

## Task 2: Understanding *Tzedakah*

### **The big idea of this task:**

When we give *tzedakah* through a Jewish lens, we not only help the world, we also help ourselves feel more connected to Jewish life and values. As a community, and as individuals, Judaism teaches that we have an obligation to give *tzedakah*.

### **During this task, campers will grapple with:**

- Is it enough to be kind and do good deeds? Why do I need to give money as well?
- What do I think is important when deciding where to give *tzedakah*?
- What can Judaism teach me about how to give *tzedakah*?

### **By the end of this task, campers will be able to:**

- Identify 1-2 quotes, Jewish stories or teachings about *tzedakah* that inspire them to act.
- Define *tzedakah* (the obligation or commandment to give righteously), *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) and *mitzvah* (commandment).
- Explain why both *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* are considered “required” in Judaism.
- Share their own experiences with *tzedakah* or *gemilut chasadim* and the impact they’ve had on them (and/or others).

### **You know you have been successful with this task when:**

Campers can explain why they think giving *tzedakah* is important for them both inside and outside of camp.

### **To have on your “radar screen”:**

- While you may choose to explore issue areas that are important to the individuals in the group, keep in mind that in most cases, you have already narrowed the organizations the teens will be considering funding. Therefore it will be wise to focus on ways to prioritize giving other than issues area, such as level of need or relationship to the person in need.
- If you know the type of organizations that you’ll be considering (ie – food bank, animal shelter...) this task is a wonderful opportunity to add in additional programming giving a “Jewish perspective” on the specific issues (see “additional resources” below for materials).

### **Additional Resources**

American Jewish World Service collection of texts on justice [www.on1foot.org](http://www.on1foot.org)

Jewish Funds for Justice Smart Tzedakah study questions [www.jewishjustice.org](http://www.jewishjustice.org)

NFTY Program Bank on Social Justice

<http://www.nfty.org/resources/programbank/socialaction/>

USY Pinat Chinuch Program Bank (scroll down to *tzedakah* and social justice)

<http://www.usy.org/progbank/pinat/>

### Raising the Bar

#### Ideas for further programs and integrating the task into the camp day

- Place the *tzedakah* quotes around different areas of camp and ask the campers to look for them throughout the day. At the end of the day ask the campers which quote(s) they identified with and why?
- Have campers go on a scavenger hunt through camp, looking for donor plaques. Ask campers to write down the names of the donors and what they donated. When they return, talk about the campers' impressions of how these donors chose to give *tzedakah*. You may want to invite your camp director or development director to provide more background on the donors and donations.
- Take campers to a favorite spot/activity or a new building/structure at camp and have them develop a list of what went into funding the space/activity and how much they think each aspect and the whole project costs. Ask your camp director or development director about the cost of the project to share with the campers at the end, or invite them to share the information.
- While in their foundations (or small groups) divide campers into two groups and hold a debate about the quote, "*gemilut chasadim* is greater than *tzedakah* (charity), because unlike *tzedakah*, *gemilut chasadim* can be done for both poor and rich, both living and dead, and can be done with money or with acts". (*Talmud Sukkah 49b*).
- Give campers the opportunity to "donate" their canteen snacks to a local soup kitchen instead of eating them
- Build and/or paint a physical ladder or representative of a ladder, and write Maimonides levels on it, as a permanent exhibition at camp.

#### Sample Activities

- Sample 1: Climbing the Tzedakah Ladder
  - Sample 2: The Giving Quilt
  - Sample 3: Psychology of Giving
- \*From Ramah Philanthropy Initiative Curriculum

## **Sample 1: Climbing the Tzedakah Ladder** **Multiple Facilitators/Large Group**

### **Overview**

During this program campers will discuss *mitzvot*, *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*. They will use their discussion to act out their own example of one of the rungs of Maimonides's 8 Levels of *Tzedakah* to present to the group. In the conclusion the campers will identify where they have seen *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* enacted at camp.

