

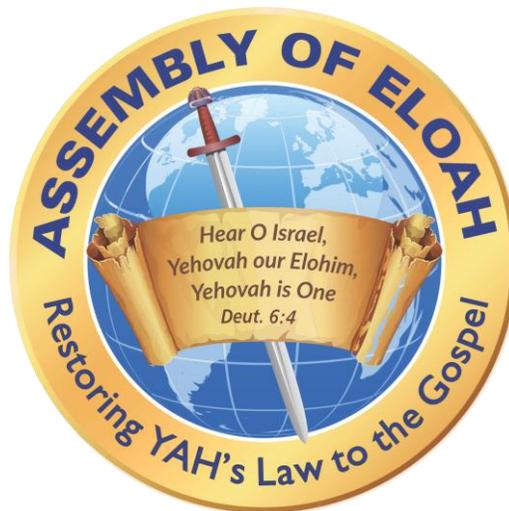
Assembly of Eloah

This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent -- Jesus Christ. Jn. 17:3

How to Access Material Blessing

Edition 1

Why is it so hard to earn a living today? How can we achieve success and material prosperity?



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We will discuss the theme of material blessing and how to access it. This is extremely important because even the quality of our divine service depends on our own material condition.

Our desire is that each person can improve his situation quickly and wonderfully, by putting into practice what we are going to explain here, and which has always been the infallible secret of the people of Israel for generations until our days.

Generally speaking, we should know that there are two types of blessings:

1. The blessing that never depends on our merits, for example: Procreation.

From the very first page of the Bible, we read:

Genesis 1:27-31 So God created mankind in his own image;... God blessed the humans by saying to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth,..."

God therefore blesses the first human couple by granting them the gift of procreation and multiplication, and this blessing is not conditional on the obedience of any rule. Animals and plants also receive a similar blessing to multiply each after its kind. And until today, one can procreate even if one violates all the laws of God and morality. Pregnancy occurs even in cases of adultery, incest, rape, etc., it is an unconditional blessing. God does not take it away because we behave badly.

We must note, however, that procreation will be affected when we break the commandments of God. See Deuteronomy 8:4,11; 30:9; Leviticus 26:9.

2. The blessing that almost always depends on our merits, example: The material blessing.

It is said indeed:

Deuteronomy 30:9-10 and Y^ehovah (the Lord) your God will prosper you abundantly in all that you do, along with your children, your livestock, and the produce of your fields..., ¹⁰ IF YOU OBEY HIM AND KEEP HIS COMMANDS AND STATUTES THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK OF THE LAW...

We see here that the Bible attaches material blessing, material prosperity to our obedience to the commandments of God (Y^ehovah), that is to say, to our behavior.

There are, of course, exceptions to these principles and you will have understood this in the wording.

There are cases when material blessing does not depend on our merits:

1. For example, if we have inherited wealth from our parents, as Proverbs 19:14 says: A house and self-sufficiency are a father's inheritance..., or if we benefit from the merits of our ancestors. In these cases, our own behavior is not taken into account for our success.

2. If we face our test of wealth; there too, we will be rich, regardless of our

behavior. This is partly why we see many bad guys thrive.

On the other hand, we can also be poor, even if we behave well, simply because we undergo our poverty test. In this case, all our efforts will not succeed in enriching us, as long as this trial lasts. We will have with great difficulty our subsistence. And it is a great merit for those who are better off to help such people who survive with great difficulty, by providing them with help for their basic needs from time to time. It is useless to try to enrich such people, they will not be able to enrich themselves; you just have to support them on a day-to-day basis.

That's why the Bible says:

Deuteronomy 15:11 Since poor people won't cease to exist in the land, I'm commanding you: Be sure to display generosity to your poor and needy relatives in your land."

Because everyone goes through the test of poverty and everyone also goes through the test of wealth. In each of these trials, God wants to see how you behave, how you remain faithful to Him in wealth as in poverty, in health as in illness, in family success as in family failure.

Apart from those who suffer a test of poverty in their daily lives (who are poor whatever they do) and apart from those who suffer a test of wealth (who are rich whatever they do), the Bible indicates that material blessing generally depends on our own behavior. And this blessing is manifested in prosperity in all areas: agricultural prosperity

(Deuteronomy 28:3-5, 11-12), financial prosperity, well-being in other activities (Deuteronomy 28:3, 6, 8, 12), victory over enemies (Deuteronomy 28:7, 10), etc.

DOES THE BIBLE ENCOURAGE WEALTH OR DOES IT DISCOURAGE IT?

It is enough to read the Bible and even the prophets to understand that poverty is always described there as a scourge, a curse, while wealth is described there as a blessing. It does not say anywhere in the Bible "Happy are the poor", because it is obvious that a poor person cannot be happy. He who lacks everything cannot be satisfied with his condition.

It is moreover because poverty is not an enviable state that God insistently enjoins us to take care of the poor, as it is said:

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 "If there should be a poor man among your relatives in one of the cities of the land that the Lord your God is about to give you, don't be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your poor relative. ⁸ Instead, be sure to open your hand to him and lend him enough to lessen his need.

The Bible even requires farm owners not to fully exploit their crops and to leave part of them for the needy and the destitute.

Leviticus 19:9-10 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to completely finish harvesting the corners of the field—that is, you are not to pick what remains after you have reaped your harvest. ¹⁰ You are not to gather your vineyard or pick up the fallen grapes of your vineyard. Leave something for the poor and the resident alien who lives among you. I am Y^ehovah (the

Lord) your God.”

Moreover, the Bible asks us not to let a rich or wealthy man become impoverished near us, but to support him as soon as we see his fortune falter, in order to get him out of his predicament to maintain his status.

Leviticus 25:35 “If your relative becomes so poor that he is indebted to you, then you are to support him. You are to let him live with you just like the resident alien and the traveler.

The Jews teach that he who helps his neighbor should not do so to the point of impoverishing himself. They say: we will not give less than 10% of our income to help others. Because, the one who spends less than 10% of his income for others is a miserly man. But we will not give too much either, so as not to become poor in turn. You can spend up to 20% of your income on others. And he who spends 20% of his income to help others is called generous.

All this clearly indicates that the Bible does not encourage poverty, since it says, on the contrary: "There will be no poor among you" (Deuteronomy 15:7). In other words, one should not become accustomed to the existing poverty; we must fight it, repel it; we must strive to eradicate it. We should not be happy to be poor and we should not be happy that there are poor people among us. Because poverty is not part of the normal order of things. It is just the fruit of the transgression by man of the fundamental principles which govern Creation, as it is said in Proverbs 13:18:

Poverty and shame are for those who ignore correction...

In summary, the many laws aimed at relieving the suffering of the poor, as well as the many promises of prosperity addressed to those who would obey the laws of the Bible, the fact that it is necessary to support the one whose fortune staggers so that he does not become impoverished, etc., all this does show that God prefers that we are all well-to-do or rich, but allows poverty only to impel us to meditate on our misbehavior and return to Him, as it is said in Haggai 1:5-7.

Haggai 1:5-7 “Now this is what Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies, says: ‘Carefully consider your ways: ⁶ You have sowed much but have reaped little. You have eaten but don’t have enough to become satisfied. You have drunk but don’t have enough to become intoxicated. You have clothed yourself but don’t have enough to keep warm. And the hired laborer deposits his salary in a bag full of holes!’” ⁷ “This is what Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies says: ‘Carefully consider your ways:

If this is so, if the Bible encourages wealth and if God wishes our prosperity, we can ask ourselves the following questions:

- Why is it so hard to earn a living today?
- How can we achieve success and material prosperity?
- What behaviours promote material blessing?
- What are the behaviors that prevent material blessing?

- What should I do with my wealth in case God blesses me?

We have previously explained that the Bible does not exalt poverty or deprivation at all.

Deuteronomy 15:4 Moreover, there will be no poor person among you, for Y^ehovah (the Lord) will surely bless you in the land that he is about to give you to possess.

God continually promises blessing to those who keep His commandments. And we can testify to the fact that throughout the Bible, everyone who walked with God was materially blessed (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Job, etc.). And the very fact of material prosperity is, according to the Bible, a clear sign of Divine favor, as can be seen in the following verses:

Genesis 39:2-3 But Y^ehovah (the Lord) was with Joseph. He became a very prosperous man while in the house of his Egyptian master, ³ who could see that Y^ehovah (the Lord) was with Joseph, because Y^ehovah (the Lord) made everything prosper that Joseph did.

Material blessing is therefore one of the very signs of a good relationship with God.

We are now going to develop the points that we had questioned.

I- WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO MAKE A LIVING TODAY?

In general, the lack of success for an individual or for a society often indicates that this individual or this society leads a

life not in conformity with the will of God, and contrary to the principles which promote success.

According to the Jews, there are 613 commandments in the Bible, which correspond to the 613 organs of the human body and the 613 parts of the soul. Each command acts on a specific aspect of man's existence (of his body and his soul). So there are commandments that act on prosperity, others on health, and so on.

According to them, each commandment helps us to harmoniously build one or more particular aspects of our existence. Like food, which contains many nutrients and vitamins, and each nutrient acts on a particular aspect of our growth or maintenance (Vitamin A, for example, maintains good eye health, vitamin C allows the body's defenses to better fight external threats, Calcium helps build bones and teeth, etc.), similarly the Bible is spiritual food for our souls, and each commandment is like a nutrient or vitamin.

When we study the Bible and put it into practice, it develops different aspects of our life and soul. Because of our ignorance, we do not take into account these different aspects of the Bible and, consequently, our life is a disaster on the material plane and on other planes as well. Because, the fact of not knowing does not change anything. Even he who does not know that fire burns will be burned if he puts his hand in the fire. This is why it is said: "My people are destroyed because they lack knowledge of me." (Hosea 4:6)

And because each generation reproduces the same errors, we stagnate under misery, disease and failure from generation to generation; life goes on deteriorating instead of improving, hopes are constantly disappointed, etc.

We will therefore explore the aspects of the Bible that influence material success, since this is our subject.

HOW TO BENEFIT FROM MATERIAL SUCCESS AND PROSPERITY?

1. You have to work.

The first step to improving your material condition is to work. Work is a top priority. So we must do something, we must find an occupation. For God blesses the work of our hands. This means that He sends His blessing on what we are already doing.

Isaiah 30:23: He will also provide rain for your seed that you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the ground will be rich and abundant. At that time, your cattle will graze in broad meadows,...

In the context of this verse, therefore, you must at least have sown the ground, acquired animals to raise, etc., so that the blessing multiplies them.

This is what is said about Isaac.

Genesis 26:12-14 Isaac received a 100-fold return on what he planted that year in the land he received, because Y^ehovah (the Lord) blessed him. ¹³ He became very wealthy and lived a life of wealth, becoming more and more wealthy. ¹⁴ He owned so many sheep, cattle, and servants that the Philistines

eventually became envious of him.

Whoever wants to get rich must therefore practice an activity on which the blessing can rest, an activity capable of enriching. He should not cross his arms. He can start with one thing and while he does that thing, think about something better.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and don't stop working until evening, since you don't know which of your endeavors will do well, whether this one or that, or even if both will do equally well.

Also, laziness also prevents getting rich.

Proverbs 28:19 Whoever works his farmland will have abundant food, but whoever chases fantasies will become very poor.

Proverbs 21:25 What the lazy person craves will kill him, because his hands refuse to work.

Moreover, an idler is dangerous for the community, because he can come to robbery and thus harm society.

As much as possible, it is better to work for yourself. Even a public servant or employee will not hesitate to have other parallel activities, work on his own. Trade and agriculture were the best means of producing wealth in biblical times. Nowadays, several sectors of activity have been added.

