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SIX LESSONS TO UNLOCKING THE TRUTH
TO GOD'S HOLY LAND



LESSON 3

I.S.R.A.E.L. — Righteous Giving

INTRODUCTION

When you think of the word “charity” what other words come to mind?

How would you define charity?

Why do you think most people are motivated to help the less fortunate? What are some reasons that you do?

Webster defines charity as “generosity and helpfulness, especially toward the needy or suffering” or as “public provision for the relief of the needy” and “benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity.” In Judaism, however, charity is much more than an act of kindness or compassion; it is an act of justice and righteousness.

In what ways do you see charity as an act of justice and righteousness?

As we continue to study our Keys to Israel using the acrostic for I.S.R.A.E.L, today’s lesson centers around the letter “R,” which stands for “Righteous Giving.” In this study, we’re going to explore the Jewish concept of righteous giving, or *tzedakah*, through God’s command to give to those in need.

KEY VERSE:

Whoever is kind to the needy honours God — PROVERBS 14:31

MAIN TEACHING POINT

Righteous giving is important to God, and God commanded His people to care for the less fortunate.

God calls all people of faith, Christians and Jews, to be good stewards of the inheritance and blessings He has poured out on us and to care for one another, particularly the poor.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What does it mean to you to honour God? Why would you want to honour God? How does giving to the poor honour God?

Do you think of giving as an act of obedience to God? Why or why not?

Why do you think it is important to God that we give to those in need?

We read in the Bible: *“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.”* (Proverbs 19:17)

Why do you think helping the poor is considered lending to God? How is that possible?

Going Deeper

As God delivered on His promise to give the Israelites the Promised Land of Israel, He also gave them direct instructions, rules, and guidelines to live by throughout their lives. The Israelites were God's chosen people and therefore, they had a responsibility to live according to His guidelines.

Many of the instructions to the Israelites can be found in Deuteronomy in words from Moses to the people.

READ DEUTERONOMY 15:7-11.

In these verses God speaks specifically about the poor.

What are the Israelites supposed to do for the poor among them?

What do you think “openhanded” means in regards to righteous giving?

What benefits will the giver receive when they give to the poor?

What do you think it means that there will always be poor people in the land?

The Hebrew word for righteous giving is *tzedakah* (pronounced (zah-duk-kah).

It is a combination of two words: *tzedek*, meaning “justice,” and *kah*, which is a name for God. Together, the word means “the justice of God.”

How does giving to the poor exemplify the justice of God?

LOOK UP THE FOLLOWING VERSES**Write down what else you learn about God's justice and giving.**

Scripture	Meaning
Leviticus 25:35	
Deuteronomy 14:29	
Psalms 37:26	
Psalms 82:3	
Proverbs 11:25	
Matthew 19:21	
Luke 6:35-38	

The Story of Ruth

READ RUTH 1–4

A beautiful example of *tzedakah* can be found in the biblical story of Ruth; the entire story is told in just four chapters.

The story begins in Moab, which is the western part of the country of Jordan. Elimelech had relocated to Moab from Bethlehem to escape a famine. He and his wife Naomi had two sons who happened to marry two women from Moab.

Eventually, Elimelech and his sons died. Naomi, Elimelech's widow, decided to move back to Bethlehem. Her daughter-in-laws, who were also widows, wanted to accompany her; but Naomi protested and told them to stay in Moab.

After chapter 1, answer the following questions:

How does Ruth show kindness to her mother-in-law?

What other choices did Ruth have?

After chapter 2, think about the following:

How does Ruth choose to take care of her mother-in-law?

How does Boaz show *tzedakah*?

Read Leviticus 23:22. How does Boaz follow this command from God?

After chapter 3, answer the following:

What advice does Naomi give to Ruth?

After chapter 4, answer the following:

What happens to Ruth and Boaz?

How is Naomi blessed by her advice to Ruth?

How are the people of Israel blessed from the union of Boaz and Ruth?

READ PROVERBS 22:9 AND PROVERBS 28:27

Fill in the chart below of how these verses apply to each Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi.

