

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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Posted March 17, 2011, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

CHARITY ON PURIM THIS YEAR

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One of the less well-known mitsvot of Purim is the obligation to give gifts to the poor on the holiday. So, how closely must we monitor these charity funds? (Especially given the fact that we'll be giving them on Purim when we may be somewhat inebriated.)

As to funds collected for the poor for the celebration of Purim, these funds are to be used for Purim.

Said R. Elazar: And that is on condition that a poor man should not use them for some other purpose than celebration Purim, for example, buying a thong for his sandal.

"They do not enforce the religious requirements [given to the poor] on Purim in a meticulous way (T. Megillah 1:5)" but whoever puts out his hand to take money given for the support of the poor, they give him [what he wants]. (Y. Megillah 1:4)

The Yerushalmi gives us a LOT of latitude here in our observance of this mitzvah. Yeah, it would be nice if the money you gave out were used to observe the holiday. But we don't have to nail down all the specifics, says this Yerushalmi.

Discussion Questions:

1. Given that we have this latitude, to whom would you like to give your Purim charity money this year? Rebels in Libya? Japanese tsunami survivors? Your local synagogue or JFS?
2. As we've learned in this forum, even if all you have is a penny and all your friend has is a penny, you trade pennies, so that you can both fulfill this commandment to give charity. How does the act of giving charity, regardless of the amount, elevate you? Are there actual studies of psychology that document the positive effects of giving charity? If you know of them, please share them!

Have a happy, happy Purim!