### **Group Type**

Multiple Facilitators/ Large Group

### **Space Needed**

A space that has a large open area for individual groups to meet and a place to tape large sheets of butcher paper

### **Supplies Needed**

- Copies of Maimonides 8 Levels of *Tzedakah*, out of order for each group (Appendix 1)
- Cut along dotted lines and give each group one strip (Appendix 2)
- One copy Maimonides 8 Levels of *Tzedakah* in order for each group leader (Appendix 3)

### **Prior to the Program**

1. Divide campers into 8 groups—one for each Level of *Tzedakah*
  - Each group should have 2-5 campers in it. If you have more than 5 campers in a group, create a “parallel universe” (create an additional set of 8 groups that will mirror the first, and function as a separate program). You can have multiple parallel universes depending on how many campers are in the group.
  - Choose a counselor to facilitate each group (if you do not have enough staff, have a counselor float between 2 groups).

### **Adapting this Program for a Smaller Group**

- Assign 2-3 campers the role of acting out multiple scenarios.

### **Timetable- 60 minutes**

10 minutes- Introduction and breaking into groups

15 minutes- Maimonides Ladder of *Tzedakah*

25 minutes- Sharing

10 minutes – Wrap-up

### **Introduction and Breaking in to Groups (10 minutes)**

1. Spend a few minutes reviewing the “values” material the full group of campers learned in the first session.

Ask the campers:

- Now that we have learned about Jewish values, can someone share what they think it means when we say “Jewish value?”
  - Explain to the campers that during the session today we are going to be talking about two Jewish values, *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*. Have you ever heard of *tzedakah* or *gemilut chasadim* and can you describe them for us? Define *tzedakah* (the obligation or commandment to give righteously), *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) and *mitzvah* (commandment).
2. Explain to the campers:
    - Many of our values are also *mitzvot*, can someone tell us what a *mitzvah* is? (*Answer: A mitzvah is something that we are commanded to do, it is not just a good deed, our text tells us that there are 613 mitzvot*)
    - Ask campers: Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
  3. Break campers into their groups.

### **Maimonides Ladder of *Tzedakah* (15 minutes)**

1. Pass out a strip of paper with one of Maimonides’s Levels of *tzedakah* to each group. Explain to the group that Maimonides was a great medieval rabbi, whose teachings are still followed today.
2. Have the group choose one representative to read the sheet aloud to their group
3. Ask the group:
  - What does your text tell us about giving *tzedakah*?
4. Instruct the group:
  - When you have finished discussing the quote, work with your group to create a skit that is about 2 minutes long and a modern day version of your interpretation of the quote.
  - You will be sharing their skit with the whole teen foundation. Make sure not to mention which of the 8 levels you are acting out in the skit, because the other groups will be trying to guess which level you are acting out.

### **Sharing (30 minutes)**

1. Pass out the full copies of Maimonides’s 8 Levels of *Tzedakah* to all of the groups.
2. Have the first group present. When they are done with their skit have the campers that are in the other groups look at the sheet and identify which level of the *tzedakah* the group is acting out.
3. Once the campers have guessed which level the campers were acting out, have the group acting out confirm which level it is.

### **Wrap Up (10 minutes)**

Ask the campers:

- Now that we have learned about Maimonides’s 8 Levels of *Tzedakah*, why do you think that he chose the particular order? Why is one better than the other?
- Thinking about our teen foundation, what level of giving should be our priority? If an organization does not meet that level, do we still want to fund it? (For example, do we

want to consider an organization that feeds people daily verses helping someone get a job so that they can feed themselves?)

- Why do you think that we placed the importance on having you donate *tzedakah* for this project, and not on the act of *gemilut chasadim*? *(Answer: Funds are crucial in helping an organization to operate, without any funding these organizations would not be able to keep their doors open. We aren't always able to help volunteer at an organization. Sometimes we do not have the skills to volunteer. For example, we may not know how to build a shed but we can raise funds to pay for someone to do it).*

## **Sample 2: The Giving Quilt** **One Facilitator/Small Group**

### **Overview**

During this program campers will discuss *mitzvot*, *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*. After the discussion they will write or draw different ways that they have seen *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* enacted at home. These drawings will eventually be taped together to create a “Giving Quilt” that can be displayed around camp. In conclusion, campers will study Jewish text about *tzedakah* and use the text to create an ad for *tzedakah*, these can also be placed around camp.

