

Tzedakah (תְּדָקָה) Text Study

designed for older students

"*Tzedakah*" is the Hebrew word for giving aid, assistance and money to the poor and needy or to other worthy causes. However, the nature of *tzedakah* is very different from the idea of charity. The word "*tzedakah*" is derived from the Hebrew root *Tzadei-Dalet-Qof*, meaning righteousness, justice or fairness. In Judaism, giving to those in need is an act of justice and righteousness that we are all obligated to do.

Below you will find 4 different selections on *tzedakah*. Read them all and then discuss the questions below.

“You shall open your hand to the poor and needy people in your land” (Deuteronomy 15:11).	“All Jews are responsible for one another” (Talmud, Shavuot 39a).
“Giving tzedakah is equal to all the other mitzvot combined” (Talmud, Bava Batra 9a).	“Support the non-Jewish poor as you do the Jewish poor” (Talmud, Gittin 61a).

1. Which of the texts above speaks to you the most? Why?
2. What do the texts above teach us about the importance of *tzedakah*? Who are we obligated to give to?
3. Suppose you get hit by a truck and someone finds a list of the places you have given *tzedakah* and how much you gave. What would the list reveal about your giving habits? How recently did you make your last donation, and how generous was it relative to your means? Who did you donate to, and why did you choose those causes?