

Incorporating Texts into Jewish Teen Philanthropy

I The following texts provide a starting point for establishing why it is important to involve oneself in philanthropy. These might be used when introducing the concept to staff, lay leaders, and parents:

1. *The world rests on a single pillar – righteousness. (Talmud Chagigah 12b)*

Connection: Why is teen philanthropy a worthwhile project? What are the broad positive impacts of teen philanthropy?

2. *According to the effort is the reward (Ethics of the Fathers 5:23).*

Connection: What makes a teen philanthropy project successful? What are the details that – with some extra effort – improve the overall experience?

3. *Educate a child according to his own way, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs, 22:6).*

Connection: What values does teen philanthropy instill? What are some strategies for encouraging a long-term commitment to philanthropy?

II At the beginning of a philanthropy project, teens should develop an understanding of the purpose of philanthropy. This includes exploring the significance of charity in Judaism and what *tzedakah* means to them on a personal level. The following texts can be used to help consider the purpose of philanthropy:

1. *If a person closes his eyes to avoid giving [any] charity, it is as if he committed idolatry (Ketuvot 68a).*

Connection: From this text, teens can discuss why charity is important and what the negative impacts are of not participating in charity.

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

Connection: This quote connects the ability to give and the obligation to give. This text can help teens identify what leads them to give *tzedakah*.

3. *Fortunate are the righteous and fortunate are their neighbors (Midrash Tanchuma).*

Connection: This text can lead to an understanding of who benefits from *tzedakah* and philanthropy. How do both the givers and the receivers benefit? What are the similarities and differences between what they gain from the interaction?

4. *Charity is equal in importance to all other commandments combined (Baba Bathra 9a).*

Connection: Encourage teens to question what makes charity important and how it differs from other good-deeds.

5. *Hillel used to say, "The more charity, the more peace" (Pirkei Avot 2:8).*

Connection: Push teens to contemplate the long-term impacts their actions. Ask them to consider some of the far-reaching effects of *tzedakah*.

II After selecting an agency to support, it is important that teens appreciate their role as philanthropic givers entails. The following texts can help teens to understand their role in philanthropic giving:

1. *One who lends money is greater than one who performs charity, and one who forms a partnership is greater than all (Shabbat 63a).*

Connection: This text can help teens explore their relationships with their grantees. What is the difference between money-lending and partnership?

2. *Our Rabbis taught: Deeds of loving kindness are superior to charity in three respects. Charity can be accomplished only with money; deeds of loving kindness can be accomplished through personal involvement as well as with money. Charity can be given only to the poor; deeds of loving kindness can be done for both poor and rich. Charity applies only to the living; deeds of loving kindness apply to both the living and the dead (Succa 49b).*

Connection: Help teens brainstorm ways they can combine philanthropic giving with action. How can they enhance a philanthropy project with volunteering, hands-on experience, etc.?

3. *There was a secret chamber in the Beit HaMikdash where pious people would leave money in secret and those who had been well-to-do but had become poor would come and take in secret (Shekalim 5:6).*

Connection: Help teens explore the relationship between giving and recognition. Do the teens have expectations about what will happen after making a donation? What is an appropriate amount of recognition for them to expect?

4. *It is not your obligation to finish the work; Nor are you free to take a break from it (Pirkei Avot 2:16).*

Connection: Teens can use this text to explore what relationship they have to an organization's projects during the philanthropic process. Does giving a grant represent a beginning, an end, or both? Help teens discover ways to continue giving after a philanthropy project ends.

III After donating a grant, teens should have a chance to celebrate the significance of their actions and to reflect on their experience. The following texts relate to the celebration and reflection process:

1. *Rejoice in all the good that G-d has given you (Deuteronomy 26:11).*

Connection: During reflection time, encourage the teens to consider what impact the philanthropy project had on them. Do they feel differently than how they expected?

2. *One should recognize and do kindness to one who has done good to him (Sefer HaChinuch #33).*

Connection: This text can be used to discuss the relationship amongst the project participants and appreciate the efforts of the group as a whole. What were the benefits of group giving as opposed to individual donation?

3. *'He that is of a merry heart has a continual feast' – this refers to one who is generous (Talmud Bava Batra 145b).*

Connection: Ask the teens to think about how their philanthropic experience will influence them in the future. How will they remember the project? Do they expect the project to positively affect them in the long-term?