Name	How it applies
Ruth	
Naomi	
Boaz	

Think About It

1. **Why might God give the Israelites the responsibility of taking care of the poor?**

Read James 1:27. Why do you think righteous giving is said to be pure religion in this verse?

2. **Read Acts 20:35. How does this verse apply to the concept of righteous giving? Describe a time you were blessed because you gave to someone in need.**

3. **Because of a host of political and socio-economic issues, Israel has one of the highest poverty rates among developed nations. What ways can you give to help people in Israel?**

4. **Jews and many Christians give tithes, a tenth of their income, based on Bible verses such as Deuteronomy 26:12. While that is important, even more important than *what* we give is *how* we give. Read the following Scriptures and write what you learn about how we are to give to God.**

Scripture	Lesson
Exodus 25:2	
Deuteronomy 15:10	
2 Corinthians 8:11-12	
2 Corinthians 9:7	

For more teaching about Righteous Giving, watch the video featuring *The Fellowship* founder and President Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, and his daughter, Yael Eckstein, Executive Vice President.

Apply it

Often times making a pledge, or a commitment to give, can help you remember to exercise righteous giving.

Consider writing down your giving goals for the year.

- **Include what you will give to the people of Israel and others.**
- **Write down dates to give and review your commitments often.**

Hebrew Words for Lesson 3

Hebrew Word	English Spelling	English Meaning
צדקה	<i>Tzedaka</i>	Charity
צדק	<i>Tzedek</i>	Justice
צדיק	<i>Tzadik</i>	Righteous
עני	<i>Ani</i>	Poor
חסד	<i>Chesed</i>	Kindness
כסף	<i>Kesef</i>	Money

Devotional Reflection — Open Our Hands

*Do not rob the poor, because he is poor;
or crush the afflicted at the gate . . .*

— PROVERBS 22:22, ESV

There once was an experiment in the United Kingdom where a young boy sat with a sign asking for food.



The experimenters wanted to observe how people reacted to poor people.

It took hours before one elderly woman finally stopped to ask the boy why he was on the streets instead of in school and why he needed food. Noticing the woman speaking with the boy, three younger women joined in and decided to buy the boy some food. However, the reality was the boy was ignored for several hours before anyone chose to act.

There is another story with a different kind of outcome.

A newspaper printed a story about a young child in a restaurant with his mother when he noticed a homeless man sitting outside the large glass windows. The poor man was looking at the lucky people who were dining inside. The child asked his mother to feed the hungry man.

At first, she hesitated, even though she was proud of her son's concern because she did not know how the other people in the restaurant would feel about the homeless man walking in. But after thinking it over, she invited the man to dine with them. The man was so grateful for their kindness. As he ate what might have been his first good meal in days, all he could say over and over again was "Thank you," with tears in his eyes.

In Hebrew, the word used to mean "charity" is the word *tzedakah*. However, "charity" is not the best translation of the word *tzedakah*. The word *tzedakah* comes from the Hebrew word *tzedek* which means "justice." A more accurate definition of *tzedakah* would be "righteousness."

According to Judaism, when we give charity we are not being kind, we are being just.

In truth, we are returning to the poor what is rightfully theirs, which God has given us to look after and use for their benefit.

When we look at charity in that way, giving to the poor is not a favour or a kindness that we are bestowing on that person. Rather, we are fulfilling our God-given duty to distribute His resources. In Proverbs we read: "*Do not rob the poor . . .*"

How can someone rob the poor? Poor people don't have anything to be taken from them! The answer is that when we withhold charity, when we refuse to help those less fortunate, we are robbing the poor of what truly belongs to them. God has entrusted us with what is theirs. It is our duty to distribute it. If we fail to fulfill our obligation, it is as if we have stolen from those who are most in need.

This perspective also explains a verse in Psalm 145:16 where we read: “*You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*” If God opens His hand to every living thing, how could there be millions of people around the world who are starving?



RIGHTEOUS GIVING

The truth is that God has opened His hand and has provided plenty for everyone.

It is our responsibility to take what God has given us and open our hands to others so that all people will have what they need.

Only then, will all God’s people be cared for and satisfied, and no one will go hungry anymore!