SZBE EVERYDAY ETHICS: Tzedaka Priorities
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Rabbi Adina Lewittes

Submitted to The Ethicist 4/9/2019:
I have an 8-year-old great-grandchild. I would like to help her develop a sense of charity. If I were to give her $40 per year to donate, how should I present the options to her, without overwhelming her?
Were I to show her images of starving Yemeni children, homeless Americans, threatened wildlife, Syrian/Central American refugees and so on, I fear she wouldn't be able to process such a burden of information.
How can an 8-year-old confront the neediness of our world in an age-appropriate way? Are there baby steps to charitable giving? I want my great-granddaughter to develop a sense of obligation.
Name Withheld

BIG JEWISH IDEAS

Devarim 16:20
צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה֙ וְיָרַשְׁתָּ֣ אֶת־הָאָ֔רֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶ֖יךָ נֹתֵ֣ן לָֽךְ׃
Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Pirkei Avot 5:21
הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, בֶּן חָמֵשׁ שָׁנִים לַמִּקְרָא, בֶּן עֶשֶׂר לַמִּשְׁנָה, בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לַמִּצְוֹת, בֶּן חָמֵשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לַתַּלְמוּד, בֶּן שְׁמֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה לַחֻפָּה, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִים לִרְדֹּף, בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים לַכֹּחַ, בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים לַבִּינָה, בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים לָעֵצָה, בֶּן שִׁשִּׁים לַזִּקְנָה, בֶּן שִׁבְעִים לַשֵּׂיבָה, בֶּן שְׁמֹנִים לַגְּבוּרָה, בֶּן תִּשְׁעִים לָשׂוּחַ, בֶּן מֵאָה כְּאִלּוּ מֵת וְעָבַר וּבָטֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם׃

He [Yehudah ben Teima] used to say: Five years [is the age] for [the study of] Scripture, Ten [is the age] for [the study of] Mishnah, Thirteen [is the age] for [observing] commandments, Fifteen [is the age] for [the study of] Talmud, Eighteen [is the age] for the [wedding] canopy, Twenty [is the age] for pursuit, Thirty [is the age] for [full] strength, Forty [is the age] for understanding, Fifty [is the age] for [giving] counsel, Sixty [is the age] for mature age, Seventy [is the age] for a hoary head, Eighty [is the age] for [superadded] strength, Ninety [is the age] for [a] bending [stature], One hundred, is [the age at which one is] as if dead, passed away, and ceased from the world.

JEWISH SOURCES

1. **Bavli, Bava Kama 71a**

איכא דמתני לה להא דרב הונא אהא דתני רב יוסף (שמות כב, כד) אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך עמי ונכרי עמי קודם עני ועשיר עני קודם ענייך ועניי עירך ענייך קודמין עניי עירך ועניי עיר אחרת עניי עירך קודמין

There are those who teach that which Rav Huna said in connection with that which Rav Yosef taught: The verse states: "If you lend money to any of My people, even to the poor person who is with you" (Exodus 22:24). The term "My people" teaches that if one of My people, i.e., a Jew, and a gentile both come to borrow money from you, My people take precedence. The term "the poor person" teaches that if a poor person and a rich person come to borrow money, the poor person takes precedence. And from the term: "Who is with you," it is derived: If your poor person, meaning one of your relatives, and one of the poor of your city come to borrow money, your poor person takes

precedence. If it is between one of the poor of your city and one of the poor of another city, the one of the poor of your city takes precedence.

2. Bavli Gittin 61a

ת"ר מפרנסים עניי נכרים עם עניי ישראל ומבקרין חולי נכרים עם חולי ישראל וקוברין מתי נכרים עם מתי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום:

The Sages taught in a *baraita* (*Tosefta* 5:4): One sustains poor gentiles along with poor Jews, and one visits sick gentiles along with sick Jews, and one buries dead gentiles along with dead Jews. All this is done on account of the ways of peace, to foster peaceful relations between Jews and gentiles.

3. Aruch HaShulchan, Yoreh Deah 251:5

וחלק גדול מהצדקה ית לקרוביו ועניי עירו ומעט מחוייב לית ג לרחוקי ועניי עיר אחרת דאל"כ עיר של עניי יגועון ברעב ח"ו.

A large portion of the tzedakah that you give should go to your relatives and the poor of your town. You are also obligated to give a little also to those who live far away, and to the poor of another city. Because if you do not, a city of poor people will perish in a famine, God forbid.

4. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 8:10

פדיו שבויי קוד לפרנסת עניי ולכסות ,ואי ל מצוה גדולה כפדיו שבויי שהשבוי הרי הוא בכלל הרעבי והצמאי והערומי ועומד בסכנת נפשות.

Redeeming captives takes precedence over providing food and clothing for the poor. There is no greater mitzvah than redeeming captives, for the captive is in the category of the starving, the thirsting, and the naked, indeed in danger of losing their own life.

5. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 7:2

וכל הרואה עני מבקש והעלי עיניו ממנו ולא נת לו צדקה עבר בלא תעשה שנאמר לא תאמ את לבב ולא תקפו את יד מאחיך האביון (דברים טו:ז).

And anyone who sees a poor person begging and hides their eyes and does not give them charity transgresses a negative commandment, as it says, "Do not harden your heart or close your hand from your poor brother" (Deuteronomy 15:7).

6. Vayikra 25:35

וְכִי־יָמוּךְ אָחִיךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ וְהֶחֱזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵּר וְתוֹשָׁב וָחַי עִמָּךְ׃

If your kinsman, being in straits, comes under your authority, and you hold (strengthen) them as though a resident alien, let them live by your side:

Rashi:

<u>והחזקת בו:</u> אל תניחהו שירד ויפול ויהיה קשה להקימו, אלא חזקהו משעת מוטת היד. למה זה דומה, למשאוי שעל החמור, עודהו על החמור אחד תופס בו ומעמידו, נפל לארץ, חמשה אין מעמידין אותו:

You should strengthen them: Don't allow them to descend and to fall because it will be difficult to lift them up. Rather, strengthen them from the moment that they falter. To what is this similar? To a load on a donkey. While it is still on the donkey, one person can grab it and hold it up, but once it falls to the ground even five people won't be able to raise it up.