Social Action and Responsibility Unit Student worksheet – Lesson 3

Source 1 - Devarim 15:7-11

7 If there be among you a needy man, one of your brothers, in any of the towns of the land which HASHEM your God is giving you, do not be hard hearted or tight fisted towards your poor;

8 Rather be open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs.

10 Give generously to him and do so without a hard heart; then because of this HASHEM your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.

11 There will always be poor people in the land; therefore I command you to be openhanded towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in the land.

ז כִּי-יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחַד אַחֶיךָ, בְּאַחַד שְעֶרֶיךָ, בְּאַרְצְךָ, אֲשֶׁר- הּ אֱלֹקֵיךָ נֹתֵן לָךָ--לֹא תְאַמֵּץ אֶת-לְבָבְךָ, וְלֹא תִּקְפֵּץ אֶת-יָדְךָ, מֵאָחִיךָ, הָאֶבְיוֹן.

ת כִּי-פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת-יָדְדָ, לוֹ; וְהַעֲבֵט, תַּעֲבִיטֶנּוּ, דֵּי מַחְסֹרוֹ, אֲשֶׁר יֵחְסַר לוֹ.

> י נְתוֹן תִּתֵּן לוֹ, וְלֹא-יֵרֵע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִּתְּךָ לוֹ: כִּי בִּגְלֵל הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה, יְבָרֶכְךָ ה״ אֱלֹקִיךָ, בְּכָל-מַעֲשֶׁךָ, וּבִכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדָךָ.

יא כִּי לֹא-יֶחְדַּל אֶבְיוֹן, מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ; עַל-כֵּן אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ, לֵאמֹר, פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת-יָדְךָ לְאָחִיךָ לַעֲנִיֶּךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ, בְּאַרְצֶךָ.

Questions

- 1. What is the Torah commanding us to do?
- 2. What is meant by the term "hard hearted"?
- 3. How does the gesture of an open or closed hand express the process of giving *Tzedakah*?
- 4. Why do you think the Torah states that "there will always be poor people"?

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Source 2 - Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Charity 10:7-14

- ָּנֹז] שְׁמוֹנֶה מֵעֲלוֹת יֵשׁ בַּצְדָקָה, זוֹ לְמַעְלָה מִזּוֹ: מֵעֲלָה גְּדוֹלָה שְׁאֵין לְמַעְלָה מִמֶּנָה--זֶה הַמַּחְזִּיק בִּידֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁמְּרָ, וְנוֹתֵן לוֹ מַתָּנָה אוֹ הַלְוָאָה, אוֹ עוֹשֶׁה עִמּוֹ שֻׁתָּפוּת, אוֹ מַמְצִיא לוֹ מְלָאכָה, כְּדֵי לְחַזַּק אֶת יְדוֹ עַד שֶׁלֹא יִצְטָרַךְ לַבְּרִיּוֹת; וְעַל זֵה נֵאֵמֶר ״וְהֵחֵזַקתָּ בּוֹ, גַּר וְתוֹשָׁב וָחַי עִמֶּךְ״, כְּלוֹמֵר הַחַזֵּק בּוֹ שֵׁלֹא יִפְּל וִי
- [ח] פָּחוּת מָזֶּה--הַנּוֹתֵן צְדָקָה לָצְנִיִּים, וְלֹא יָדַע לְמִי נָתַן, וְלֹא יָדַע הֶעָנִי מִמִּי לָקַח, שֶׁהֲרֵי זוֹ מִצְנָה לִשְׁמָהּ: בְּגוֹן לִשְׁכַּת חֲשָׁיִים שֶׁהָיְתָה בַּמִּקְדָשׁ, שֶׁהָיוּ הַצִּדִּיקִים נוֹתְנִין בָּהּ בַּחֲשַׁאי וְהָצְנִיִים בְּנֵי טוֹבִים מִתְבַּרְנְסִין מִמֶּנָּה בַּחֲשַׁאי. וְקָרוֹב לְזֶה--הַנּוֹתֵן לְתוֹךְ קַפָּה שֶׁלִּצְדָקָה; וְלֹא יִתֵּן אָדָם לְתוֹךְ קַפָּה שֶׁלְצְדָקָה, אֵלָא אִם כֵּן יוֹדֵע שְׁהַמְּמֵנָּה נֵאֵמֵן וְחָכָם וִיוֹדֵע לִנָהֹג בָּהּ כַּשׁׁוּרָה כַּחַנִּנִיָּה בָּן תִּרָדִיוֹן.
- [ט] פָּחוּת מִזֶּה--שָׁיָדַע הַנּוֹתֵן לְמִי יִתֵּן, וְלֹא יָדַע הֶעֲנִי מִמִּי לְקַח: כְּגוֹן גְּדוֹלֵי הַחֲכָמִים שֶׁהָיוּ הוֹלְכִין בַּפֵּתֶר, וֹמַשִּׁלִיכִין הַמַּעוֹת בִּפְתָחֵי הַאַנִיִּים. וֹכָזֶה רָאוּי לַעֲשׁוֹת, וֹמַעֵּלָה טוֹבָה הִיא, אִם אֵין הַמְּמִנִּין בַּצִּדָקָה נוֹהַגִּין כַּשׁוּרָה.
 - [י] פָּחוּת מְצֶּה--שֶׁיָדַע הֶעָנִי מִמֵּי נָטַל, וְלֹא יָדַע הַנּוֹתֵן: בְּגוֹן גְּדוֹלֵי הַחֲכָמִים שֶׁהָיוּ צוֹרְרִים הַפְּעוֹת בִּסְדִינֵיהֶן וּמַבְּשִּׁילִין לַאֲחוֹרֵיהֵן, וּבָאִין הַצַנִּיִּים וְנוֹטְלִין, בְּדֵי שֵׁלֹא יִהְיֵה לָהֵן בּוּשָׁה.
- [יא]פָּחוּת מִזֶּה--שֵׁיִּתֵּן לֶעָנִי בְּיָדוֹ, קֹדֶם שֶׁיִּשְׁאֹל. [יב] פָּחוּת מִזֶּה--שֵׁיִתֵּן לוֹ כָּרָאוּי לִתַּן לוֹ, אַחַר שֶׁיִּשְׁאֹל. [יג] פָּחוּת מִזֶּה--שֵׁיִתֵּן לוֹ פָּחוּת מִן הָרָאוּי, בְּסֵבֶר פָּנִים יָפוֹת. [יד] פָחוּת מִזֶּה--שֵׁיִתֵּן לוֹ, בְּעֶצֶב.

There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other.

- [1] The greatest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, or finding employment for him in a word, by putting him in a situation where he is no longer be dependent upon others' aid. With reference to such aid it is said, "You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you" (Lev. 25:35), which means, strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented.
- [2] A step below this is the one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is dropping money in a charity box.
- [3] One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know his benefactor. The greatest sages used to walk about in secret and put coins in the doors of the poor.
- [4] A step lower is the case where the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus greatest sages would tie coins into their robes which they would fling them over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.
- [5] Lower than this is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.
- [6] Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.
- [7] Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.
- [8] The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously.