



JUDAISM

Genesis 37:16

My brothers do I seek (Joseph) with meditation by Rabbi John D Rayner

Who are our brothers and sisters? Are they only members of our own family or clan or people or nation? All men and women of every colour and creed, of every race and nation are our brothers and sisters, for we are all members of the human family. Like brothers and sisters, we should feel a sense of common identity. Like brothers and sisters, we should feel each other's pain and seek each other's welfare. For God, who created us, cares equally for all of us: therefore, we should care equally for one another.

Meditation by Albert Einstein

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that we are here for the sake of others; above all, for those on whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends; and for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day, I realise how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labours of others, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.

Rabbi Akiva

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. That is the greatest principle of the Torah.

Rabbi Hillel: What is hateful to yourself do not do to others; that is the whole Torah

Deuteronomy 15.7

If there is anyone among you, anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your settlements in the land that the Eternal one your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart and shut your hand against such a needy person. But you shall give liberally, and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Eternal One your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

Mishnah Torah 10:7-14

The highest level of tzedakah, exceeded by none, is that of the person who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him to find employment – in a word, by putting him where he can dispense with other people's aid.

How do you do tzedakah? There are lots of ways to do tzedakah, but the most common way is **giving money to the poor or other worthwhile causes**. Tzedakah can also include donating food, clothing, and other necessities, or volunteering one's time to assist the needy.

Judaism teaches that **everyone has a responsibility to help those suffering from poverty.**

Social justice is an important aspect of Jewish communities, where a balance in society between the wealthy and poor can be achieved through helping others.

The guiding principles of stewardship, compassion and justice may be applied to the question of wealth and poverty in a variety of ways:

- The Talmud teaches the importance of not being greedy, but having sufficient wealth to survive in comfort.
- Many Jews believe wealth cannot be taken with you after death so its importance should be seen in perspective. Also, Jews are taught to be careful that wealth does not become a distraction from their faith.
- Jews are taught that wealth should be gained from honest work.
- Judaism teaches that everyone has a responsibility to help those suffering from poverty.
- Social justice is an important aspect of Jewish communities, where a balance in society between the wealthy and poor can be achieved through helping others.
- Judaism teaches the importance of showing compassion towards others which Jews believe follows the example set by God.

Charity The giving of charity is important to many Jews.

The following is taken from the Talmud:

Just as God visits the sick, feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, so you do the same.

There are two kinds of charity; giving money or possessions and giving of oneself. Some Jews believe people should donate money to someone anonymously, which retains the dignity of all involved.

Other Jews prefer to invest in relief programmes that provide long-term solutions to famine so that people can help themselves.

Tikkun Olam is the principle behind voluntary service in Judaism. Human beings are responsible for harmony in the world. Since there is much suffering, the world needs to be 'repaired' or healed. Many Jews volunteer to take part in social action programmes abroad to help those who are less fortunate.

Many Jews believe that voluntary work is an important duty since it relates to the commandment to be kind to others.

Volunteering time as a form of charity is also important to many Jews. This is called gemilut hasadim. Jews may volunteer to help the sick or comfort mourners in the home.

What does Judaism teach about wealth and poverty?

To have wealth is both a blessing and a responsibility. Sanctity of life – all life is sacred and all humans should be treated with equality, dignity and justice. Compassion - Judaism teaches, Open your hand to the poor and your neighbours in your land who are in need. (Deuteronomy 15:11).

What does the Old Testament say about the poor?

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV)

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

it is called upon by Judaic Law to respect and care for the poor

It is important in Jewish communities to strive towards addressing social justice, which can lead to a balance in society between the richest and poorest.

Judaism teaches that **everyone has a responsibility to help those suffering from poverty.** Social justice is an important aspect of Jewish communities, where a balance in society between the wealthy and poor can be achieved through helping others.