



Middah of the Month

Parents' Edition

A Project of the Education Department,

Beth El of Montgomery County

Month: חֶשְׁוֹן Cheshvan

Middah: צְדָקָה Tzeh-dah-kah Righteousness

Rosh Chodesh: October 25-26, 2022

Dates for Middah Focus: October 25- November 29, 2022

Overview: The Hebrew term צְדָקָה is often erroneously translated as “Charity.” In fact, the word comes from the Hebrew root, צ.ד.ק. meaning “just” or “correct,” while the English word “charity” comes from the Latin word “caritas,” which “implies an act of giving by the 'haves' to the 'have-nots' - out of the goodness of their hearts.” (Source: Oxford Dictionary) The distinction is that charity implies an act of generosity rather than an expectation, while צְדָקָה is quite simply “the right thing to do.” In fact, in conversational Hebrew, when one says, “אתה\את צודק\צודקת” what is meant is “You (m/f) are right!”

Giving money or other material resources is certainly an act of צְדָקָה. However, both the attitude of the donor and the emotional well-being of the recipient are also part and parcel of the act of צְדָקָה. Thus, the 12th Century sage, Moses Maimonides, famously constructed a “Ladder of צְדָקָה” with each rung representing either greater willingness on the part of the donor, or greater care for the dignity of the recipient. It is easy to envision how much more kind and caring a society would emerge if such attitudes were to prevail. Perhaps this is what was meant by the Torah’s commandment (Deuteronomy 16:20) of “צִדְקָה צִדְקָה תִּרְדְּפִי Justice, justice shall you pursue.”

Helping Your Children Understand and Practice the Middah: Resources

PJ Library Playlist- <https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pj-library-tzedakah-project/tzedakah>

- <https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/october-2017/everything-you-need-to-know-tzedakah>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/teaching-tzedakah-to-children/>
- <https://www.jewishboston.com/how-to-teach-tzedakah-to-children-one-step-at-a-time/>
- <https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/jewish-philanthropy-concept-tzedakah>