2. You have to pray.

We must also pray for our sustenance, because prayer reminds us, Who is really the One who feeds the whole world.

John 16:24 So far you haven't asked for

anything in my name. Keep asking and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete."

However, working and praying are not enough. There are behaviors that promote blessing or that hinder it.

We will begin to explain behaviors that promote material blessing and those that inhibit them.

Behaviors that promote blessing.

We recently explained that a man who wanted material blessing should not only pray for it, but also undertake an activity, so that God could bless the work of his hands.

The Zohar, which is a mosaic of biblical interpretation, explains this in these terms:

"It is the prayer of man that attracts blessings down here".

And also:

"No movement occurs in heaven without the prior impulse from below. Likewise, the blessings from above can only be effective here below when something real already exists, that is, in order to obtain the heavenly blessing, something must already be possessed; for blessing can have no effect on emptiness. Where do we know that from? We know it from the woman of Obadiah to whom the prophet Elisha asked: "Tell me, what have you got in your house? because the blessings from above cannot extend to emptiness. The prophet replied: Your

words reassure me; because I did not know how to attract blessings from above on a house where there is nothing. But, since you have a little oil, the blessings will be able to spread on your house."

2 Kings 4:1-7 Now there happened to be a certain woman who had been the wife of a member of the Guild of Prophets. She cried out to Elisha, "My husband who served you has died, and you know that your servant feared Y^ehovah (the Lord). But a creditor has come to take away my children into indentured servitude!" ² Elisha responded, "What shall I do for you? Tell me what you have in your house." She replied, "Your servant has nothing in the entire house except for a flask of oil." ³ He told her, "Go out to all of your neighbors in the surrounding streets and borrow lots of pots from them. Don't get just a few empty vessels, either. ⁴ Then go in and shut the door behind you, taking only your children, and pour oil into all of the pots. As each one is filled, set it aside." ⁵ So she left Elisha, shut the door behind her and her children, and while they kept on bringing vessels to her, she kept on pouring oil. ⁶ When the last of the vessels had been filled, she told her son, "Bring me another pot!" But he replied, "There isn't even one pot left." Then the oil stopped flowing. ⁷ After this, she went and told the man of God what had happened. So he said, "Go sell the oil, pay your debt, and you and your children will be able to live on the proceeds."

It is therefore clear that because of the principle that God blesses the work of our hands, it is necessary for the one who wants to be blessed on the material level to undertake an activity, or to take steps that can lead to a blessing, and not to sit with your arms crossed or lying in bed.

We will now continue our explanation by bringing up the following point:

WHAT ARE THE BEHAVIORS THAT PROMOTE MATERIAL BLESSING?

According to the Bible and according to the teachers of Judaism, certain behaviors, certain actions attract material blessing upon us. The most important is paying tithes.

ABOUT TITHING

The first foundation of material blessing is tithing, as it says:

Malachi 3:10 Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. So put me to the test in this right now," says Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies, "and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure.

Thus, a man who undertakes, but has trouble getting by materially, the first thing he must check is tithing. For, we are taught that he who does not pay his tithe ends up impoverished.

Malachi 3:8-9 Will a person rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "By the tithe and the offering. ⁹ You are cursed under the curse—the entire nation—because you are robbing me!

The teachers of Judaism teach that everything we have belongs to God, who gives it to us as "managers" and not as owners. The manager of a bank cannot do everything he wants with the money entrusted to him. He spends according to the owner's instructions. It is the same for everything that God entrusts to us. We have to manage it in the way that He has told us: 10% for Him, and 90% for

ourselves and our neighbor. He who manages in this way receives the blessing in return, as the verse above says. On the other hand, the one who does not pay his tithe is cursed. And what is this curse? He will become impoverished.

In fact, the Bible specifies the exact nature of this curse in the following verse of Numbers 5:10, a verse very poorly translated in the Christian Bibles:

"And every man, his holy things (ie tithes) will be his; but as soon as he has given them to the priest (servant of God), it will belong to the latter."

Rashi comments: «and each man, his holy things will be his own» means, according to a midrash (the particular mode of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible), that he who retains his tithes without giving them will effectively keep them. His field will produce only a tenth of what it usually produces. While the one who gives to the servant of Y^ehovah, an elder of the Assembly of Eloah what belongs to him will withdraw from his gesture a lot of money.

In other words, when God gives us two parts (90% and 10%), we cannot keep them both; we can only take one. If we choose to keep the tithe, God considers that it is what we have chosen, and He takes the 90% (which will then evaporate in all kinds of expenses that are not profitable for us, for example at the doctor, etc.), then He will start giving us only 10% of what He had planned to often give us.

But, if we give Him 10%, if we tithe, then He lets us enjoy the 90%.

There is a story in the Talmud that illustrates this.

A peasant used to harvest 100 bags of wheat from his field every year, which enabled him to live comfortably. However, he never forgot to bring the Levite 10 bags of wheat, representing the tithe of his harvest. When he was about to die, he called his only son and told him to take care of the plantation, and above all to continue to pay tithes faithfully.

After the father's death, the son did indeed collect 100 bags in the first year. But he neglected to deposit 10 bags with the Levite. The following year his harvest declined and after a few years he harvested only 10 bags. He did not understand what was happening to him, until a friend of his father came to explain to him that his harvest had decreased by 90% because he did not pay his tithe. So he decided to make amends and began to pay the tithe of the harvest each year. Production improved from year to year, and after a few years the field returned to its normal production of 100 bags.

All this indicates that a man to whom God had planned to give, for example, 100 million during the course of a year, if he neglects his tithe, will finally enjoy only 10 million, because, by keeping his tithe, he chose 10%. But if he faithfully pays his tithe, he will receive the 100 million and will be able to enjoy

90 million, because he has been faithful in paying his tithe.

So far, we have begun to explain what one must do, according to the Bible and the teachers of Judaism, to access material blessing. We also mentioned that keeping the commandment to tithe topped the list of actions that promote material blessing. Indeed, the teachers of Judaism teach that by giving one's tithe, one derives increased blessing and success in all favorable areas.

