

Parashat Terumah- 2014, 5774
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

[My wife and I were on an amazing Kosherica Chazanim Cruise from Jan 19-26 and I did not have access to my email- so please forgive if I have not yet responded to your emails. But I will get to it- ASAP.]

This parasha is noted as the parasha of Tzeddaka, for communal projects, such as shul, mikvah, schools, etc.

ויקחו לי תרומה כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו,

“HaShem spoke to Moshe saying, speak to the children of Israel and let them take for Me a portion (a contributions for the Mishkan), from every man whose heart motivates him to give” (25:2).

There are important aspects of tzeddaka that are misunderstood by many, especially regarding a husband learning in Kollel and wife supporting the family.

In Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dei'a (248:4) it is recorded that women are obligated in the Mitzvah of tzeddaka, however, one who collects tzeddaka may not accept a large sum of money from a married woman without the consent of her husband. There is no specific amount which is considered a “large sum”, it all depends on the relative means of the family. In any event, if the husband is against her giving even a small amount, the gabbai of tzeddaka may not accept anything from her. Even if she is employed and has her own money put aside, she still requires her husband's consent. This concept is based upon the halacha of “All that a woman acquires belongs to her husband”. (Gittin 77b). **THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE MISUNDERSTAND!**

The halacha, based on Gemara Gittin, is referring to a situation where the husband is the worker and bread-winner of the house. He gives the wife enough money for all household needs and the wife's responsibility is taking care of household chores, cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children. Of course, if he can afford to give her enough, to hire a maid, a cleaning assistant or for baby sitting, all the better.

Now, here is what the halacha is saying, that under those circumstances if she takes a part-time job to augment the family income, then “MaH ShehKanta Isha- Kana Ba'alah” that extra she earns belongs to her husband. After all, it is HIS income that covers the household expenses. **However if the husband learns in Kollel, has no income, or very little income, while she works full time and also takes care of household chores-[which is a very common trend in today's Yeshivish circles,] then SHE is considered the bread-winner of that household. All the income she earns belongs to HER. She can give to the tzeddaka of HER choice and as much as she pleases.**

This was stated by Rav Hershel Schachter in the name of Rav Soloveitchik. It is also so written clearly by the Yam Shel Shlomo on Bava Kama (59a,) and was also the opinion of the Aruch HaShulchan (248:12.) It is therefore not so unusual to hear women participating in a shul auction for Aliyot or other Kibbudim, to buy these honors for their husbands. It used to be that a husband would buy jewelry or clothing for his wife for Simchat HaChag (Yom Tov holiday) and she would reciprocate buying him a new shirt or tie. Now however, with the new trend, she reciprocates by buying him a “shlishi” or “shishi” at Kriyat HaTorah (Torah reading). Only difference is, one is monetary while the other is spiritual, also, one comes gift wrapped while the other is not.