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Areyvut Jewish Teen Philanthropy Seminar  
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## Texts/Activities

Below are samples of activities that can be used to incorporate Jewish texts into your teen philanthropy program. When implementing these activities, please include appropriate recognition. If you would like additional activity ideas or resources, please contact Daniel Rothner at (201) 244-6702 or Daniel@areyvut.org.

### I. Different Approaches to Studying Text

#### Activity A: Chavruta Study

Text I:

You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in your land.  
Devarim 15:11

- Who do you think the text refers to as “your brother,” “your poor,” “your needy,” and “your land”?
- Based on this text, what criteria would you set for deciding who to support?

Text II

Our rabbis have taught: We support the poor of the non-Jews, along with the poor of Israel, and visit the sick of the non-Jews, along with the sick of Israel, and bury the poor of the non-Jews along with the dead of Israel...for the sake of peace.

Gittin 61a

- How do you understand “for the sake of peace”?
- Based on this text, what criteria would you set for deciding who to support?

#### Activity B: Scenario Based on Text

Pirkei Avot 2:4: Do not separate yourself from your community.

Vayikra 25:35: When your brother becomes impoverished and loses the ability to support himself in the community, you must come to his aid.

Based on the **texts** listed above, how would you respond to the following scenario?

You are an 18 year old high school senior living in Manhattan. For the past six years you have donated 10% of the birthday money you received from friends and family members to support organizations in your community that are important to you, specifically, your synagogue, community center and local federation. You realize that is always nice to allocate your donations (no matter how big or small) to these organizations. Because you are graduating high school this year, you are receiving even more and even larger checks than you normally do and you will be donating a total of \$3,769.

Last night you were watching the national news and the lead story was the wildfires on the West Coast that you heard about in your current events class at school. You are aware that thousands of people have now been left homeless, jobless and hungry.

### Questions to Think About...

- \* Would you continue to give the same percentage as you always do to the organizations you have been supporting for the last six years?
- \* Would you give more money than you usually do to, some allocated towards disaster relief?
- \* Would you give all of the money to the West Coast?
- \* Would you give less to your local organizations so you can give to the catastrophe?
- \* Would you pay your own way to volunteer out West over spring break?

### Activity C: Sharing a Teaching

Ask participants to work with a partner/group to share their favorite Jewish text with the group. Texts can be shared through illustrations, dioramas, movement, cake decorations, lyrics, poetry, skits, advertisements, mime, photos, etc. Alternatively, ask students to think of a television show, movie, song, Broadway production, book, etc. that relates to the text that they have chosen.

### Activity D: Prompts for Reflection

- A person who sows the seeds of tzedakah receives a true reward. Proverbs 11:18  
Write About: What does it mean to "sow the seeds" of tzedakah? Have you or your family ever done something like this?
- No one has ever become impoverished from giving tzedakah, as it is said, "And the results of tzedakah is well-being." Isaiah 32:17

Write About: Think about a time when you gave tzedakah. What did the results feel like to you?

- The needy who is your relative should be helped before all others; the needy in your neighborhood come before the needy in your city; the needy in your city come before the needy around the world. Rambam, Gifts to the Poor, 7:13

Write About: Who are the needy around the world? In your city? In your neighborhood? Does your giving reflect these instructions?

- The throne of Israel is established and the religion of truth is upheld only through tzedakah...Indeed, Israel is redeemed only through tzedakah. Isaiah 32:17

Write About: Do you think your giving helps the broader Jewish people? If so, how?

- Even people living on tzedakah are obligated to give part of their money to tzedakah. Gittin 7b

Write About: Does it make sense to you that everyone must give tzedakah? Why or why not?

- It is a mitzvah to give a poor person what is needed. If one has no clothing, clothing should be provided. If one has no furniture, it should be obtained...Even if an impoverished person was used to riding on a horse with a servant running ahead, you should provide a horse and a servant. It is a mitzvah to meet a poor person's needs – but you are not required to make that person rich. Mishneh Torah

Write About: Do you agree that it is important to give a poor person a horse and servant if that is what he was used to? Why or why not?