It follows that the commandment to tithe is one of the commandments by which each and everyone can free themselves from all the unfortunate elements of their life, and permanently possess joy and abundance, in good health, in material and spiritual largesse, as the Bible itself says:

Malachi 3:10-12 Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. So put me to the test in this right now," says Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies, "and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure. ¹¹ And I'll prevent the devourer from harming you, so that he does not destroy the crops of your land. Nor will the vines in your fields drop their fruit," says Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies. ¹² "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight," says Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies....

We will now explain why this commandment is so important, who is concerned by the commandment and what it consists of concretely.

1. The importance of the commandment of tithing

This commandment is one of the most important because it is linked to humility and the fear of God.

Tithing implies humility, for he who gives his tithe recognizes by this that all that he possesses comes from God, who willingly gave it to him, and not from his own strength or his own intelligence, as it is said:

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 You may say to yourselves, 'I have become wealthy by my own strength and by my own ability.'¹⁸ But remember Y^ehovah (the Lord) your God, because he is the one who gives you the ability to produce wealth, in order to confirm his covenant that he promised by an oath to your ancestors, as is the case today.

God gives good things to a person who tithes, because He knows that this person is humble, and it says:

Proverbs 15:33 ...humility precedes honor.

The one, on the other hand, who refuses to pay his tithe, thinks that what he has belongs to him, and even that he has deserved it, thanks to his efforts, etc. It is pride, and it is said:

Proverbs 16:18 Pride precedes destruction;

Such a person does not receive a blessing, as it is said:

Malachi 3:8-9 ... Yet you are robbing me! ... "By the tithe and the offering.⁹ You are cursed under the curse—the entire nation—because you are robbing me!"

Tithing also implies the fear of God, for whoever gives his tithe obeys a Divine

commandment, and thereby expresses his fear of God.

And the fear of God is the lock that protects man from pride and fault.

Moreover, tithing is so important that it is the only commandment on which God authorizes man to put Him to the test, as it is said:

Malachi 3:10 So put me to the test in this right now," says Y^ehovah (the Lord) of the Heavenly Armies, "and see..."

2. Who is concerned with the tithing command?

All adults: men and women, rich and poor. In the Bible, a person is considered an adult when that person reach the age of 20.

However, in a couple, both spouses are considered as one person. Therefore, if the husband has already tithed his earnings, the wife will no longer tithe the money her husband gives her, and vice versa. If the wife has already given the tithe from her income, the man will not tithe the money that his wife gives him. However, when the man and his wife each have an income, both must tithe.

Children and youth under the age of 20 are excluded from the tithe commandment. However, they will certainly be blessed if they decide to tithe. Furthermore, they must be accustomed before this age to give the tithe of their income, as it is said:

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way appropriate for him, and when he becomes

older, he will not turn from it.

Children and youth under the age of 20 do not have to take tithes from the money offered by their parents.

3. What income is affected by tithing?

- All income obtained in a correct way is subject to tithing: financial gains related to lucrative activities or investments, salary, etc.). In the case of a trade, it is the profit that is considered income.

- We will not give tithes on income from theft, or prostitution, etc. because they were obtained by breaking the commandments of God.

- A person who did not pay his tithe and who now repent does not need to give tithes on sums collected before his repentance, but it is enough that he begins to do so now.

- If it happens that one was obliged to use his tithe before having paid it (if one goes through a difficult period, for example), one will have to repay it with a penalty of 20%. One cannot however use one's tithe on the occasion of a bereavement.

One of the purposes of the law of tithing is to constantly remind man that everything he possesses is a gift from God, and therefore he does not need to be proud of it.

Therefore, every God-fearing adult is concerned with fulfilling the law of tithing.

About Tzedakah

The second thing that promotes material blessing is helping the needy, called tzedakah (SHD#6666 tzed-aw-kaw') in Judaism. We will now explain the importance of this commandment and how to practice it.

The Importance of Tzedakah

According to Judaism, the Tzedakah is so important that the Bible indicates that Abraham was only chosen because of it.

Genesis 18:19 Indeed, I've made myself known to him in order that he may encourage his sons and his household that is born after him to keep the way of Y^ehovah (the Lord), and to do what is right (Tzedakah) and just, so that Y^ehovah (the Lord) may bring about for Abraham what he has promised.

They teach that they have to pay much more attention to the commandment of Tzedakah, because Tzedakah is a characteristic of the descendants of Abraham.

Why give? Because God demanded to care about the poor. Because poverty is painful. According to their teachers, there is nothing in the world more severe than poverty; it is the most terrible of all evils.

And also: "All suffering is on one side of the scale and poverty is on the other side.

All the days of the poor are miserable. This is why God loves and rewards all who pity the poor.

Proverbs 19:17 Whoever is kind to the poor is lending to Y^ehovah (the Lord)— the benefit of his gift will return to him in abundance.

Everyone must therefore realize that, just as he constantly addresses Y^ehovah to ask for health, happiness, subsistence, etc., and wishes that the Master of the World hear his complaints, he must also pay attention to the complaints of the poor” (Yoré Déa p. 247). For it says:

Proverbs 21:13 Whoever refuses to hear the cry of the poor will also cry himself, but he won't be answered.

And the Jerusalem Talmud affirms: “The door that does not open for the poor will open for the doctor”.

The Virtue of Tzedakah

We have already explained that the practice of Tzedakah promotes blessing.

On this subject, their master the TOUR writes: «Experience made, we can attest that the command of the Tzedakah never leads to lack, but on the contrary, it adds wealth and honor.» ... «A person will never become poor for having given Tzedakah » ... « and will not suffer any harm for devoting himself to this commandment ».

One never becomes poor because of the Tzedakah command, and nothing bad can happen because of the Tzedakah command.

