

[DO OUR CHARITY DOLLARS WORK FOR OR AGAINST OUR IDEALS?](#)

Submitted by Laurynn Lowe on Sun, 08/11/2019 - 00:00



BLOG BY RABBI MARC D. ANGEL

We are good-hearted people who do our best to be kind and charitable. We want to build a better society, ease suffering, aid the needy, support worthy institutions etc. We are barraged by those who solicit funds for one cause or another. We may give a few dollars to each; we may give a lot to a few; we may give more or less, depending on our mood when we receive the solicitation for charity.

Do we have a philosophy that governs our charitable outlays? Or do we just make contributions randomly, based on who asks us first or who approaches us most respectfully?

I would like to suggest that we think carefully about our charitable giving, and view our charitable dollars as a means of advancing our vision of a better Jewish community and a better world.

I hear many people complain about the "hareidization" of Orthodoxy--that religious institutions are taken over by extremist, fundamentalist Orthodox zealots. People complain: why do the "hareidim" control the rabbinic courts, the mikvaot, the kashruth agencies, the yeshivot etc? Here is one answer: because WE are providing them with funds to do so! A great many charitable dollars from Modern Orthodox (and non-Orthodox) Jews are poured into Hareidi hands. In our generosity and good-heartedness, we support individuals and institutions who strive to undermine our own vision of a healthy Judaism and a good society. In effect, many of our charity dollars are used to work against us.

Should we be giving our limited charity funds to those who foster a religious life in which men do not receive training or encouragement to find gainful employment? or in which men (in Israel) avoid military service in Tzahal by staying in kollels? or in which people are imbued with neutral-Zionist or even anti-Zionist attitudes; or in which obscurantist and fundamentalist teachings are presented as the true word of God? Should we be supporting institutions that promote a

narrow, xenophobic vision of Judaism, or that have moved far "to the right", that seek to undermine Modern Orthodox ideals and values where ever they can?

Instead of complaining about negative trends within Orthodoxy (and Judaism in general), we could actually accomplish something useful by developing a clear philosophy of our own philanthropy. What institutions best reflect the vision of Judaism which we feel should be promoted? How can we best use our charity dollars to work for our vision of Judaism and humanity, and how can we avoid having these dollars used to undermine our ideals?

If we will focus more carefully on the impact of our charity, we may find that we indeed can make a real difference. If the institutions we believe in are well supported, they can accomplish more. If more dollars are devoted to the causes which foster our vision, then less dollars are available to those who would undermine our vision.

Each dollar we contribute is, in effect, a "vote". It reflects who we are and what we believe and what we dream. If we would all vote wisely, if we would all contribute in ways that advance our ideals--we would be voting for real change. We would be voting for an Orthodox Judaism that is intellectually vibrant, compassionate and inclusive. We would be voting for an Orthodox Judaism that is engaged meaningfully with the entire Jewish community and with society at large.

We all should give generously and graciously. But we need to think carefully when deciding to whom to entrust our charity dollars.

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