### **Group type**

Small group/ One Facilitator

### **Space needed**

A small room/ outdoor area

### **Supplies needed**

- Copies of the sheet of the *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* Quilt Square – Appendix 4
- Tape to create the giving quilt
- Markers or crayons
- Copies of the *tzedakah* quotes- Appendix 5

### **Prior to the program**

- Identify a place in camp where you can hang the quilt.

### **Adapting this program for a larger group**

- Have the campers work in foundations to complete this activity.

### **Timetable- 45 minutes**

**10 minutes- Introduction and Review**

**25 minutes- The Giving Quilt**

**10 minutes- Sharing and Wrap Up**

### **Introduction and Review (10 minutes)**

1. Spend a few minutes reviewing the “values” material the full group of campers learned in the first session. Ask the campers:
  - Now that we have learned about Jewish values, can someone share what they think it means when we say “Jewish value?”
  - Explain to the campers that during the session today we are going to be talking about two Jewish values, *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*. Have you ever heard of *tzedakah* or *gemilut chasadim* and can you describe them for us? Define *tzedakah* (the obligation or commandment to give righteously), *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) and *mitzvah* (commandment).

2. Explain to the campers:
  - Many of our values are also *mitzvot*, can someone tell us what a *mitzvah* is? (*Answer: A mitzvah is something that we are commanded to do, it is not just a good deed, our text tells us that there are 613 mitzvot*)
  - Share with the campers that in the Talmud it says that *gemilut chasadim* is greater than *tzedakah* (charity), because unlike *tzedakah*, *gemilut chasadim* can be done for both poor and rich, both living and dead, and can be done with money or with acts.
  - Ask campers: Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

### 25 minutes- The Giving Quilt

1. Pass out the *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* Quilt Sheet
  - Have the campers draw or write in the box on the left side of the paper about a time that they gave *tzedakah* at home.
  - Have campers then draw or write in the box on the right side about a time that they participated in *gemilut chasadim* at home.
  - If they have not participated in *tzedakah* or *gemilut chasadim* at home, ask them to think about an example of seeing someone else participate in one of these acts.
2. Once they finish drawing ask them the following questions and have them write the answers in the outside frame.
  - On the left side of the page:
    - How is this an act of *tzedakah*?
    - When you were participating in this act of *tzedakah* how did it impact others?
    - Imagine yourself doing the act in the picture, how did you feel?
  - On the right side of the page:
    - How is this an act of *gemilut chasadim*?
    - When you were participating in this act of *gemilut chasadim* how did it impact others?
    - Imagine yourself doing the act in the picture, how did you feel?
3. Have the campers share their two pictures/stories with their group using their answers as a guide for sharing.
4. Share with the campers that both *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim* play an important role in running the organizations that we are funding. Ask them:
  - Why do you think that we placed the importance on having you donate *tzedakah* for this project, and not on the act of *gemilut chasadim*? (*Answer: Funds are crucial in helping an organization to operate, without any funding these organizations would not be able to keep their doors open. We aren't always able to help volunteer at an organization. Sometimes we do not have the skills to volunteer. For example, we may not know how to build a shed but we can raise funds to pay for someone to do so*).

## 10 minutes- Sharing and Wrap Up

1. Hand out the *tzedakah* quote page.

Ask campers:

- To decide which of these quotes matches their own act of *tzedakah*?
- Have campers write the quote on their quilt square.

Ask campers:

- How are these quotes helpful when you think about our teen foundation?
  - If we were going to use your quote as a guiding vision for our teen foundation, what types of organizations would we look for to fund? *(Answer: If we chose Rabbi Eleazar's quote, maybe we will only support organizations that give money to others in a kind and caring way...)*
2. At the end of the program make sure to collect the camper's drawings to tape together to make a quilt to hang in camp.

**Sample Program 3: Psychology of Giving**  
**Adaptable program for one facilitator/Multiple facilitators**

Ramah Philanthropy Initiative – Session # 4 (out of 14)

Major theme(s): Psychology of Giving: Rambam’s Ladder and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Time Required: 45 minutes

Goal(s): Gain familiarity with the “most famous” Jewish text on tzedakah  
 Understand that there are needs that each person has and that these needs are  
 Understand our personal connections to the concepts of tzedakah

Materials: Maimonides “ladder” cut up intro strips (multiple)  
 Actual Maimonides ladder  
 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs cut up into strips  
 Actual Hierarchy of Needs  
 Paper and pens/pencils

Activities:

1) 15 minutes

“Order” Maimonides “ladder” individual and/or then as a group. See if your final group product matches what Maimonides came up with. Are there other categories you might have included?