Isaiah 32:17 The effect of righteousness (Tzedakah) will be peace, and the result of righteousness (Tzedakah) will be quietness and confidence forever.

But apart from the fact that Tzedakah promotes material blessing, it also has other important virtues. For example: Tzedakah repels evil decrees and adds life.

Proverbs 10:2 Nothing good comes from ill-gotten wealth, but righteousness (Tzedakah) delivers from death.

Tzedakah is a responsibility of all to help those in need, through acts of service, tangible goods or financial donations.

In our explanation of the principles that promote blessing, we discussed the importance of Tzedakah and explained what it is precisely. We will now continue to explain how to practice it.

Who Should Practice Tzedakah?

Everyone is obliged to give Tzedakah according to his ability, as it says:

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 "...don't be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your poor relative. ⁸ Instead, be sure to open your hand to him and lend him enough to lessen his need..."

And also:

Leviticus 19:9-10 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to completely finish harvesting the corners of the field—that is, you are not to pick what remains after you have reaped your harvest.
¹⁰ You are not to gather your vineyard or pick up the fallen grapes of your vineyard. Leave something for the poor and the resident alien who lives among you. I am Y^ehovah (the Lord) your God.

Even someone who is poor and obtains his sustenance through Tzedakah, is also bound to give Tzedakah from what others give him. Even if he can only give a small amount, he should not give up, because the small amount of money he can give is equal to a large amount of money given by a rich person.

Despite this, someone who has nothing but what he needs for his own sustenance is not obliged to give Tzedakah, for the sustenance of the individual precedes that of any other.

The person who does not have the ability to give much Tzedakah, but who convinces his relatives and friends who have money to give Tzedakah, and that by his action these people give Tzedakah, its importance is great since she is one of the people who make the community acquire merits, as their masters teach: the one who makes people do things (who pushes others to do things) is greater than the one who does things.

Daniel 12:3 « ... those who turn many to righteousness (Tzedakah) will shine like the stars for ever and ever.

Who should I give Tsedaka to?

In principle, to anyone in need. However, their masters define an order of priority.

In general, it is good to give priority to those who care for the Bible, as it says:

"Abundance in the world comes through the merit of the disciples of the wise, that is, those who devote themselves to the study of the Bible, so that it is fitting for the rich to watch that their needs are met". (Déguél Makhané Efraïm).

Thereafter, the poor of one's own house have priority over the poor of the city and the poor of the city have priority over the poor of another city, as the scripture indicates:

Deut. 15:11 "...Since poor people won't cease to exist in the land, I'm commanding you: Be sure to display generosity to your poor and needy relatives **in your land.**"

How much should you give to a poor person who asks you for Tzedakah?

If a poor man asks for money publicly, just give him a small amount of money. At a minimum, throughout the city, he should be given the value of two meals a day and a place to sleep.

On the contrary, if a man becomes poor and receives Tzedakah in secret, without the public knowing about it, the people of his town will endeavor to give it to him in such a way as to satisfy all his needs.

In any case, if one has enough to give, it is forbidden to send away empty-handed a poor person who asks for a donation (especially to eat), even if all that is given to him is only a dried fig; as the

psalmist says: Psalm 74:21 Don't let the oppressed return in humiliation.

Because, famine cannot be discussed, cannot be demonstrated. We should not ask someone to justify that he is hungry before feeding him, but we can ask him to prove that he has no clothes before providing them.

If you have nothing to give him, console him with words. It is forbidden to scold harshly or raise your voice against a poor person; for his heart is already broken and humbled.

Psalm 51:17b A broken and chastened heart,
God, you will not despise.

And woe to him who puts the poor to shame! Rather, we need to be like a father to them, showing them compassion and speaking to them, as it is said: "I was a father to the needy" (Job 29:16).

Furthermore, Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg says, "When a poor man asks you for help, do not use his faults as an excuse not to help him. For then God will also take notice of your transgressions and He will certainly discover many of them.

However, whoever does not need Tzedakah but tricks people and takes Tzedakah, will not die without needing public assistance.

How to give Tzedakah?

It is important to consecrate verbally what you want to give, specifying in a

low voice: "This is the Tzedakah. I give it in respect to the Divine commandment". (You can also add personal wishes, for example, for success or recovery, etc.). For all things are consecrated by the word. By doing so, this money or object we offer acquires all the virtue and power of the Tzedakah, so that the person who receives it can no longer use it to harm us (by witchcraft for example, as is common in Africa).

This is the reason why it is better to often have a box in one's house in which we put the money we have taken for the Tzedakah. Before putting it in the box, we consecrate it. Afterwards, all we have to do is distribute it to those we want to help. And if we don't do that, we'll make sure to verbally consecrate every amount we're about to give to someone.

The Tzedakah must be given cordially. He who gives must also say words to relieve and console those in need.

Moreover, Tzedakah has a higher level when given in secret. If someone gives Tzedakah to be praised, he loses his merit.

But if Tzedakah is given publicly, but for the sole purpose of positively influencing others and leading them to follow his example and give Tzedakah too, even if he is praised by other people, he does not lose his merit, because his intention was not to receive praise.

And how do we know that man's intention is to be praised? If you see that he has members of his own house that he does not help enough and

nevertheless, he gives a lot of Tzedakah to strangers (there are people who leave hungry or dishevelled members of their household and spend large sums outside), then of course he only wants to be seen and thus gain reputation in order to be praised.

Furthermore, Tzedakah must be done immediately, because whoever needs it is suffering and must be relieved of his suffering. Everything related to kindness must be done immediately, without delay. For sometimes, abstaining from giving Tzedakah leads to danger, as in the case of Na'houm Ish Gamzou (A poor man asked him to eat and, the time he took to casually unload one of his donkeys, the poor man fell dead of starvation).

We should not be proud because we give, as their masters say: "Do not think too well of yourself when giving Tzedakah, for all that you have belongs to Y^ehovah... everything comes from Him and it is He who gives you the strength to earn the money that you have, and the portion of the poor has been entrusted to you to give it to him".

