



## Table Talk: Parshat Re'eh

In this week's parsha, the Torah commands the Jewish people to take care of its poor people.

In Chapter 15 verses 7-8, Moshe teaches the people, who are days away from entering Eretz Canaan and setting up a society:

"If there shall be a destitute person among you...you shall not harden your heart or close your hand...Rather you shall open your hand to him."

In English we call this charity, but in Hebrew we call this act "tzedaka". What does Tzedaka technically mean? What is the difference between these two words and their implications?

Charity implies that you are doing a favor, giving something you don't have to give and going beyond the letter of the law. But "tzedaka" comes from the root "tzedek" which means justice! How is it just, correct, and expected that one give money to the poor?

Discuss.

We believe that it is our duty to take care of each other, and we believe that G-d gives us money and is always the source of our success. If so, of course we must use that money for some greater good. He is giving us the means to help others. There is an expectation and a responsibility that comes with that blessing of wealth. We are not doing anyone a favor, but rather we are fulfilling the purpose for which we were blessed with that success.

In Chapter 15 verse 10 we are told: "You shall surely give him (the poor man) and let not your heart feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, Hashem, your G-d, will bless you in all your deeds and in every undertaking."

When we help others, Hashem helps us. It is a challenge to recognize G-d's part in our successes, and it is difficult to part with the money we work hard to earn.

How can we internalize the message from this week's parsha and really change the way we view our money? How do some of the Torah's commands help us get to that point?

(Think about various mitzvot like tithing and bringing first fruits and not eating fruit from fruit trees for the first three years...)