



THE GIFT OF WEALTH: A BLESSING OR A TRAP?

Do we control our wealth, or does it control us?
The Torah challenges us to use our wealth
wisely, before it uses us.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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Founded in 2008 in memory of Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg OB" M
Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India



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A. Who Needs Money?.....1

After the giving of the Torah, Moses turns to the Jews and asks them to donate materials for the construction of the Mishkan (Source 1). Where did they acquire all these materials? Before leaving Egypt, G-d instructed Moses to tell the Jews to ask the Egyptians for gold, silver, and valuable clothing. Why? So that Abraham would not say, "The promise of 'they will be enslaved and oppressed,' was fulfilled, but the promise of 'and afterward they will leave with great wealth' was not fulfilled." (Source 2)

The Rebbe asks: Why did G-d initially promise in the Covenant of Parts that the Jews would leave Egypt with great wealth? In the desert, all their needs—food and clothing—were provided for them. Why was there a need for silver and gold?

The answer: After overcoming the great challenge of Egyptian exile while preserving their Jewish identity, the next challenge was to enter the wilderness and, in such a desolate place, build a Mishkan for G-d in the most beautiful and majestic way—using silver, gold, and cedar wood. Therefore, G-d ensured that they would leave Egypt with great wealth, along with the cedar trees that Jacob had planted in Egypt specifically for the Mishkan's construction. (Source 3)

B. Setting the Right Priorities.....5

When we build a synagogue or a Torah institution, we have an opportunity to publicly declare that holiness and spirituality are central to our lives. Just as we invest significantly in the beauty of our personal homes—far more than in a barn meant for animals—so too, we should pour even more effort into the grandeur of a house dedicated to honoring G-d. The use of wealth for spiritual matters serves as an educational message for us and for future generations, demonstrating how central and important spirituality is in life.

This principle is also reflected in the donation of gold and silver for the Mishkan and the Beit HaMikdash—by doing so, the Jews publicly expressed that the holiness of the Temple was of greater importance than their own homes.

An example of this idea: King David expressed his distress to the prophet Nathan over the fact that he was living in a grand palace while the Ark of the Covenant remained in a temporary tent. As a result, he began planning the construction of a magnificent Beit HaMikdash. (Source 4)

C. Wealth That Becomes a Burden.....8

G-d desires that we use wealth in a positive and meaningful way. There was once a wealthy individual whose great fortune disrupted his life, leading to anxiety and paranoia.

A similar fate befell Korach, who could not withstand the test of wealth. His great riches led him down a destructive path, ultimately bringing him to publicly challenge Moses. About him, it is said: "Wealth kept by its owner, to their detriment"—meaning, it was precisely his vast fortune that caused his downfall. (Source 5)

Why does the Torah tell us about Korach, when it generally avoids speaking negatively about people, and even about animals? To teach us that the test of wealth is even greater than what we often assume. Even a G-d-fearing Jew may convince themselves that most of their wealth is meant for personal needs, with only a small portion to be given to tzedakah.

The fundamental mistake comes from the belief that money belongs to its "owner," when in truth, G-d is the true owner of all possessions. We are merely G-d's agents, entrusted with using wealth for higher, spiritual purposes.

Introduction

In today's lesson, we will explore the Torah's perspective on money and wealth. We will understand why it was so important for G-d to promise Abraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with riches and what higher purpose wealth can serve. From this, we will gain an important insight into our own relationship with money and the correct Jewish approach to financial priorities.

השיעור לפרשת תרומה

משיחת י"א ניסן, ה'תשל"ו, בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם, כרך פ"ג עמוד 500 ואילך

A. Who Needs Money?

The Fundraising Campaign

Right after the giving of the Torah, G-d tells Moses to begin building the Mishkan (tabernacle or portable temple), the house where G-d's presence would rest among the Jewish people. Like with building a synagogue, the first step was raising funds. G-d lists the items the Jews needed to donate.

Source 1 Exodus 25:1-8

Student's
pg. 1

G-d spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, and have them bring Me a gift; from every person whose heart moves them, you shall collect My gift.

This is the offering you shall collect from them: gold, silver, and copper, sky-blue, purple, and scarlet wool, fine linen, and goat hair, ram skins dyed red, tachash skins, and cedar wood, oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and gemstones for setting, for the *ephod* and the breastplate.

They shall make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell within them."

וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: "דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה, מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְכְּנוּ לְבוֹ, תִּקְחוּ אֶת תְּרוּמָתִי.

וְזֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְחוּ מֵאֲתָם: זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנֹחָשׁ. וְחִכְלֵת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ וְעִזִּים. וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאֻדָּמִים וְעֹרֹת תְּחָשִׁים וְעִצֵּי שִׁטִּים. שֶׁמֶן לְמָאֵר, בְּשָׂמִים לְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְלִקְטֹרֶת הַסַּמִּים. אֲבָנֵי שֹׁהַם וְאַבְנֵי מִזְאִים לְאַפֹּד וְלַחֹשֶׁן.

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְתוֹכָם."

Where did they get all the money and materials?

For this, we need to go back a bit. During the Ten Plagues, Moses conveyed G-d's request to the Jews that they should ask their Egyptian neighbors for silver, gold, and garments.

Source 2 Exodus 11:1-2

Student's
pg. 1

G-d said to Moses ... "Speak now in the ears of the people, and have each person ask their neighbor for silver and gold vessels."

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה: "... דַּבֵּר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וְיִשְׁאַלּוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ וְאִשָּׁה מֵאֵת רֵעוּתָהּ, כָּלִי כֶסֶף וְכָלִי זָהָב."

Rashi

Student's
pg. 1

Speak now: This word, “Na” in Hebrew, denotes a request; please inform them, so that the righteous Abraham should not say that “They will be enslaved and oppressed” (Genesis 15) was fulfilled, but the end of that verse, “And afterward they will leave with great wealth,” was not fulfilled.

דָּבַר נָא. אֵין נָא אֶלֶּא
לְשׁוֹן בְּקִשָּׁה, בְּבִקְשָׁה
מִמֶּנּוּ הַזֵּהִירָם עַל כֵּן,
שֶׁלֹּא יֹאמַר אוֹתוֹ
צָדִיק אֲבֹרָהִם
"וְעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אוֹתָם"
קִיָּם בָּהֶם, "וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן
יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גָּדוֹל" לֹא
קִיָּם בָּהֶם.

What does this mean? Rashi is referring to the Covenant of Parts, where G-d told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land, but afterward, they would leave with great wealth.

Genesis 15:13-14

Student's
pg. 2

G-d said to Abram, "Know that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward, they will leave with great wealth."

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם: "יָדָע
תָּדַע כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה
זֶרְעֶךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם,
וְעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם
אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה. וְגַם
אֶת הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲבֹדוּ
דֵּן אֲנִי, וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן
יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גָּדוֹל."

>> The Rebbe

Why Great Wealth?

Student's
pg. 2

The Jewish people knew they were going into the desert, where they would remain for forty years. Why then did they need all of this silver and gold?!

לכאורה אינו מובן: כיון שידעו
שהם הולכים למדבר, ובו יהיו במשך
ארבעים שנה - לשם מה היו צריכים
את הכסף והזהב?!

Student's
pg. 2

G-d knew that while the Jews were in the desert, He would provide them with manna to eat, water to drink from Miriam's well, and the Clouds of Glory to launder their clothes. Yet, despite this, He declared that He would not take them out of Egypt until they had taken with them "great wealth."

Even though the Jewish people said that they were willing to forgo the great wealth in order to leave Egypt quicker, G-d commanded them to borrow silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians. This was done "so that 'that righteous one' [Abraham] should not say: 'He fulfilled the part about enslaving and afflicting them, but He did not fulfill the part about their leaving with great wealth.'"

Student's
pg. 3

The entire justification was simply so that Abraham shouldn't say that G-d didn't fulfill his promise. So why did G-d promise great wealth in the first place, rather than merely ensuring that they will go free?

Jewish Identity Under All Circumstances

Student's
pg. 3

And the answer is as follows: The Jewish people demonstrated that, despite having lived in Egypt for four uninterrupted generations, they remained steadfast in their Jewish identity and did not submit to the idolatrous influences of Egypt. As the Midrash states, "they did not change their names, their clothing," etc. G-d therefore wanted them to leave with great wealth so that everyone should see that they are using the gold, silver, and copper to build a Mishkan (Tabernacle) in the middle of the desert.

הקב"ה ידע שבהיותם במדבר, הוא יתן להם מן לאכול, ומים לשתות מבארה של מרים, וענני הכבוד שיגהצו את בגדיהם, ואף על פי כן אמר, שלא יוציא אותם ממצרים עד שיקחו עמהם "רכוש גדול".²

ולמרות שבני ישראל טענו שהם מוותרים על הרכוש גדול, ובלבד שיצאו כבר ממצרים, הקב"ה הורה להם לשאול כלי כסף וכלי זהב מהמצרים, כדי "שלא יאמר אותו צדיק, ועבדום וענו אותם, קיים בהם, ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול, לא קיים בהם".³

ומכיון שכל הטענה היא ש"שלא יאמר לא קיים בהם", נשאלת השאלה:⁴ מדוע באמת הבטיח הקב"ה "רכוש גדול", ולא הסתפק בכך ש"אחרי כן יצאו"?!