After having defined and explained in what the obligation of Tzedakah consists, it remains for us to conclude the subject by evoking some last notions related to this concept.

THE EIGHT LEVELS OF TZEDAKAH

The masters of Judaism teach that there are eight different levels of Tzedakah:

1- The highest level is that of someone who supports his neighbor by providing him with a source of income (for example, by giving him a gift or a loan to start a business, or by entering into a commercial enterprise with him, or by finding him a job, etc.), so that he can meet his own needs, and that he is no longer under the obligation to ask alms from others.

2- The 2nd level of Tzedakah is to give Tzedakah without knowing the identity of the recipient and without the recipient knowing the identity of the donor. This is the case, for example, when you give money to a Tzedakah fund that will then redistribute it.

3- The 3rd level corresponds to the case where the donor knows the identity of the recipient, but the latter does not know who his benefactor is. This is the case, for example, when you go through an intermediary to send a donation anonymously to a specific person.

4- The 4th level corresponds to the situation in which the recipient knows the identity of his benefactor, but the donor does not know the identity of the recipient.

5- The 5th level is to give to the one who is in need before he makes his request.

6- The 6th level consists of giving after receiving someone's request.

7- The 7th level is about giving less of what is needed, but with a happy face.

8- The last level, the lowest of all, is to give with sadness.

NOT TO PRACTICE TZEDAKAH ATTRACTS RIGORS IN THE WORLD.

Y^ehovah is very close to the call of the poor. Because of this, we must be very careful to avoid that those who are in distress around us complain, because there is a pact established with them.

Exodus 22:27 And when he (the poor) cries out to me, I'll hear him, for I am gracious.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 "If there should be a poor man among your relatives in one of the cities of the land that Y^ehovah (the Lord) your God is about to give you, don't be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your poor relative. ⁸ Instead, be sure to open your hand to him and lend him enough to lessen his need.

It was precisely against the neglect of this commandment that Sodom was destroyed, as the prophet Ezekiel explains.

Ezekiel 16:49 Look! This was the sin of your sister Sodom and her daughters: Pride, too much food, undisturbed peace, and failure to help the poor and needy.

Because the lack of Tzedakah was added to her other crimes, the city was destroyed.

MODESTY AND BLESSING

The third thing that promotes material blessing is modesty. Modesty is decency in dressing, speaking and behaving. It's about not revealing or exposing more of yourself than is necessary. Lack of

modesty in dress, speech or behavior distances blessing and attracts poverty, as we will explain.

A. Modesty in dress

Modesty in women consists in dressing in a clean and dignified manner, without revealing the parts of her body that usually arouse sexual desire. Her outfit must therefore cover her belly, chest, back, armpits and thighs (at least to the knees in a sitting position). The outfit should not be transparent or too tight.

Mini-skirts, dismembered, necklines, low or deep waist (which reveal the birth of the buttocks), etc., are therefore not modest outfits for a woman.

Likewise, extravagant outfits and hairstyles, decorations or exaggerated makeup, the essential aim of which is not to make oneself beautiful, but rather to attract attention to oneself, are also to be avoided, because one of the aspects of modesty consists of discretion.

A woman who already has physical signs of puberty should not undress in the presence of men (unless it is for an unavoidable necessity). For this reason, the woman will preferably choose a female gynecologist, unless there is none, or unless the urgency of the moment does not allow a choice.

Western civilization (still copied by Christian Africa) has almost ended up forcing the woman to frequently find herself in the embarrassing and indecent situation of undressing in front of men who do not have the right to see her nudity (male gynecologists, male birth attendants, beauty contest, etc.). All these situations are contrary to modesty.

The Bible, for its part, only speaks of midwives and never of midmen, and the Bible gives capital importance to modesty, as we will see later.

Therefore, a modest woman will not participate in beauty contests that undress the woman in public. For, in addition to transgressing modesty, all this aims only to encourage debauchery and fornication, and to scorn women, who are exposed as sexual objects (for the good pleasure of men) and whose intimacy is paraded without modesty in the face of the world.

A person who fears God should neither organize nor participate in a miss contest that forces the woman to undress in public.

A modest woman will also not go swimming in a bikini or other naked outfit in a mixed pool (i.e. a pool where there are men and women).

And, unfortunately, most people are completely unaware that modesty has some influence on material blessing. Civilizations that know this carefully monitor female modesty (the Israelites, for example), and this reinforces their blessing. And in Israelite homes where modesty is not taken into account, difficulties reign.

Feminine modesty is therefore one of the important aspects of family life, because it makes the woman dear to her husband. It also attracts blessing and success in the home.

Lack of modesty, on the other hand, not only takes away the blessing from the home, but also causes tensions and a lack of consideration that weaken relationships today. Modesty expresses the woman's inner beauty and maturity.

But, as Jewish law defines it, modesty is not just for women. It also concerns men. For men, modesty in clothing primarily involves dressing in a clean and proper manner. A modest man shall not, as a matter of fashion, wear torn clothes, nor dress so as to reveal his undergarments, nor dress so as to resemble a woman.

Deuteronomy 22:5 "A woman is not to wear what is appropriate to a man, nor is a man to put on a woman's garment, because anyone who does this is detestable to the Lord your God.

For everyone, modesty also consists of dressing in a manner consistent with the circumstance. So, we will not go to the synagogue or to a festive evening in construction clothing, or in bush clothing, for example.

In matters of clothing (and even in other matters), it is not necessary to follow fashion, because fashion is not often dictated by God-fearing people.

Psalm 1:1-3 How blessed is the person, who does not take the advice of the wicked,...² But he delights in the Lord's instruction, and meditates in his instruction day and night. ³ He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in its season, and whose leaf does not wither. He will prosper in everything he does.

So there's no point in following the bad guys' advice when it comes to fashion. We must instead follow the advice of the Bible which prescribes us to dress in a beautiful, clean, refined and above all modest manner.

