

## Mishlei 18-16

### Giving

#### Key Concepts

The distribution of financial wealth in a community is affected by many factors, but ultimately it is Hashem who determines how much each of us possesses at any time. And yet individuals are motivated to give some of their possessions to others while many individuals find it extremely difficult to give money away.

Why would someone give away his own money? One factor is the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. Another is the debt of gratitude the recipient will owe him. There is always the possibility that the giver will himself be in need at some future time and will be able to draw on that obligation.

#### Exploring Mishlei

(טז) מִתֵּן אָדָם יֶרְחִיב לוֹ וְלִפְנֵי גְדֹלִים יִנְחֶנּוּ:

(16) *A man's giving eases his way in society,  
and brings him before the great.*

The practice of giving brings another important benefit to the giver. There is often an effect on others in the community, beyond those who actually receive a gift. People instinctively admire someone who displays generosity. They appreciate witnessing the phenomenon of Hashem's blessing coming to life in practice. They also appreciate having a resource of cash flow within the community, imagining that at some future time they may indirectly benefit from that resource in one way or another.

People of stature in a community are often in a position to give honour to selected individuals. They are likely to favor individuals who are known for their generosity because such individuals are seen as an asset to the community. Thus, a generous person may find that he can draw on a pool of goodwill to help him get things done. He is welcome among highly placed people and has access to their attention.

Because of all these advantages a generous person needs to consider carefully why he is giving his money away and how public his actions should be. Clearly, if his generosity is kept hidden, its spiritual value rises as its publicity value goes down.

## Learning Mishlei

(16) A man's giving — **מִתֵּן אָדָם**  
eases his way in society — **יִרְחִיב לוֹ**  
and before the great — **וְלִפְנֵי גְדֹלִים**  
men of the community  
it brings him — **יִנְחֶנּוּ**.

## Additional Insights

[1] The word for giving used in this proverb (**מִתֵּן**) is a general term, covering a wide variety of giving, including needy people and the well-to-do. (מלבניים)

[2] Besides giving away money, the proverb may be referring to the giving of knowledge to students. If a teacher is reluctant to make his hard-earned Torah knowledge freely available to others who have not worked to understand it as he has, that teacher is reminded how he will also benefit. Through the interaction with his students his knowledge will be refined and clarified. (שבט מיהודה)