

Giving to the Poor

Thought for the Week:

You shall not hesitate to give, nor murmur when you do give; because you shall know who is the good repayer of the hire. You shall not turn away from him that is in want, but you shall share all things with your brother, and shall not say that they are your own; for if you are partakers in that which is immortal, how much more in things which are mortal? (*Didache* 4:7-8)

Commentary:

You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. (Deuteronomy 15:10)

The Torah commands us to give generously to the poor. "You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11). The Master taught frequently about giving to the poor and encouraged His followers to do so lavishly. Believers should be distinguished as the most generous people on earth. When Paul received permission from the apostles to take the gospel to the Gentiles, the apostles gave him only one stipulation. They asked him to teach the Gentiles "to remember the poor" (Genesis 2:10).

When we give to the poor, we should do so with a glad heart. The Torah says, "Your heart shall not be grieved when you give to [the poor man]," (Deuteronomy 15:10). That is why Paul says, "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The rabbis taught, "The poor man does more for the giver than the giver does for the poor man." ¹Why? Because, as Deuteronomy 15:10 says, if you give generously to the poor, "the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings" (Deuteronomy 15:10). The person who gives to the poor man seems to be doing the poor man a favor, but he is actually receiving the gift of God's blessing from the poor man.

A person who refuses to give to the poor forgets that he himself depends on the generosity of God. If we refuse to be generous when we see others in need, why should God help us when we are in need?

Yeshua refers to giving to the poor as storing up treasure in heaven. ² Money spent on charity should be regarded as an investment. A wise investor does not hesitate to put his money into a venture that will guarantee a good return.

Middot U'Mitzvot (Character and Deeds)

The Power of Giving

In the years before World War II, a small Jewish community in Hungary hired a rabbi to teach Torah to their boys, but the poor community was unable to afford to pay the man. Instead, the parents took turns providing the man's family with a daily meal. After a few decades, the rabbi's wife died, his children moved away, and he was alone. He was too old to teach anymore, so the community hired a new rabbi to educate their children. One woman, however, took pity on the old man who had taught her sons so well. For five years—until the rabbi died—she climbed the stairs to his small apartment every day and brought him lunch. Sometime later, the woman died.

When the war began, the small Jewish community was deported. The woman's grandchildren, however, were saved by a Christian woman who risked her life to hide them behind a false wall she built in her apartment. She provided meals for her hidden Jews every day. The Nazis raided and searched her apartment, but they never discovered her fugitives.

After the war, the children learned that the apartment they had been hidden in had once belonged to a different tenant. It was the same apartment that the old rabbi had lived in. The Christian woman who brought them food daily from the market had climbed the same stairs that their grandmother had climbed to bring the old rabbi his daily lunch. The grandmother's investment in heaven had paid dividends on earth.³

Endnotes

1. Leviticus Rabbah 34:8. 2. Matthew 19:21. 3. Chana Nestlebaum, *Chofetz Chaim, Loving Kindness: Daily Lessons in the Power of Giving* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2007), 52–53.