

It Is Better To “Turn Shabbos Into a Weekday” Than To Take Tzedakah

Question: If someone is collecting because he has no money, but one knows for a fact that the poor person could get a job and make a living on his own if he was so inclined, is he still obligated to give him *tzedakah*?

Answer: Chazal urge people to stay away from accepting charity. They say that it is preferable for one to “make his Shabbos a weekday” than to take *tzedakah*. Which means it is better to “forego kavod shabbos” (to not buy extra items for Shabbos), than to take *tzedakah*. Chazal also stress that it is better to do menial labor than to accept charity.

The Poskim explain that when Chazal made these statements, they were only speaking to the one accepting *tzedakah*. The receiver should do all he can to avoid accepting *tzedakah*. Regarding the giver, however, he should not judge people who ask for *tzedakah*. Even if he feels that the poor person has the ability to support himself, he should still give him a donation.

Not only should one give a donation to all those who ask, he should also give it with a smile and without complaint. The Medrash says that one who gives *tzedakah* but does not give it in a friendly way will be seriously punished.

I would add that this applies when one is actually giving the donation. He should give it with a smile and not express his opinion that the man should be working for a living. Later on depending on the situation, after he has already given his donation, he can explain to the person why he feels it may be better for him to work than to collect charity.

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