**Raising the Bar**

**Ideas for further programs and integrating the task into the camp day**

- Put each level on a post-it and have teens “order” Maimonides ladder on a climbing wall or tower.
- Laminate pieces of paper with each of Maimonides levels and use weighted paper clips, string and a weight at the bottom to “order” the levels in the pool.

2) 15 minutes

“Order” Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, following the same instructions as before. Does the final product match? Do you agree or disagree with Maslow’s order?

3) 15 minutes

Discussion

- How do Maslow’s needs fit with Rambam’s ladder?
- How is Rambam’s highest level, self-sufficiency, like Maslow’s highest level, self-actualization? How are the two related? How are they different?
- What are your needs when it comes to tzedakah and giving? As a philanthropist, do you have a hierarchy of needs? What would it look like? Have each camper create a personal hierarchy/ladder of philanthropy.

### **Rambam's Levels of Tzedakah (from Lowest to Highest)**

One who gives unwillingly, but nevertheless, gives.

One who gives cheerfully, but not enough.

One who gives enough, but not until he is asked.

One who gives before being asked.

The receiver knows the identity of the giver, but the giver does not know the identity of the receiver.

The giver knows the identity of the receiver, but the receiver does not know the identity of the giver.

The giver does not know the receiver, nor does the receiver know the giver.

The giver helps the receiver to achieve independence

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** is a theory in psychology, proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*.<sup>[2]</sup> Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity. Maslow's theory was fully expressed in his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*.<sup>[4]</sup>

Maslow's Hierarchy is often displayed as a pyramid with the largest and lowest needs at the bottom and the need for self-actualization at the top.

Physiological Needs: breathing, food, homeostasis

Safety Needs: personal security, financial security, health and well-being, safety against accidents/illness (this includes clothing and shelter)

Love and Belonging: friendship, family

Esteem: be respected, have self-esteem, have self-respect

Self Actualization: "What a man can be, he must be"; to be free of the opinion of others; to do things not for the outcome, but because it's the reason you are here on earth

## Appendix 1

### Maimonides Ladder for Campers

This list is Maimonides Ladder out of order.

- Giving after being asked – You are giving the amount that you can afford to the recipient but they had to ask before you were willing to give them what they needed.
- Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant - This can be done by aiding someone in getting a job or set up a business with them. This is the highest level of charity because it allows for the recipient to no longer require charity from others, and makes them able to give it, which is the greatest gift one can give.
- Giving before being asked – Asking for help is often of the most difficult things people do even when they are in dire need. By giving charity without being asked you show that you understand their situation and do not to be asked for the help needed.
- Giving begrudgingly – The person giving the charity unwillingly and cruelly. They do not care about their fellow man, by giving begrudgingly the recipient feels worse then they did before they received the charity. This is the lowest rung of charity because the giver is not doing it out of the kindness only out of obligation. True tzedakah is given with a warm heart.
- Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity – In the four lowest levels of tzedakah both the recipient and giver know each other. This creates a situation where the giver is superior to the recipient, the giver's ego is stoked and the recipient feels ashamed and inferior. When the recipient does not know the identity of the recipient they are humbled, however the recipient does not receive the burden of knowing who the donor was and their feelings are not spared.
- Giving less than you can afford, but giving it cheerfully – This is slightly higher on Maimonides' ladder because they are giving it with a smile. By showing understanding and empathy you make the recipient feel better than if you gave them the charity negatively.
- Giving when neither party knows the other's identity – This is the second highest level of tzedakah. When both the recipient and donor of charity do not know each other. This does not create a superior – inferior bond between the giver and recipient but rather one of mutual understanding and respect.
- Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity – This level of tzedakah is higher because the ego of the person giving charity is still being inflated by the recipient's dignity is spared for the most part.

