

Teacher's Guide

<http://www.panix.com/~jjbaker/rmbmzdkh.html>

1. We are required to take more care about the *mitzva* ["command"] of *tzedaka* [*Tzedaka*], unlike "charity" (from Gk. *karitas*, "love"), is the Jewish legal requirement to do rightly with your fellow person -- that is, to support him when he is in need.(Deut. 15:7-8) than for any other positive *mitzva*. For the *mitzva* of *tzedaka* is the sign of the righteous descendants of Abraham our father, as "[God] has made known to him [Abraham], so that he shall command his sons to do *tzedaka*." {Genesis XVIII:19} The throne of Israel is not established, nor does true faith stand except through *tzedaka*, for "through *tzedaka* will I [God] be established." {Isaiah LIV:14} And Israel will not be redeemed except through *tzedaka*, for "Zion will be ransomed through judgment and returned through *tzedaka*." {Isaiah I:27}

7. There are eight levels of *tzedaka*, each greater than the next. The greatest level, above which there is no other, is to strengthen the name of another Jew by giving him a present or loan, or making a partnership with him, or finding him a job in order to strengthen his hand until he needs no longer [beg from] people. For it is said, "You shall strengthen the stranger and the dweller in your midst and live with him," {Leviticus XXV:35} that is to say, strengthen him until he needs no longer fall [upon the mercy of the community] or be in need.

8. Below this is the one who gives *tzedaka* to the poor, but does not know to whom he gives, nor does the recipient know his benefactor. For this is performing a *mitzvah* for the sake of Heaven. This is like the Secret [Anonymous] Office in the Temple. There the righteous gave secretly, and the good poor drew sustenance anonymously. This is much like giving *tzedaka* through a *tzedaka* box. One should not put into the box unless he knows that the one responsible for the box is faithful and wise and a proper leader like Rabbi Hananya ben Teradyon.

9. Below this is one who knows to whom he gives, but the recipient does not know his benefactor. The greatest sages used to walk about in secret and put coins into the doors of the poor. It is worthy and truly good to do this if those who are responsible for collecting *tzedaka* are not trustworthy.

10. Below this is one who does not know to whom he gives, but the poor person does know his benefactor. The greatest sages used to pack coins into their scarves and roll them up over their backs, and the poor would come and pick [the coins out of the scarves] so that they would not be ashamed.

11. Below this is one who gives to the poor person before being asked.

12. Below this is one who gives to the poor person after being asked.

13. Below this is one who gives to the poor person gladly and with a smile.

14. Below this is one who gives to the poor person unwillingly.