Therefore, one for whom the word of God is the supreme authority, his or her attitude toward his or her clothing and appearance will not be controlled and influenced by forces that do not honor God.

In the temple, God asks the priests to take precautions so that the altar does not see their nudity.

Deut. 23:14 For the Lord your God is on the

move within your camp to deliver you and to hand your enemies over to you. Therefore, your camp must be holy so that he will not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you."

The connoisseur of the Bible is therefore perfectly aware of the great severity with which any unauthorized unveiling of the body is treated. The very presence of God imposes the obligation of modesty. And indecent behavior distances God from his people and can cause a withdrawal of Divine protection.

But today we have allowed mini-skirts and all kinds of indecent outfits even in churches and places of prayer. All this obviously distances the presence of God and also the blessing, as we can easily see.

We began to explain the link between modesty and material blessing, by evoking and explaining modesty in clothing. But modesty is not just about clothing. There is also a modesty of language.

MODESTY OF LANGUAGE

Modesty must also be expressed in language. Speech, the teachers of Judaism say, is the main quality which characterizes human beings, and therefore differentiates them from animals. Furthermore, the world was created by the word of God, the Bible tells us. And man having been created in

the image of God, his word (just like that of God) therefore has a certain power, and must, therefore, be used with wisdom and caution.

Because with words, we can build the world, build lives, etc., and there are also words capable of destroying the world, destroying lives, etc., including our own life. This is also what is said:

Prov. 18:21 The power of the tongue is life and death.

Proverbs 13:3 Anyone who guards his words protects his life; anyone who talks too much is ruined.

In particular, bad words are capable of turning our lives (and sometimes those of others) into a desert. This is why in Hebrew, the same word (מדבר) which means "to speak" also means "desert". To warn us that whoever does not speak in a healthy and constructive way brings desert.

Just as lack of modesty in clothing attracts poverty, so lack of modesty in language attracts poverty, dries up life.

Lack of modesty in language consists of backbiting, slander, crude, obscene and morally devoid remarks, mockery, belittling and denigrating others, insults, provocation, etc. Nasty, sarcastic, rude, disrespectful and hurtful language is opposed to modesty and is part of the language of the wicked, as it is said:

Psalm 64:3-4 who sharpen their tongues like swords, and aim their bitter words like arrows,

Proverbs 12:18 Some speak rashly like the cutting of a sword, but what the wise say promotes healing.

Likewise, jokes in bad taste, as it is said:

Proverbs 26:18-19 Like the maniac who shoots fiery darts and deadly arrows—¹⁹ that's what someone is like who lies to his neighbor and then says, "I was joking, wasn't I?"

Modesty of language therefore consists of pleasant, proper, wise, responsible, polite, respectful and useful language, the concern not to cause any damage to others, the fact of knowing how to hide secrets.

Speech must also be clear.

"Don't get used to speaking in unintelligible terms in the hope of being understood later". (Pirke Avot)

God gave us a language to use it wisely and for his glory, to build the world and not to destroy it.

Unfortunately, today, few people are aware of the impact of the words they use and their consequences. In daily life, people only speak to insult each other, denigrate each other, provoke each other, they speak rudely, violently, etc.

In couples, we often use shocking and scathing words to express our dissatisfaction to the other. On social networks, the situation is even worse. The quality of the language is so poor!

How many people take unhealthy pleasure in speaking badly, in trying to hurt with words, in being aggressive and insulting, seeking to gain glory from bringing dishonor to their fellow man, as if it were a goal in their life?

And few people ask themselves: Is what I am saying pleasing to God?

These people, in reality, dry up their own lives and gradually transform them into desert. Note that in the artistic world, for example, it is not the rudest artists (nor the most naked on stage) who are the richest, or who are more successful in their lives. Because, by their lack of modesty (in language or in clothing), they simply keep the blessing away.

But he who does not want to distance the blessing must be modest in his speech, just as in his clothing. And he who watches over his tongue, in addition to not drying out his life, preserves the Divine image that is in him, and is protected against the evil eye. Whereas the one who gets used to talking trivialities, to speaking coarsely, to using hostile, indecent language, etc., gradually destroys the force of his

speech. Even his prayers will no longer be answered.

On social networks, many people subscribe to the pages of these people whose main publications consist of making videos to smear others. In reality, we must unsubscribe from such pages, so as not to continue to strengthen the evil, as it says:

Proverbs 20:19 Whoever spreads gossip betrays confidences; so don't get involved with someone who talks too much.

We must simply ignore those who talk nonsense all day long or all the time in publications, and they must be in our eyes what they really are: idiots, as the Psalmist says:

Psalm 15:4 The one who despises those who are utterly wicked, but who honors the one who fears the Lord, who keeps his word even when it hurts and does not change,

Likewise, we must not "like" indecent photos or indecent posts posted by people we know or do not know. Because it encourages them in the wrong way.

SOME TIPS TO AVOID SPEAKING BADLY:

We have to be around people in real life, and follow people on social media, who speak well and behave well. Because, if you are around rude people, it will be difficult not to imitate their way of speaking. Because we are often

influenced by our companies and people we frequent.

Rashi also teaches us that the tribe of Reuben, because it was close to that of Qorah in the location of the camps, was unfortunately badly influenced. Indeed, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, who joined Korah in his revolt against Moses were descendants of Reuben. (Numbers 16:1).

We must therefore strive, on every occasion, to mix and associate with decent and God-fearing people.” Above all, we must remember that everything we have is from God, and therefore we must use it in a way that honors God.

May the Lord forgive us and help us to improve our language every day!

We also have to explain modesty in general behavior.

C) MODESTY IN BEHAVIOR

It can be defined simply as having a modest and discreet behavior.

What must be avoided here is exhibitionism, indulging in increased exposure of oneself and one's heritage.

Everything we expose is also exposed to the evil eye. Consequently, he who displays in the public square all that he

is, all that he has and all that he does, strongly exposes himself to the evil eye and will not fail to attract complications on his own life or in that of his children, etc.

