

ראה is a פרשה full of מצות, חסד and מידות. In the פרשה, the פסוק says (15:7-8), לא תאמץ את לבבך, - we're talking about the מצוה of צדקה, you should not harden your heart; ולא תקפץ את ידך - and don't close your hand; מאחידה האחיון - from your poor brother; לו - to him; and תעבט תעביטנו די מחסרו אשר יחסר לו - Open up your hands generously and extend to him any credit he needs to take care of his needs, whatever he needs.

Rav Kormornick, in the famous sefer A Short Vart, brings down a very beautiful example of how to explain this pasuk, and he asks the following question: לא תאמץ את לבבך - do not harden your heart; ולא תקפץ את ידך - and don't close your hand. If a person hardens his heart, he's not going to open up his hand, so the words "you should not close your hand" seem to be superfluous. If he's not going to give, his hand is closed?

The Vilna Gaon understands the imagery of a closed and open hand to teach us a very fundamental lesson in giving צדקה. If you close your hand, all your fingers appear to be of equal length. If you open your hand, your fingers are of different length. The Gaon writes that when you give צדקה, we have to realize and recognize each individual is exactly that, an individual with unique needs. We have to try, to the best of our ability, to help him in a way that reflects what he personally requires. So therefore you have to have both of these פסוקים to teach us we have to give what that person needs.

He gives a tremendously heartbreaking and critically impressive example. This was fulfilled by Rebbetzin Rivky Holtzberg, the name may ring a bell. She ran the Chabad house in Mumbai, India before she was murdered in a terrorist attack years ago. During her shiva, a young Israeli woman approached her mother and handed her a small package containing Rifky's diamond ring and her finest Shabbos dress. "How did you get these?" Rifky's mother said in shock. The woman answered, "I was just in India, looking for a way out, looking to get away from everything. Soon enough I found myself in trouble. I got connected with bad people and I was grabbed one day and thrown into jail by the police. You cannot begin to imagine how horrible a place that is in India. And no one knew that I was there and I could not help myself at all. I managed in some way to bribe a guard to let me escape. I ran straight to the Chabad house. I knew I would be looked after over there. Your daughter welcomed me, fed me, and insisted that I leave the country. Knowing that I might get caught at the border looking the way I look, she gave me her best Shabbos dress and her diamond ring. 'If you look dignified, and look like a well-dressed married woman with a ring on your finger', she said, they will not look too closely at you. She was right. I wasn't checked and I arrived home safely."

What an act of חסד. What a tremendous ability to give something that is beyond what we can easily comprehend. And this is in our time, not thousands of years ago, this was now. This is a tremendous example of a בעלת חסד and a בעלת צדקה. May we learn from her example and strive to improve our own צדקה to the best of our abilities.