והתירוץ לזה: לאחר שני ישראל הראו שמבלי הבט על כך שהיו בארץ מצרים במשך ארבעה דורות ללא הפסק, נשארו לעמוד ביהדותם, ולא נכנעו למרותם של כל מיני העבודה זרה שהיו במצרים, "ערוות הארץ"⁵, ובלשון המדרש:⁶ "שלא שינו את שמם ולבושם וכו' (כל ארבעת הענינים שנימנו שם) - רצה הקב"ה שיצאו משם "ברכוש גדול", ויִרְאוּ שמנצלים את ה"זהב

ניסן שנה זו (אנ"ק חל"א ע' קסט) בהערה. וש"נ.
6. ראה מדרש לקוח טוב וארא ו, 1. במדבר פ"כ, כב. וראה גם תו"מ חע"ט ריש ע' 326. וש"נ.

2. לך לך טו, יד.
3. ברכות ט, סע"א ואילך. הובא בפרש"י בא שם.
4. ראה גם לקו"ש שם ע' 10 ואילך.
5. מקץ מב, ט. שם, יב. וראה קה"ר פ"א, ד. וראה גם מכתב ר"ח.

Student's
pg. 3

The Mishkan was not built in the Land of Israel. Israel was the next stage, where they built the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). The first step towards establishing a dwelling place for G-d was in the desert—a place inhabited only by “snakes, fiery serpents, scorpions, and thirst where there is no water.” This is where G-d brought the nation He had freed from slavery, providing them with the cedar trees that Jacob had brought with him to Egypt, knowing that they would later be needed to build the Mishkan in the desert (as Rashi explains).

Student's
pg. 4

He commanded them to take with them “silver and gold vessels,” “gold, silver, and copper,” and all the other materials enumerated in the Torah—all to demonstrate that in the midst of a desolate wilderness, filled with “snakes, fiery serpents, and scorpions,” the Jewish people would construct a dwelling place for G-d, in which He would fulfill His promise: “And I will dwell among them.”

וכסף ונחושת" כדי לבנות משכן באמצע המדבר!

את המשכן לא בנו בארץ ישראל; בארץ ישראל התבצע השלב השני - שלאחר המשכן בנו שם בית המקדש, אבל התחלת בנין דירה לו יתברך על ידי המשכן, היתה במדבר - שזהו מקום שיש בו רק "נחש שרף ועקרב וצמאון אשר אין מים",⁷ ולשם הביא הקב"ה עם שהוציא אותם מעבדות, ונתן עמהם ארזים שהביא יעקב עמו לארץ מצרים, בידעו שאחר כך יצטרכו לבנות משכן במדבר,⁸

וציווה עליהם לקחת עמהם "כלי כסף וכלי זהב", "זהב וכסף ונחושת", וכל הפרטים שנימנו בכתוב,⁹ וכל זה - כדי להראות שבאמצע המדבר שבו ישנם "נחש שרף ועקרב" בונים בני ישראל דירה להקב"ה שבו יהיה "ושכנתי בתוכם".¹⁰

Source 3 Rashi, Exodus 25:5

Student's
pg. 4

Cedar wood: From where did they get these materials in the desert? Rabbi Tanchuma explained that Jacob, our forefather, foresaw with divine inspiration that the Jews would one day build a Mishkan in the desert. So he brought cedar trees to Egypt, planted them there, and instructed his children to take them along when they left Egypt.

וַעֲצֵי שִׁטִּים. וּמֵאֵין הָיוּ
לָהֶם בְּמִדְבָּר? פֶּרֶשׁ
רַבִּי תַנְחוּמָא: יַעֲקֹב
אֲבִינוּ צָפָה בְּרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ
שֶׁעֲתִידִין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבָנוֹת
מִשְׁכָּן בְּמִדְבָּר, וְהָבִיא
אַרְזִים לְמִצְרַיִם וַיִּטְעֵם,
וַצֹּוּהוּ לְבָנָיו לְטָלֵם עִמָּהֶם
כְּשֶׁיֵּצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם.

After demonstrating that even during 210 years of exile they did not lose their Jewish identity, their next challenge was to build a Mishkan in the desert—a place filled with snakes and scorpions—using silver and gold.

10. שם, ה.

7. עקב ה, טו.
8. כמוזב בפירוש רש"י, תרומה כה, ה. כו, טו.
9. שם כה, ג ואילך.

