



JEWISH COMMUNAL FUND'S GUIDE TO GIVING:
A TZEDAKAH RESOURCE FOR TEENS

You have

the power

to help

repair the world



What does Jewish tradition tell us about the best way to give charity?

You may have studied about Maimonides (the *Rambam*), an important Jewish rabbi and philosopher from the 12th century who wrote the Laws of Charitable Giving (*Hilchot Matanot L'Eneyim* 7: 13). He lists the order regulating the priorities and later on (10: 7-14) lists eight levels of distributing *tzedakah*, each one higher than the next.

Rate this list in the order of your priorities with number 1 being the lowest and number 8 being the highest. Enter one letter next to each number. Then see the bottom of this page to see how your choices compare with *Rambam's Ladder*. This is a great exercise to do with your family!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

- A A person gives without having to be asked, but gives directly to the poor. The poor person knows who gave the help, and the giver knows who was benefited.
- B A person gives a donation in a certain place, but walks away so that the giver does not know who received the benefit. However, the poor person knows the giver.
- C A person gives but is not happy when s/he digs into his/her pocket in order to give.
- D A person contributes anonymously to the *tzedakah* fund which is then distributed to the poor.
- E A person gives money and help to prevent another person from becoming poor. For example, teaching a person a trade, finding them a job, lending money or teaching them to fish.
- F A person gives, but only when asked by a poor person.
- G A person gives cheerfully, but gives less than s/he should.
- H A person makes a donation to a poor person secretly. The giver knows who was benefited, but the poor person does not know who the giver was.



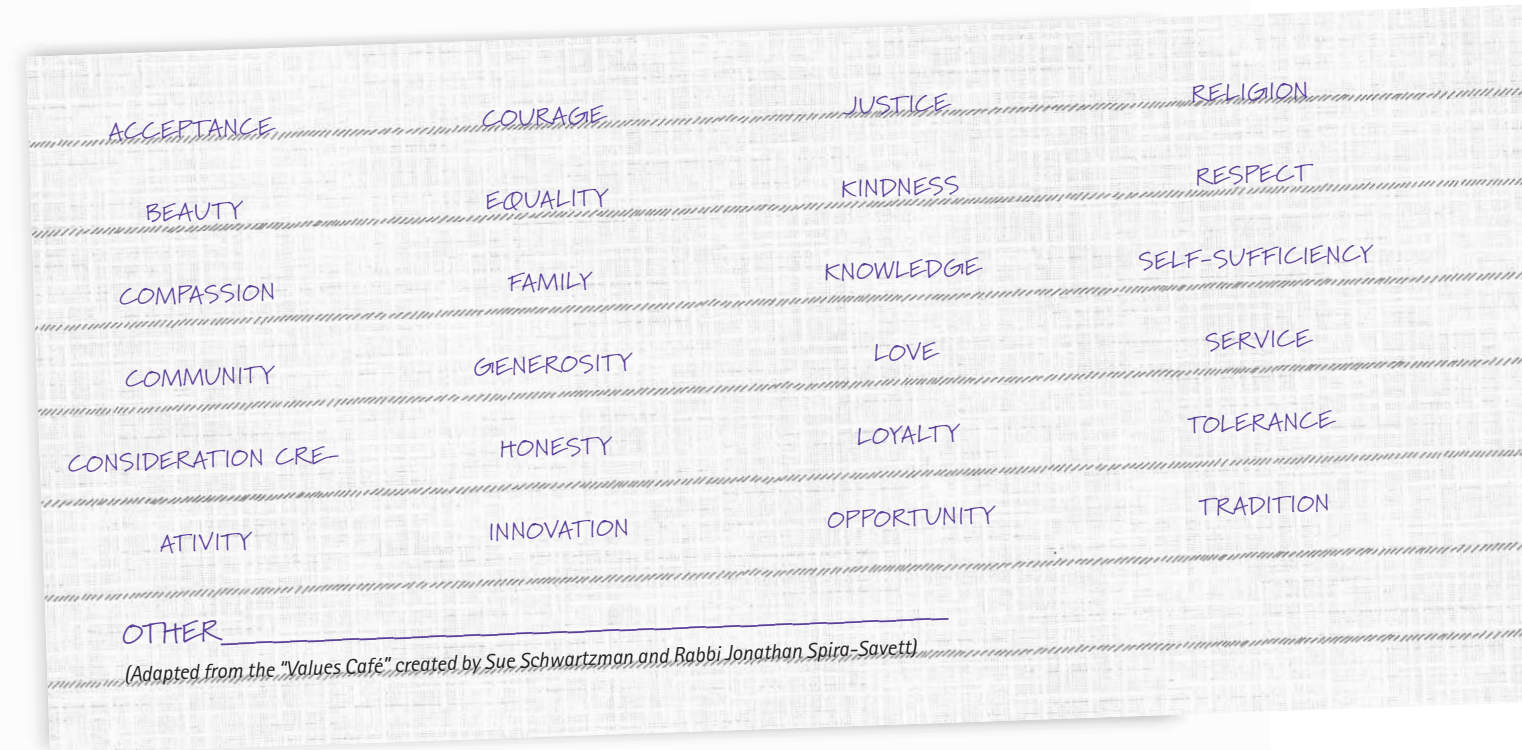
DISCUSS THIS!
 Discuss why you chose a particular order for these statements. Talk about the differences between your arrangement, your parents' and *Rambam's*.

