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 open-handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in the land.

זּ כִּי-יִהְיֶה בְּדְּ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחַד אַחֶידְּ, בְּאַחַד שְׁעָרֶידּ, בְּאַרְצְדּ, אֲשֶׁר ה׳ אֱלֹקִידְ נֹתֵן לָדְ--לֹא תְאַמֵּץ אֶת- לְבָבְדְּ, וְלֹא תִקפֹּץ אֶת-יָדְדָּ, מֵאָחִידְ, הָאֶבְיוֹן.

חַ כִּי-פַתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת-יַדְדָּ, לוֹ;וְהַצְבֵט, תַּצְבִיטֶנּוּ, דֵּי מַחְסֹרוֹ, אֲשֶׁר יֶחְסֵר לוֹ.

י נָתוֹן תִּתֵּן לוֹ, וְלֹא-יֵרֵע לְבָבְךְ בְּתִּתְּדְ לוֹ: כִּי בִּגְלַל חַדָּבָר חַזֶּה, יְבָרֶכְדְ ה׳ אֱלֹקִידְ, בָּכָל-מַעֻשֵּׂדְ, וּבָכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדֶדְ.

יא כִּי לֹא-יֶחְדַּל אבְיוֹן, מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ; עַל-כֵּן אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּוְדְּ, לֵאמֹר, פַּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת-יָדְדְּ לְאָחִידְּ לַצַנִיֶּדְ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְדְ, בָּאַרְצֵּךְ.

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

שְׁמוֹנֶה מַעֲלוֹת יֵשׁ בַּצְדָקָה, זוֹ לְמַעְלָה מִזּוֹ: מַעֲלָה גְּדוֹלָה שְׁאֵין לְמַעְלָה מִמֶּנָּה--זֶה הַפַּחְזִיק בִּידִי יִשְּׂרָאֵל שֶׁפֶּךְ, וְנוֹתֵן לוֹ מַתָּנָה אוֹ הַהַלְוָאָה, אוֹ עוֹשֶּׁה עִמּוֹ שֻׁתָּפוּת, אוֹ מַמְצִיא לוֹ מְלָאכָה, כְּדֵי לְחַזַּק אֶת יָדוֹ עַד שָׁלֹּא יִצְטָרַךְ לַבְּרִיוֹת; וְעַל זֶה נָאֱמָר "וְהֶחֱזַּקְתָּ בּוֹ, גַּר וְתוֹשָׁב וָחַי עִמָּךְ", כְּלוֹמַר הַחֲזֵק בּוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִפֹּל וְיִיצְטָרַךְ

פָּחוּת מָאֶה--הַנּוֹתֵן צְדָקָה לָעֲנִיִּים, וְלֹא יָדַע לְמִי נַתַּן, וְלֹא יָדַע הֶעָנִי מִמִּי לָקַח, שֶׁהֲרֵי זוֹ מִצְּוָה לִשְׁמָהּ: כְּגוֹן

לִשְׁכַּת חֲשָׁיִים שֶּׁהָיְתָה בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ, שֶׁהָיוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים נוֹתְנִין בָּהּ בַּחֲשַׁאי וְהָעֵנִיִּים בְּנֵי טוֹבִים מִתְפַּרְנְסִין מִמֶּנָה בַּחֲשַׁאי. וְקַרוֹב לְזֶה--הַנּוֹתֵן לְתוֹדְ קַפָּה שֶׁלִּצְדָקָה; וְלֹא יִתֵּן אָדָם לְתוֹדְ קַפָּה שֶׁלִּצְדָקָה, אֵלָא אִם כֵּן יוֹדֵע שֶׁהַמְּמָנֶּה

ָנֶאֱמָן וְחָכָם וְיוֹדֵעַ לִנְהֹג בָּהּ כַּכַּשׁוּרָה כַּחַנַנְנְיָיה בֶּן תְּרַדְיוֹן.

פָּחוּת מָזֶה--שֶׁיָדַע הַנּוֹתֵן לְמִי יִתֵּן, וְלֹא יָדַע הֶעָנִי מִמִּי לָקַח: כְּגוֹן גְּדוֹלֵי הַחֲכָמִים שֶׁהָיוּ הוֹלְכִין בַּסֵּתֶר, וּמַשְׁלִיכִין הַמָּעוֹת בְּפִתְחֵי הָעֲנִיִּים. וּכְזֶה רָאוּי לַעֲשׂוֹת, וּמַעֲלָה טוֹבָה הִהִיא, אִם אֵין הַמְּמֻנִּין בַּצְּדָקָה נוֹהַגִּין כַּשׁוּרָה.

פָּחוּת מָצֶּה- שָׁיָּדַע הֶעָנִי מִמֵּי נָטַל, וְלֹא יָדַע הַנּוֹתֵן: כְּגוֹן נְּדוֹלֵי הַחֲכָמִים שֶׁהָיוּ צוֹרְרִים הַמְּעוֹת בִּבִּסְדִינֵיהֶן וּמֵפְשִׁילִין לַאֲחוֹרֵיהֶן, וּבָאִין הָעֲנִיִּים וְנוֹטְלִין, כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה לָהֶן בּוּשָׁה.

בָּחוּת מָגֶה--שֶׁיִּתֵן לֶעָנִיבְּיָדוֹ, סְדֶם שֶׁיִשְׁאֹל.

פַּחוּת מָצֶה- שֶׁיִּתֵּן לוֹ כָּרָאוּי לִתֵּן לוֹ, אַחַר שֶׁיִּשְׁאֹל.

פָּחוּת מָצֶה- שֶׁיִּתֵּן לוֹ פָּחוּת מִן הָרָאוּי, בְּסֵבֶר פָּנִים יָפוֹת.

פַּחוּת מָזֶה--שֶׁיּתֵן 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" (*Vayikra* 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.