B. Setting the Right Priorities

>> The Rebbe

Which home should be more beautiful?

Student's
pg. 5

Since it was necessary to build a Mishkan for G-d—a place about which God Himself says, “And I will dwell within them”—if the Mishkan would look like just any other structure in the world, it would indicate that people don’t recognize the distinction between the two.

This is similar to the difference between a person’s home and the stable or barn where their animals are kept. While people generally heat their barn and provide food and drink for the animals, no one decorates it with jewelry or embellishments to make it beautiful. By contrast, a home for people needs to be a “pleasant dwelling that expands one’s mind,” as the Talmud states.

From this it should be clear to us that when building a Mishkan or a Beit HaMikdash—or even a “minor sanctuary,” a synagogue, study hall, yeshiva, and the like—it can’t just be as nice as one’s private home. If a person treats a house of worship as no more important than their personal residence, it shows that they do not truly appreciate its significance for them. Its significance is not for someone else, it is for us ourselves and our own children.

והענין בזה: כיון שהוצרכו לבנות משכן לו יתברך, שזהו מקום שעליו אומר הקב"ה "ושכנתי בתוכם" - הנה אם המשכן יהיה כמו העולם, הרי זה מורה שהאדם אינו יודע ומכיר שיש איזה חילוק ביניהם.

כמו שיש חילוק בין הדירה שבה דר האדם עצמו לדיר ורפת שבהם נמצאים להבדיל, הבהמות שלו, שנהוג אמנם לחמם את הרפת, וליתן בה מאכל ומשקה עבור הבהמות, אבל לא מעטרים את הרפת עם תכשיטים ודברים מיוחדים כדי שתהיה יפה וכו', מה שאין כן דירת בני אדם יש צורך שתהיה "דירה נאה" שמרחיבה דעתו של אדם.¹¹

ומזה צריך להבין, שבשעה שהולך לבנות משכן ומקדש, או משכן ו"מקדש מעט"¹², בית כנסת ובית מדרש, ישיבה וכיוצא בזה, לא די שיהיו כמו הדירה שלו, שאז הרי זה מורה שהוא לא מכיר את החשיבות שלהם עבורו; לא מדובר עבור אחרים, אלא עבורו בעצמו ועבור ילדיו.

11. כדברי הגמרא במסכת ברכות, נז, ב.
12. יחזקאל יא, טז, וראה מגילה כט, א.

We should want a beautiful synagogue not in order to impress others, but for our own sake and the sake of our children.

Student's
pg. 6

We need to feel—and to express this sentiment in our actions—that the holiness of a synagogue and study hall demands that we build them with "gold," even if in our own homes we are content with "silver" or "copper."

When we do this, we have the opportunity to display in our daily lives—even while we sleep—that the highest priority in our lives is spirituality and holiness. This will be in such an open and clear way that "all the peoples of the earth will see"

The proof of our order of priorities is that for a holy place, we use gold, while for our own homes we are satisfied with silver and copper. A home is a dwelling for people, distinct from a stable for animals—but it does not reach the level of sanctity of a synagogue or study hall. These places are also meant for people, but when we enter them we are more readily able to rise above the routines of daily life and strive to be better, more spiritual, and more holy.

To allow us the ability to demonstrate this recognition, G-d grants us gold, and gives us the free will to choose how to use it. G-d trusts us that we will use our brains and understand that gold is meant for the Beit HaMikdash.

We see this with King David, who couldn't bear that he was sitting in a proper wooden house while the Holy Temple was a tent-like structure made of curtains.

הוא צריך להרגיש - ובאופן שיתבטא במעשה באופן הנהגתו שבשביל בית כנסת ובית מדרש, "מקדש מעט", הנה מצד קדושתו ברוחניות, צריך לחפש עבורו "זהב", אף על פי שבביתו מסתפק בכסף או נחושת.

ואז יש לו הזדמנות לבטא בחייו היום-יומיים (אפילו בעת השינה), עד ש"ראו כל עמי הארץ", שאצלו העיקר רוחניות וקדושה,

והא ראייה, שבשביל זה משתמש בזהב, ואילו בביתו מסתפק בכסף ונחושת וכיוצא בזה; זוהי אמנם דירת בני אדם, להבדיל ממקום שבו נמצאים בעלי חיים, אבל אין זה מגיע לקדושה של בית כנסת ובית מדרש, שגם הם נעשו עבור בני אדם, שבשעה שבאים לשם, אזי נקל יותר להתעלות מחיי היום-יום ולהיות טובים ורוחניים וקדושים יותר.