#### Activity E: Using Vocabulary from the Text

"7 Hebrew Words and Phrases Every Activist Should Know", by Rabbi Jonathan Spira-Savett

<http://www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=14231>

#### Activity F:

Scavenger Hunt through Jewish Texts\* - Using the lists of texts provided as a starting point, compile a list of several texts related to tzedakah. Divide students into pairs or groups. Students should pore through the material and choose at least two sayings/concepts in tzedakah that they think "best illustrates" their understanding of why Judaism thinks that Tzedakah is important. Illustrate this text in some manner. One option is to use the art supplies – including the words and some illustration. Another might be to develop a sermon/speech explaining why this text best illustrates their understanding. Any creative

application of this lesson should be acceptable. Perhaps they should show you what they've chosen before beginning the creative portion of the activity.

\* Activity provided by Eytan Hammerman, National Ramah Camps

#### Activity G:

##### Jewish Values Handout\*

Please rank the five most important teaching/values for our Jewish teen foundation to keep in mind while making decisions:

- Anyone who does not teach their child a skill or profession may be regarded as teaching their child to rob, Talmud 29a
- Do not let him slip until he falls completely, for then it will be difficult to raise him; rather strengthen him when he begins to fall, Midrash
- The Torah commands us to give charity to the poor among the people of Israel, each according to his or her needs. But you cannot ignore the poor (non-Jews) in your midst, Joseph Caro
- The highest level of tzedakah is helping someone to help himself, Maimonides
- A person should give his relatives before giving to anyone else...and then to the poor in his town...and then to the poor in other towns...the poor in Israel should receive before the poor in other lands, Joseph Caro
- If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I? Hillel
- And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if you saved the entire world, Talmud Sanhedrin 37a
- We are all created in the image of God, Genesis, 21:26-27
- If, however, there is a needy person among you...do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsmen. Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficiently for whatever he needs, Deuteronomy 15:7-8
- Proper fulfillment of any commandment only takes place in Israel, Maimonides
- Separate not yourself from the community, Pirkei Avot
- It is not up to you to finish the task, and you are not free to abstain from it, Pirkei Avot
- Love your neighbor as yourself, Leviticus 19:18
- Justice, justice you shall pursue, Deuteronomy 16:20

\* Activity provided by Eytan Hammerman, National Ramah Camps

#### Activity H: The 8 Levels

Maimonides (the Rambam) in his Laws of Charitable Giving (Hilchot Matanot L'Evyonim 7:13) lists the order regulating the priorities and later on (10:7-14) lists eight levels of distributing

tzedakah, each one higher than the next. Below are Rambam's eight levels. Have participants act out of the levels while their colleagues guess which level is being presented.

- 1) A person gives but is not happy when s/he digs into his/her pockets in order to give.
- 2) A person gives cheerfully, but gives less than s/he should.
- 3) A person gives, but only when asked by a poor person.
- 4) A person gives without having to be asked, but gives directly to the poor. The poor person knows who gave the help, and the giver knows who was benefited.
- 5) A person gives a donation in a certain place, but walks away so that the giver does not know who received the benefit. However, the poor person knows the giver.
- 6) A person makes a donation to a poor person secretly. The giver knows who was benefited, but the poor person does not know who the giver was.
- 7) A person contributes anonymously to the tzedakah fund which is then distributed to the poor.
- 8) A person gives money and helps to prevent another person from becoming poor. For example, teaching a person a trade, finding them a job, lending money, or teaching them to fish.

Alternatively, ask participants to put the levels in the order that they see fit and see how closely their orders match with the Rambam's order.

Alternatively, create a ladder (from paper or wood) and decorate each rung to symbolize the corresponding level in Rambam's list.