Showing off your wealth or your success, talking about your achievements or your projects with anyone, can attract the evil eye. Likewise, those who display on social networks all their deeds and gestures, their success, their projects, their children, etc., expose all this to the evil eye and many soon suffer the negative effects if they do not take the trouble to protect themselves from the evil eye. We must therefore use wisely this powerful tool (Internet) that God has granted to our generation, and not conform to all the uses that people around us make of it.

Our masters teach that you should not flaunt what you have, and that you should remain discreet about your business, your assets and your family.

Support Bible Study

One action that also promotes material blessing is supporting Bible study.

Explanation

In the war against Amalek, the Bible records that the Israelites were dominant when Moses raised his hands to the

heavens in supplication to Yehovah, for his prayer had the power to protect all the people from calamity. But when his hands got tired and he could no longer hold them up; Aaron and 'Hur, sons of Miriam, were to support him, so that he could continue his prayers.

Our teachers explain that this comes to teach us that we must materially support those who, in all generations, dedicate their lives to study and teach the Bible, and pray for the people, thus assuring spiritual protection and heavenly blessings to all other members of the people. We must take care to help them materially and financially, so that they continue to devote themselves to study and prayer. Those who support them obtain great merit, grant them great success and meet their needs. There are examples of this in the Bible.

The Bible describes the hospitality and generosity of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:9-24) and the wife of Shunem (2 Kings 4:8-37) towards Elijah and Elisha, two great prophets of the 9th century BCE.

The first welcomes the prophet Elijah, at the time of drought. While she and her son have almost nothing left, she makes food for the hungry prophet. Because of this, a miracle occurs for her: the jars of oil and flour no longer run out. She and her son are therefore saved from certain

death, for having supported a prophet and teacher of the Bible.

Likewise, the wife of Shunem once welcomed the prophet Elisha, and even arranged a room for him so that he could stay there whenever he passed by, so that he had no need to go to an inn. Against all expectations, she was rewarded with a child.

Likewise, in biblical times, our teachers report that two tribes of Israel concluded a particular alliance (Rashi on Devarim, 33-18): The tribe of Zebulun, which was dedicated to commerce, had decided to grant half of its profits to the tribe of Issachar, so that the latter can devote themselves completely to the study of the Bible. The result was that the merit of Issachar's study made Zebulun prosper in her business and Zebulun's financial support allowed Issachar to better devote herself to study. Ultimately, no tribe in Israel produced as many Bible scholars as Issachar did at this time, and no tribe prospered in its trade as Zebulun did at that time.

Because of this, the Shul'han Aruch (Yoré déah siman 246-1) concluded: "...A person who does not have the possibility of studying the Bible due to his ignorance or his occupations, will provide for the needs of Bible students." The donor will benefit not only from the general merit of the Tzedakah, but also from the merit

of the study of the person he is supporting.

All these stories show that one of the rather simple ways to benefit from material blessing and also spiritual protection is to financially support our teachers, who study the Bible and teach it to us and pray for us.

On the other hand, in a place where no one cares about those who dedicate themselves to studying and teaching the Bible, hardships often arise, as this story shows.

One day, Rabbi Yitskhak Louria (the Ari Hakadosh) found himself in the middle of a lesson with his students in the fields of Safed; Suddenly he interrupted his lesson on the secrets of the Bible to say to his students: My friends, know that I have just listened to a proclamation in the sky according to which a plague of terrible proportions will fall on Safed soon, and will destroy all the fruits of the field, sparing nothing.

This plague is due to a poor Bible scholar whose name is Rabbi Yaacov. He sits and cries and complains because of God's strict judgments, because he can no longer stand what his bad neighbors are doing to him. They show him no compassion and do nothing to alleviate his suffering. God is full of wrath against all the people in the city because of this

situation. It is because of this that the proclamation was made announcing the imminent arrival of the plague. So, my students, quickly take some money and take it to poor Rabbi Yaacov. It may be that in this way we can repeal the bad decree.

Rabbi Yitskhak Hacohen then got up and took the money they had collected and ran towards Rabbi Yaacov's house. When he arrived, he found him sitting on a chair crying. Rabbi Yitskhak asked him why he was crying, and Rav Yaacov answered him. And why not? As if my severe poverty was not enough, now the vases I used to carry water to my neighbors have broken and I have no money to buy new ones. It is because of this that I suffer and cry. Am I worse than the rest of the world?

When Rabbi Yitskhak listened to Rabbi Yaacov's words, he was impressed and then realized the truth of what the Ari Hakadosh had said. Then Rabbi Yitskhak HaCohen gave the money to Rabbi Yaacov. This act gave him great joy. Rabbi Yitskhak begged him not to complain any more, because he had almost caused great tragedy to the people of Safed. Rabbi Yaacov agreed and immediately asked God for grace to wipe out the plague that was about to descend on Safed, and also asked God to forgive his neighbors for not helping him.

Rabbi Yitskhak HaCohen returned to the place where the Ari Hakadosh was teaching and related everything that had happened. Everyone was greatly impressed. At that time, the Arizal said to his students, be blessed, because you are the reason through which the evil decree was canceled.

They continued their study, but a few moments later they looked up to the sky and saw a large army of locusts crossing the sky and were very frightened. But the Ari Hakadosh reassured them saying: Do not be afraid, for the sin committed by the people of Safed against this poor man has been forgiven and the evil decree has been repealed. Shortly after, a very strong wind suddenly blew and carried with it all the locusts throwing them into the sea, not a single locust remaining. After that day, the people of Safed became very sensitive to the needs of this poor man Rabbi Yaacov (and other poor people).

Kitvé haAri haKadosh, taken from Sefer Kav haYashar, Chapter 9, and in Sefer Méil Tzedakah.

May Yehovah make us generous towards our masters who strive to raise the glory of the Bible. May Yehovah grant them His assistance and success to those who support them!

Amen, Y^ehovah