וכדי שאדם יוכל להראות שהוא בעצמו הכיר בכך, נותנים לו זהב, ויש לו ברירה ובחירה חופשית, וסומכים עליו שינצל את השכל ויבין ש"זהב" ניתן עבור בית המקדש.

Source 4 II Samuel 7:1-3

Student's
pg. 6

When the king had settled in his house, and G-d had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I am dwelling in a house of cedar, while the Ark of G-d remains within a curtain." Natan said to the king, "Go and do all that is in your heart, for G-d is with you."

וַיְהִי כִּי יָשָׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּבֵיתוֹ, וַה' הֵנִיחַ לוֹ מִסָּבִיב מִכָּל אֹיְבָיו. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל נָתָן הַנָּבִיא, "רְאֵה נָא אֲנֹכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּבֵית אֲרָזִים, וְאֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים יֹשֵׁב בְּתוֹךְ הִרְיָעָה." וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ, "כָּל אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבְךָ לַעֲשֹׂה, כִּי ה' עִמָּךְ."

Indeed, he began the plans for building a magnificent Temple, which was one of the most beautiful structures in the entire region. This illustrates the point we are discussing—that the Temple is the most important place, and therefore it is there that it is fitting to use silver and gold.

C. Wealth That Becomes a Burden

>> The Rebbe

Student's
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G-d wants us to show that we are using our wealth in an intelligent and beneficial manner, and not, G-d forbid, abusing it. Unfortunately, sometimes people stumble and misuse their wealth to their own detriment, as the verse states, "Wealth kept by its owner to their own detriment."

As discussed earlier, we plainly see a person who amassed vast sums of money, yet this very wealth bound and restricted him, depriving him of a normal human life. His money remained sitting idly in the bank, unused, and he derived no actual benefit from it—as if it were never truly his. The only real connection he had to his wealth was that it bred distrust of others. He lived in constant fear, always worried that maybe someone had set their sights on his money, anxious about what might happen if others discovered his identity as the famous individual. This in addition to all the other difficulties he had in his life.

רצונו של הקב"ה שייראו שמשתמשים בעושר באופן שכלי וטוב, לא כפי שקורה לפעמים חס ושלוש שמישהו נכשל ומשתמש בעושר לרעתו, רחמנא ליצלו, כמו שכתוב¹³ "עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו",

כפי שנזכר לעיל, שרואים בעיני בשר שישנו אדם שאסף הרבה דולרים, וענין זה קשר ואסר אותו וביטל ממנו חיים אנושיים, והדולרים נשארו לשכב בבנק ללא שימוש, כך, שלא היה לו מהם מאומה, כאילו לא היו שייכים אליו כלל; שייכותם היחידה אליו היתה בכך שבגללם לא היתה לו נאמנות לשום אדם, כיון שעל כל צעד ושעל היה יירא שמא פלוני שם עינו על כספו, ומה יהיה אם יגלו שהוא זה שיש לו חשבון בנק פלוני וכו', עם כל הקשיים שהיו לו בחיים כפשוטם.

The week before the Rebbe gave this talk, Howard Hughes, one of the richest and most mysterious people in U.S. history, died. He was born in 1905 and accumulated his wealth from the aviation, oil, and film industries. Despite his enormous wealth, estimated in the billions of dollars, his personal life was filled with tragedy and loneliness.

In his later years, his mental condition deteriorated drastically. He developed severe obsessive-

¹³. קהלת ה', יב.

compulsive disorder (OCD) and deep paranoia, and he refused to leave his room.

When he died in 1976, he was completely alone. Although he had been married in the past, he had no children and left no heirs. A significant portion of his vast fortune was transferred to the U.S. government in the form of estate taxes.

The Rebbe used his tragic story to illustrate a message about the relationship between material wealth and true happiness. Wealth in and of itself is not only not a guarantee of joy, but it can become a source of suffering and sorrow. In Hughes' case, the enormous wealth he accumulated did not bring him happiness or fulfillment; rather, it deepened his isolation and contributed to the deterioration of his mental state. The Rebbe used this example to emphasize the importance of using material wealth properly, while maintaining spiritual and human values.

Student's We are told further: Don't think that this is
pg. 7 a challenge unique to exile, something that never existed before, and therefore, it cannot truly be considered a test—thus making it unreasonable to expect one to overcome it. This issue is not specifically related to exile; rather, it stems from the negative inclination.

ומוסיפים לומר לו: אל תחשוב שזהו ענין שקשור עם גלות, ולפני זה לא היה מעולם כזה ניסיון, ובמילא הרי זה סימן שאין זה ניסיון, ואם כן, איך יכולים לדרוש זאת ממנו? - כיון שאין זה קשור דווקא עם גלות, אלא קשור עם היצר הרע,

Student's The proof of this is that the first person about
pg. 8 whom it is said, "Wealth kept by its owner to their detriment," was Korach. Korach was "a clever man," an intelligent Jew in all other respects. He knew Torah, and he could argue and present his case based on Jewish law. G-d granted him immense wealth, assuming that due to his intelligence and capacity for Torah learning, he would use it properly. However, since he was given free will, his wealth ultimately became "wealth kept by its owner to their detriment."

והא ראייה, שהראשון שעליו נאמר "עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו" - הרי זה קורח¹⁴, שעליו אומרים ש"פיקח היה"¹⁵, כך, שבכל שאר העניינים היה "יהודי פיקח", וידע ללמוד, והיה יכול להתווכח ולטעון על פי שולחן ערוך, והקב"ה נתן לו עושר עצום, בחשבו שמצד פיקחותו ויכולתו ללמוד וכו', ינצל זאת באופן טוב; אבל מצד זה שניתנה לו בחירה - נעשה מזה "עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו".

Source 7 Talmud, Pesachim 119a

Student's "Wealth kept by its owner to their own
pg. 8 detriment": Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says this is the wealth of Korach.

"עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו", אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: זו עשרו של קרח.

14. פסחים קט, א. וש"נ.
15. פרש"י קרח טז, ז.

Korach was the first rich person in Jewish history, and to this day the expression, "rich as Korach" is commonly used in Hebrew. Korach was also very wise and of noble lineage. However, his wealth led him to arrogance, which caused him to rebel against Moses. And the end was very bad indeed...

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 8

Generally speaking, the Torah avoids speaking negatively even about an impure animal. How much more so should we refrain from speaking negatively about a person, and even more so about a Jew, and certainly about someone of distinguished lineage.

Moreover, Kabbalistic sources explain that Korach's soul came from—and remained at—an extremely elevated level. This was reflected in the fact that "the sons of Korach did not die." This resulted in several Psalms explicitly associated with Korach.

Student's
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Why then does the Torah relate this negative information about Korach?

The reason this is related to us is that the Torah wishes to make us aware of the magnitude of this challenge. We may think to ourselves, "I am an intelligent individual. I have studied Torah, and I continue to study even now. And yet, it seems logical to me that I should use my money for my personal needs, keep the rest safely stored in the bank, and only give a small portion to charity—at least relative to what I could actually give." We may argue, "Why should I be suspected of wrongdoing? I pray three times a day, I study Torah, I educate my children properly—so how could I possibly be making a miscalculation?"

והטעם שמשפריים לנו זאת - כי לכאורה הרי אפילו "בגנות בהמה טמאה" לא רוצים לדבר¹⁶, ועל אחת כמה וכמה בנוגע לאדם, ועל אחת כמה וכמה יהודי, ועל אחת כמה וכמה מיוחס,

ועל אחת כמה וכמה על פי המבואר בקבלה¹⁷ שנשמתו היתה ונשארה בדרגא נעלית ביותר, והראיה, ש"בני קרח לא מתו"¹⁸, ומזה יצאו כמה מזמורים בתהלים¹⁹ שמזכירים שהם קשורים עם קרח - הרי זה כדי שנדע גודל הניסיון שיש בזה:

יכול משהו לחשוב, שהוא אדם פיקח, ולמד תורה, ויתכן שלומד גם עתה, ואף על פי כן נראה לו שעליו לנצל את הכסף עבור צרכיו האישיים, ואת שאר הכסף להשאיר מונח בבנק, וליתן לצדקה רק חלק קטן, על כל פנים קטן בערך מה שביכולתו ליתן; וטוען שאין מה לחשוש בו, שהרי הוא מתפלל שלש פעמים ביום, ויודע ללמוד, ומחנך את ילדיו כראוי, ואם כן, איך יתכן שיטעה בחשבון.

18. פינחס כו, יא.
19. מזמור מב ואילך. עג ואילך.

16. ב"ב קכג, א. וראה פסחים ג, א.
17. ראה שער הגלגולים הקדמה לג-לה. ועוד. וראה גם לקו"ת קרח נד, סע"א ואילך. אוה"ת ר"פ קרח. ביאורו"ז להצ"צ תנוריע ע' שמ ואילך. יהל אור צ' שלה. לקו"ש חי"ח ע' 187. וש"נ.

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To this, the Torah responds: There was once someone greater than you in Torah scholarship, wealthier than you, and of more distinguished lineage than you. Korach possessed all these qualities, yet he still fell into the trap of "wealth kept by its owner to their detriment."

