always be poor people so that the wealthy have to whom to give charity. Because the world was built on *TON* - kindness, with this, we can acquire the attribute of kindness and save ourselves from *Gehinom*.

Is it a curse to be poor? Does Hashem hate them and not care about their sustenance? Of course not! As Rabbi Akiva answered the Roman general, Hashem loves the poor! So why doesn't Hashem give them their food? Because Hashem has set up a system where those with abundance must share their wealth with those who have been selected to live a life of poverty, to provide the wealthy with the opportunity to give charity and train themselves in the attribute of kindness. Hashem provides enough blessing to the wealthy that when they would each do their fair share – a minimum of one tenth of their income – there would be enough to support all the poor. The problem is that the wealthy often do not fulfill their complete obligation, as illustrated in the following story from the Talmud (Kehubot 62b).

תנו רבנן: מעשה ברבן יוחנן בן זכאי שהיה רוכב על החמור והיה יוצא מירושלים והיו תלמידיו מהלכין אחריו ראה ריבה אחת שהיתה מלקטת שעורים מבין גללי בהמתן של ערביים כיון שראתה אותו נתעטפה בשערה ועמדה לפניו אמרה לו רבי פרנסני אמר לה בתי מי את אמרה לו בת נקדימון בן גוריון אני אמר לה בתי ממון של בית אביך היכן הלך אמרה לו רבי לא כדין מתלין מתלא בירושלים מלח ממון חסר ואמרי לה חסד ושל בית חמיך היכן הוא אמרה לו בא זה ואיבד את זה אמרה לו רבי זכור אתה כשחתמת על כתובתי אמר להן לתלמידיו זכור אני כשחתמתי על

כתובתה של זו והייתי קורא בה אלף אלפים דינרי זהב מבית אביה חוץ  
משל חמיה...

*The Sages taught: There is a story about Rabbi Yochanan ben Zackai, who was exiting Yerushalayim on a donkey with his students following behind him. He saw a young woman collecting grains of barley from the droppings of where Arabs had grazed their sheep. When she saw Rabbi Yochanan she stood before him and said, "Rebbe, please give me something to eat!" He said to her, "My daughter, who are you?" She said, "I am the daughter of Nakdimon ben Gurion." He said to her, "My daughter, where did all of your father's money go?" She answered, "Rebbe, don't you know the adage, 'If you want to "salt" (= preserve) your money, you must give it away ( for charity)?' "What about your father-in-law's money?" She answered, "This one came and ruined the other." She then said, "Rebbe, do you remember when you signed my Ketuba?" Rabbi Yochanan said to his students, "I remember when I signed on this woman's ketuba. One thousand, thousand gold pieces, excluding the money from her father in law's house."*

The story continues:

ונקדימון בן גוריון לא עבד צדקה והתניא אמרו עליו על נקדימון בן גוריון כשהיה יוצא מביתו לבית המדרש כלי מילת היו מציעין תחתיו ובאין עניים ומקפלין אותן מאחריו איבעית אימא לכבודו הוא דעבד ואיבעית אימא כדבעי ליה למיעבד לא עבד כדאמרי אינשי לפום גמלא שיחנא

The Talmud then asks,

*Nakdimon ben Gurion didn't give charity? Didn't we learn that when he left his house to go to the bet midrash, he would walk on a silk runner and the poor people would fold it up for him and he would give the charity for it? (He did this so the poor would feel they earned their money) The Talmud answers: One explanation is*



*that he did it for his own honor, and the other is that he did not give according to his means. He needed to give more, and therefore he lost his wealth.*

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir Hakohen Kagan, זצ"ל) points out how this idea is expressed in the adage quoted above: *"If you want to salt – preserve- your money, you must give it away"* Preserving one's wealth is compared to preserving meat in salt. Just as when one packs meat in salt, the larger the piece of meat, the more salt he must use, so, too, the more money that a person has, the more he must give away for charity.

We see that when one does not give as much as he is supposed to, he may lose his wealth. The Torah teaches us that the opposite is true as well. When one gives the proper amount of charity, he will become wealthy.