Rambam's Ladder answers:
 1.c 2.g 3.f 4.a 5.b 6.h 7.d 8.e



VALUES

Select three values that are very important to you, and think about why you chose these values. (Circle 3)



ISSUES AND CAUSES

Now that you have considered some of the values that motivate your giving, the next step toward creating your mission statement is thinking about issues that concern you. There are many problems and causes that you hear about in the media, but it is easier to begin your charitable giving if you focus on one or two areas. Take a look at the list below, and **select two causes** that interest you the most.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| ANIMALS | EDUCATION | IMMIGRANT'S RIGHTS/SERVICES | PEACE/CONFLICT RESOLUTION | SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT |
| ANTI-RACISM | ELECTORAL REFORM | ISRAEL | POVERTY & HUNGER | SUBSTANCE ABUSE |
| ANTI-SEMITISM | ENVIRONMENT | JEWISH CULTURE | PRISON REFORM | SUICIDE PREVENTION |
| ARTS | GANGS | JEWISH EDUCATION | RACE & INTERFAITH RELATIONS | SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT |
| CIVIL RIGHTS | GAY/LESBIAN RIGHTS | JEWISH SECURITY | REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS | WOMEN'S RIGHTS |
| DEVELOPING NATIONS | GUN CONTROL | MEDICAL RESEARCH | SENIOR CITIZENS | YOUTH/TEEN SERVICES |
| DISABLED PEOPLE | HEALTH & WELLNESS | MY SYNAGOGUE | | |
| DISASTER RELIEF | HOMELESSNESS | | | |
| DOMESTIC VIOLENCE | | | | |





Ask your synagogue and school to donate leftover food to a soup kitchen, shelter or organization that provides food for the poor.

Recommended sites to help with your online research:

Charity Navigator
www.charitynavigator.org

GuideStar
www.guidestar.org

Better Business Bureau
www.bbb.org/us/Charity-Reviews

These websites enable you to conduct a search by keyword (issue), location and other criteria. For example, you can search poverty or hunger in a specific geographic region. They list only IRS approved charities.

Choose a Charity to Support

There are several ways to find organizations that address the issues you care about:

- ★ Consider organizations you've come into contact with through school projects, volunteering efforts, synagogue, or family involvement
- ★ Ask your parents, teachers, and friends if they know of organizations that work on your top issue
- ★ Research organizations using a searchable online directory. For an up-to-date list of online directories, visit the Jewish Teen Funders Network website (www.jtfn.org). You can also look at JCF's Annual Report (www.jcfny.org) to see which charities other JCF donors have supported.

Once you have two or three organizations that look interesting, take some time to learn more about their work. Visit their websites and use the following questions to guide your research:

- ★ What **purpose** does the organization serve? What are the organization's **goals**?
- ★ What specific **programs** are in place to achieve these goals?
- ★ Do they **report** on how **effective** these programs have been?
- ★ Is there a **clear need** for this organization to exist? What do you think might happen if the organization closed its doors tomorrow?
- ★ How long has this organization been in existence? Some philanthropists like to give to established organizations with a **long track record**, while others prefer to support organizations that are **just starting up**.
- ★ Does the organization's work line up with the **giving priorities** and **values** that you stated in your **mission statement**?

Commemorate life cycle events by opening a donor-advised fund.

Attention Parents: Searching for the perfect Bar/Bat Mitzvah gift? *Give your child, grandchild or relative the gift of tzedakah!*

In just minutes, you can establish a charitable fund that gives your teen first-hand experience in charitable giving and sets him or her on a life-long path of helping others. JCF's Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Teen Giving Funds can be established with an initial gift of \$1,800 on behalf of a child under age 18. Friends and family can make tax-deductible contributions to the fund at any time, and JCF tracks all gifts into the fund. Your teen can then log online and recommend grants of \$36 and above to charity.

To open a fund or learn more about JCF, contact Tamar Snyder at 212-752-8277, ext. 26 or tamar@jcfny.org.