Who Does Our Money Belong To?

Student's
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How is such a thing possible? The answer is explicitly stated in the verse itself: "To its owner." Korach deceived himself into thinking that he was the true owner of his money. Once he reached that mindset, his positive inclination became a partner in the money, and his negative inclination became the other partner. With two equal partners, sometimes one side prevails, and sometimes the other does.

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We need to recognize that we are not the true owner of our money. Rather, we are agents of G-d, who chose us and entrusted us with a specific sum of money so that we should merit building and strengthening Judaism in various places and ways. When we internalize this truth, we no longer see ourselves as the "owners" of the wealth, but rather as G-d's agents. As the verse states, "Mine is the silver, and Mine is the gold—says the L-rd of Hosts."

This does not refer to the silver and gold stored away in the seventh heaven. It refers to the wealth that exists right here in this physical world, in the possession of those living in it. The true owner of it all is G-d—"Mine is the silver, and Mine is the gold—says the L-rd of Hosts."

ועל זה מספרת התורה: היה תלמיד חכם גדול יותר ממנו, גביר גדול יותר ממנו, ומיוחס גדול יותר ממנו, עם כל המעלות שהיו לקרח, ואף על פי כן היתה היכולת ל"עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו".

איך יתכן הדבר? - מפורש בפסוק עצמו התירוץ: "לבעליו" הוא השלה את עצמו שהוא בעל הבית על הכסף, וכיון שכן, הנה חצי שותף הוא היצר טוב, וחצי שותף הוא היצר שמצד השני, כך, שלפעמים מצליח זה ולפעמים מצליח השני.

ובכן: עליו לדעת שלא הוא בעל הבית על הכסף; הוא שליח של הקב"ה שבחר בו ונתן לו כך וכך כסף כדי שיזכה לבנות יהדות במקומות שונים ובאופנים שונים, ואז מחשיב את עצמו - כפי שהאמת היא - לא בתור "בעליו" של הכסף, אלא בתור שליח של הקב"ה, ש"לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה' צבאות"²⁰,

והרי אין כוונת הקב"ה לכסף וזהב שנמצא ב"רקיע השביעי", אלא "לי הכסף ולי הזהב" שנמצא כאן בעולם בפשטות אצל כל אדם שחי בעולם, שבעל הבית האמיתי על זה הוא "לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה' צבאות".

20. חגי ב, ח.

Thinking that wealth is ours can drag us down to the lowest depths. We need to remember that our wealth belongs to G-d; He gave it to us so we can use it as a force for good.

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The fact that money is in our possession is because Hashem chose us as His agents to carry out His mission: to give charity and perform acts of kindness, and to use the money—"gold, silver, and copper"—to build a sanctuary for G-d.

When we fulfill this mission, G-d grants us the merit as if we were the true owners of the wealth. As the Talmudic saying goes, "The wine belongs to its owner, but the thank you is given to the one who pours it." In this case the reward is even greater, because we have been granted free will.

ומה שהכסף נמצא בכים שלו - הרי זה לפי שהקב"ה בחר בו בתור שליח לילך בשליחותו של הקב"ה ליתן צדקה וגמילות חסדים, ולהשתמש בכסף, "זהב וכסף ונחושת", לבנות "משכן שנקרא מקדש"²¹ להקב"ה;

ואז אומר לו הקב"ה, שהזכות שלו היא כאילו הוא היה בעל הבית האמיתי, בדוגמת הענין של "היין לבעליו, התודה למשקהו"²² ויתירה מזה בנדון דידן, כיון שניתנה לו בחירה²³.

משיחת י"א ניסן, ה'תשל"ו, בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם, כרך פ"ג עמוד 500 ואילך

Story - The Rich Men of Kishinev

Student's
pg. 11

For about 150 years, thousands of Jewish families lived in hundreds of villages, towns, kibbutzim, and crossroads in the regions of Podolia, Volhynia, and Bessarabia. Some were wealthy landowners, owners of large mills, vegetable gardens, and vineyards, while others had moderate wealth, and some were poor.

In 1859, non-Jewish landowners set their sights on Jewish landowners, bringing malicious reports to Mr. Plumberg, the government minister in Odessa, and demanding that administrative laws be passed to restrict Jewish landowners. These laws would empower local authorities to act at their discretion, without reason or justification, against Jewish landowners. . . .

The deputy minister, the notorious Mr. Kalimav, would periodically issue special orders with various justifications, increasing the taxes on Jewish landowners. He turned a blind eye to the non-Jewish landowners, but insisted on strictly enforcing the law on the Jews. The wealthy landowners, although affected to some extent by the taxes, were able to withstand them due to their large profits. However, the middle-class and

21. עירובין ב, א. וש"נ.