The verse says in this week's portion:

כב) עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר אֶת כָּל תְּבוּאֹת זֶרְעֶךָ הַיֵּצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה שָׁנָה שָׁנָה

*22) You shall annually tithe the entire crop of your planting, the produce of the field.*

The Sages ask about the double wording in the Hebrew עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר - *aser te'aser*. To answer this, the Midrash (Tanchuma Reeh 18) makes a play on words (which only works in Hebrew) to explain it.

יח) עֶשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר עֶשֶׂר בְּשִׁבְלִי שֶׁתַּעֲשֶׂר עֶשֶׂר כִּדִּי שֶׁלֹּא תִתְחַסֵּר

*Take a tenth so that you should become wealthy. Take a tenth so that you should not lose your money.*

The Torah is teaching us that by giving a tenth of our wealth to charity, we will become wealthy and not lose our wealth. Create wealth by giving away money? That sounds counter-intuitive!

Shouldn't it be the opposite, that when you save your pennies, they accumulate to make you a wealthy person?

The Chofetz Chaim explains how giving a tenth of one's earnings to the poor makes a person wealthier, and why a person loses his wealth when he fails to fulfill his charity obligations.

Since Hashem is relying on the wealthy to support the poor, in reality, for every \$100 that a person receives, only \$90 is for him and \$10 is for a poor person. If he doesn't give the poor person the \$10, Hashem has to find someone else to give him his \$10.00. Hashem then looks for a reliable and trustworthy executor of the extra money that Hashem gives him to give to the poor. Knowing that this person gives the "extra" to the needy recipient, Hashem doubles his money. Thus, by giving his charity properly, Hashem gives him more money to give more charity. Because, unfortunately, many people don't give a tenth of their earnings to charity, Hashem has to repeatedly use the same reliable people. This is how one becomes wealthier through giving charity.

The person who didn't give the poor his allocation will likely lose money because since he was only entitled to \$90, next time he will get only the \$90 that he deserves. But he must give charity from the \$90 also, so if he continues to keep the extra money for himself, he will continue to lose money.

By the way, don't think that the person who didn't give the poor his money gets to keep the extra money. Because he was only entitled to \$90, he will lose the extra \$10 somewhere along the way.

Another mitzvah in this week's parsha shows us how sensitive Hashem is to the needy. Chapter 15:7-10 says.

ז) כִּי יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֲבִיוֹן מֵאֶחָד אֶחָיִךְ בְּאֶחָד שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר יְדוֹד אֶלְקֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לֹא תִאֲמָץ אֶת לִבְבְּךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת יְדֶךָ מֵאֶחָיִךְ הָאֲבִיוֹן  
ח) כִּי פָתַח תִּפְתַּח אֶת יְדֶךָ לוֹ וְהֶעֱבַט תִּעְבְּיטְנוּ דֵּי מַחְסָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יַחְסֹר לוֹ

*7) If there shall be a destitute person among you, any of your brethren in any of your cities, in the land that Hashem you G-d gives you, you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother.*

*8) Rather, you shall open your hand to him again and again and you shall **lend him his requirement, whatever he lacks.***

The Sages derive from the words, “his requirement, whatever he lacks,” that this varies depending on the individual’s needs. So, if a person was used to eating steak for dinner every night, and now he is destitute and needs his steak, you must provide it to him. If when a man was wealthy, he always had someone run in front of his wagon to announce him, you must provide this to him in his impoverished state as well. This is what is meant by, “whatever he lacks”.

The Talmud (Ketubot 67b) tells an astounding story about Hillel the Elder.

תנו רבנן די מחסורו אתה מצווה עליו לפרנסו ואי אתה מצווה עליו לעשרו אשר יחסר לו אפילו סוס לרכוב עליו ועבד לרוץ לפניו אמרו עליו על הלל הזקן שלקח לעני בן טובים אחד סוס לרכוב עליו ועבד לרוץ לפניו פעם אחת לא מצא עבד לרוץ לפניו ורץ לפניו שלשה מילין

*The Sages taught. “Whatever he lacks.” ... even a horse to ride on and a servant to run before him. They said about Hillel the Elder*

*that he commissioned a horse and runner for a certain person who lost his wealth. One day, there was no runner to go before the horse, so Hillel himself did it for three miles.*

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz (d. 1979) makes the following observation. Hillel the Elder was the greatest Sage of his time. How could this person on the horse allow the great rabbi to run before him to announce him like a simple servant? How could he not feel unworthy of such treatment by the greatest Jew of the generation? Rabbi Shmulevitz concludes that he must have been crazy! He had to be out of his mind to allow Hillel to run before him. Yet Hillel did it because he realized that this crazy man really needed it. What a stellar example of sensitivity to the needs of another.

There is another directive in this week's portion (Deuteronomy 15:10) that further underscores the idea that Hashem wants us to be givers.

(י) נָתַן תַּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא יָרַע לְבַבְךָ בְּתַתֵּךָ לוֹ כִּי בְּגִלְלֵי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יִבְרַכְךָ יְיָ וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְכֹל מְשָׁלְחֶיךָ

*10) Give him again and again, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking.*

Rashi comments – give him even a hundred times.

Maimonides comments on the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (3:14) that says:

וְהַכֹּל לְפִי רֵב הַמַּעֲשֵׂה

*Everything depends on the number of good deeds that we do.*

Maimonides:

ואחר כך אמר שהמעלות לא יגיעו לאדם לפי רוב גודל המעשה, אבל לפי רוב מספר המעשים, והוא שהמעלות אמנם יגיעו בכפול המעשים הטובים פעמים רבות ועם זה יגיע קנין חזק לא כשיעשה אדם פעל אחד גדול מפעולות הטובות כי בזה לבדו לא יגיע לו קנין חזק, והמשל בו כשיתן האדם למי שראוי אלף זהובים בבת אחת לאיש אחד ולאיש אחד לא יתן כלום לא יעלה בידו מדת הנדיבות בזה המעשה האחד הגדול כמו שמגיע למי שהתנדב אלף זהובים באלף פעמים ונתן כל זהוב מהם על צד הנדיבות, מפני שזה כפל מעשה הנדיבות אלף פעמים והגיע לו קנין חזק, וזה פעם אחת לבד התעוררה נפשו התעוררות גדולה לפעל טוב ואח"כ פסקה ממנו.

*The author of the Mishna says: A person doesn't acquire greatness of character from the size of the act; rather, he acquires it through the number of good acts that he does. This is because only through repeating an action many times does a person acquire that attribute. Whereas if he does one large act, this will not influence him very much. For example, when a person will give a needy person one thousand golden pieces at one time, but to many others he will give nothing, he will not acquire the attribute of being a giver with this one act as much as he would if he would give one gold piece a thousand times to a thousand different needy people. Repeating the act of giving one thousand times, will implant the quality of being a giver strongly within him.*

For this reason, the Chofetz Chiam was against giving money to another to allocate it for him, rather than giving it himself. When someone else gives the charity to the poor for him, he misses out on the benefits to his soul that one achieves from the act itself of giving, and he doesn't acquire the attribute.

It is remarkable to see how concerned Hashem is for the poor and needy. This is the hallmark of our Torah and Hashem Who

wrote it. It is all about helping the other person in any way that we can.

Hashem commands us to rejoice on the holiday of Sukkot. The verse says (Deuteronomy 16:14):

יִדְּ וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּחֻגֵּךָ אֶתְּהָ וּבְנֶךָ וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר וְהִיתוּם  
וְהָאֵלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ

14) *You shall rejoice on your festival – you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maidservant, **the Levite, the proselyte the orphan, and the widow** who are in your cities.*

Rashi's comment on this verse is stunning:

יא) והלוי והגר והיתום והאלמנה - ארבעה שלי כנגד ארבעה שלך בנך ובתך ועבדך ואמתך אם אתה משמח את שלי אני משמח את שלך

*“My four” (the Levite, proselyte, orphan and widow) correspond to “your four”: (your son, daughter, slave, and maidservant). **If you gladden My four, I will gladden your four.** Hashem is the father of the orphan and the protector of the widow, since they have no one else to fend for them.*

Hashem created the world because He wanted to bestow kindness upon others. He wants us to follow His example, so He has set up the world in a way that there are abundant opportunities to practice and acquire this stellar attribute, one which Hashem stresses time and again ---- taking care of the needy.

Those of us who are blessed with the ability to help others should certainly rise to the occasion and fulfill Hashem's will to take care of His needy children.