## Appendix 2

### My Maimonides Ladder for Cut Out

Cut out along the lines and give one slip of each paper to each group.

- Giving begrudgingly – The person giving the charity unwillingly and cruelly. They do not care about their fellow man, by giving begrudgingly the recipient feels worse than they did before they received the charity. This is the lowest rung of charity because the giver is not doing it out of the kindness only out of obligation. True tzedakah is given with a warm heart.

- Giving less than you can afford, but giving it cheerfully – This is slightly higher on Maimonides' ladder because they are giving it with a smile. By showing understanding and empathy you make the recipient feel better than if you gave them the charity negatively.

- Giving after being asked – You are giving the amount that you can afford to the recipient but they had to ask before you were willing to give them what they needed. \

- Giving before being asked – Asking for help is often of the most difficult things people do even when they are in dire need. By giving charity without being asked you show that you understand their situation and do not to be asked for the help needed.

- Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity – In the four lowest levels of tzedakah both the recipient and giver know each other. This creates a situation where the giver is superior to the recipient, the giver's ego is stoked and the recipient feels ashamed and inferior. When the recipient does not know the identity of the recipient they are humbled, however the recipient does not receive the burden of knowing who the donor was and their feelings are not spared.

- Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity – This level of tzedakah is higher because the ego of the person giving charity is still being inflated by the recipient's dignity is spared for the most part.

- Giving when neither party knows the other's identity – This is the second highest level of tzedakah. When both the recipient and donor of charity do not know each other. This does not create a superior – inferior bond between the giver and recipient but rather one of mutual understanding and respect.

- Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant - This can be done by aiding someone in getting a job or set up a business with them. This is the highest level of charity because it allows for the recipient to no longer require charity from others, and makes them able to give it, which is the greatest gift one can give.

## Appendix 3

### Maimonides Ladder for Group Leader

The following list is the actual ladder in order from lowest on top to highest on the bottom.

This sheet of paper is for you to use to help the group put the Levels in order.

8. Giving begrudgingly – The person giving the charity unwillingly and cruelly. They do not care about their fellow man, by giving begrudgingly the recipient feels worse than they did before they received the charity. This is the lowest rung of charity because the giver is not doing it out of the kindness only out of obligation. True tzedakah is given with a warm heart.

7. Giving less than you can afford, but giving it cheerfully – This is slightly higher on Maimonides' ladder because they are giving it with a smile. By showing understanding and empathy you make the recipient feel better than if you gave them the charity negatively.

6. Giving after being asked – You are giving the amount that you can afford to the recipient but they had to ask before you were willing to give them what they needed.

5. Giving before being asked – Asking for help is often of the most difficult things people do even when they are in dire need. By giving charity without being asked you show that you understand their situation and do not to be asked for the help needed.

4. Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity – In the four lowest levels of tzedakah both the recipient and giver know each other. This creates a situation where the giver is superior to the recipient, the giver's ego is stoked and the recipient feels ashamed and inferior. When the recipient does not know the identity of the recipient they are humbled, however the recipient does not receive the burden of knowing who the donor was and their feelings are not sparred.

3. Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity – This level of tzedakah is higher because the ego of the person giving charity is still being inflated by the recipient's dignity is sparred for the most part.

2. Giving when neither party knows the other's identity – This is the second highest level of tzedakah. When both the recipient and donor of charity do not know each other. This does not create a superior – inferior bond between the giver and recipient but rather one of mutual understanding and respect.

1. Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant - This can be done by aiding someone in getting a job or set up a business with them. This is the highest level of charity because it allows for the recipient to no longer require charity from others, and makes them able to give it, which is the greatest gift one can give.

Appendix 4  
Quilt Squares

	<b>Gemilut Chasadim</b>
	<b>Tzedakah</b>

Appendix 5  
Tzedakah Quotes

**Tzedakah Quotes**

- Shimon [the son of Rabban Gamliel] says: It is not what one says, but rather what one does, that makes all the difference in the world.- Pirkei Avot
- Rabbi Eleazar said, "The reward that is paid for giving charity is directly related to the kindness with which it is given."
- He who gives tzedakah in secret, is greater than Moses. Talmud, Bava Batra
- And the work of tzedakah shall bring peace.- Isaiah 32:17