22. ב"ק צב, ב.

23. כפי שהצמח צדק מאריך בספר המצוות, דרך מצוותיך, מצות מילה פ"ג (ו, ב).

poor landowners, for whom the taxes were a heavy burden, grew poorer year by year. By 1868, many, especially in the regions of Calarash and Bender, faced a crisis as they could no longer pay the accumulated taxes from the past two years. In addition to the threat of being expelled from their properties, they faced the prospect of imprisonment and heavy fines.

The Rebbe Maharash, who was the most active communal leader in his generation, was concerned about their situation and sought to help. When the Rebbe Maharash traveled from Marienbad to Lubavitch at the beginning of Elul 1868, he passed through the city of Odessa with the intention of raising funds for them. The wealthy people of Odessa responded with generous donations. However, the wealthy people of Kishinev did not respond as expected.

During one of his addresses at a gathering of wealthy people in Kishinev, the Rebbe Maharash said: "G-d created the world and its creatures with the secret dynamic of giving and receiving. The heavens give material blessings, and the earth receives. In plants too, there are givers and receivers. Similarly, among humans, there are rich people who give, and poor people who receive. The rich are meant to give, and the poor to receive. And G-d decrees who will be the rich giver and who will be the poor receiver."

"But the poor person asks: 'It is true, Master of the World, that You created Your world with the dynamic of givers receivers, but why must I be the poor one who receives, and someone else the rich one who gives? Why can't I be the rich one who gives, and someone else the poor one who receives? Why must I suffer the hardship of poverty so that the rich person may maintain his wealth?' This is the meaning of the verse, : 'A prayer of the poor when he is in distress, before G-d he pours out his complaint.' This refers to a prayer of the poor when he is in distress, questioning why he must endure the suffering of poverty, so that the rich may be sustained in their wealth. After all, many are sent to the world to enrich and succeed, so why must the success and wealth of the rich come at the expense of the poor's suffering?"

This holy address opened the hearts of the wealthy of Kishinev, who contributed substantial sums. Through the combined efforts of the wealthy of Odessa and Kishinev, the hardships of the middle-class and poor landowners were alleviated, and they were provided with a new source of livelihood. Moreover, news of this speech spread throughout the country, and in every city it reached it illuminated the path for wealthy people to understand the deeper root of G-d's divine providence.

Every Jewish man and woman who has been blessed by G-d with bread and clothing should recognize the good that G-d has done for them, and express gratitude to G-d by extending a helping hand to their poor brethren, each according to their ability, with a generous and loving heart.

Based on Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz, Volume 6, Pages 253-255

This is a well-known story in Chabad. The Rebbe Maharash was reminding these wealthy people that the wealth is not theirs but given to them by G-d to use correctly. When we are cognizant of this, we look at everything with a different perspective.

Key Points:

Student's
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- *In the covenant between the parts, G-d promised Abraham that his descendants would go into Egypt, but they would leave with great wealth.*
- *At the conclusion of the Egyptian exile, G-d told Moses to urge the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for gold and silver, to fulfill His promise to Abraham in full.*
- *The Rebbe asks: Why did G-d initially promise Abraham that the Israelites would leave Egypt with wealth? After all, in the desert, they had no need for money, as all their needs were provided from Heaven!*
- *The Rebbe explains: Through the building of the Mishkan, the Israelites expressed that their priorities were clear.*
- *The most important thing, and therefore the one with the most investment and beauty, was a place of holiness and spirituality. This is why they built it with gold, silver, and the finest materials. Therefore, G-d commanded them to collect great wealth from Egypt, so that it could be used for holiness in constructing the Tabernacle and bringing the Divine Presence into the desert.*

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- *When we ensure that our synagogue is more beautiful than our own home, we convey an educational message to our children and community—our priority in life is spirituality and holiness.*
- *Sometimes, great wealth leads its owner to a life of negativity. Like the wealthy Howard Hughes, who succumbed to anxiety, or like Korach, whose wealth led him to rebel against Moses, only for him to be swallowed by the earth.*
- *We must remember that money belongs to G-d, and it is entrusted to us to fulfill G-d's will in the world.*

Takeaway:

Student's
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We must evaluate our priorities when it comes to matters of holiness, such as investing in a beautiful mezuzah or handmade matzah for the Seder, alongside investment in synagogues and Jewish institutions. We must remember that the money we have is given to us by G-d, and it is primarily intended for spiritual purposes. We should dedicate it with the utmost importance for these purposes, rather than focusing on less important personal needs.