



Schechter Manhattan Tzedakah Roundtable
Family Study Guide
March 2019/Adar 5779

Schechter Manhattan Tzedakah Roundtable Home Activity for Students and their Parents

Please allow 30-40 minutes for this family activity.

Welcome to the 2019 SSSM Tzedakah Roundtable! This is the part of the school year where each class takes the tzedakah money they have collected each Friday and decides, as a group, where the money should go. In this way, each class is its own “giving circle.” Schechter Manhattan is proud to be in the vanguard in this growing movement of giving circles in the Jewish community.

In order to deepen this experience, we hope that each family will spend 30-40 minutes together going through this activity to help think about why we give and to make choices among worthy organizations.

We offer you four organizations from which to choose:

1. **The Water Project:** The kids learn about the importance of clean water, they get to connect with children around the world who are less fortunate and see how they can make an actual difference.
2. **Rainforest Conservations:** The kids can learn about the importance of the rainforests and what steps can be done to protect them. They will also learn about climate change with their education program.
3. **Innovation Africa:** Israelis installing solar panels in Africa. The kids will learn about the importance of clean energy. They can learn about the projects in Africa and see videos of installments of the solar panels.
4. **Hand in Hand (יד ביד):** Hand in Hand is building integration and equality in Israel through a growing network of Jewish-Arab public schools and shared communities. The kids will learn about the process and benefits of sharing a community combined of Arabs and Jews.

We intend this activity to be suitable for all of our students. A separate letter on the next page provides guidance for families of students in Gan, Kitah Aleph, and all new Schechter families. Depending on the student's age, we expect that parents will “interpret” or paraphrase certain concepts for younger children.

We've made sure to include ideas that all of our students can grasp, though they might need adult help, and created different activities for different ages using different educational modalities. Thank you for your help and partnership! We hope that this is a meaningful activity, and perhaps one that you can also use in any discussions you may have about your family's priorities around tzedakah.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Dana Morgan, Joshua Rabin, Julie Sissman, or Aliza Weinstock. If you'd like additional resources on intentional giving or the broader Jewish Giving Circle movement, please reach out to Julie Sissman or check out amplifiorgiving.org.

Dear Gan and Kitah Aleph Families,

(Special Note: This letter is an introduction for families doing this activity for the first time. If your child is in Grades 2-8, and this is not your first year at Schechter Manhattan, please go to page five.)

Welcome to the Tzedakah Roundtable! Once a year, each class has the opportunity to allocate the tzedakah they've collected each Friday throughout the year. Classes learn about tzedakah, about giving money to support different organizations, and how to make choices about why and where to give. Each class will make its own decision about where to give, and that class's tzedakah money is donated based on the class's decision.

Part of the Tzedakah Roundtable is a Home Activity: a booklet with text about tzedakah, discussion questions, and guidance for deciding where to donate the money. Students are asked to decide their top two preferences and discuss those preferences in class.

The Tzedakah Roundtable takes place throughout the school, and children may need more guidance from parents in the earlier grades. Please don't fret if your child in grades K-2 has a hard time engaging! We're laying a foundation starting in kindergarten. Feedback from parents over the years is that by grade 2 or 3 the children are looking forward to Tzedakah Roundtable and able to have really thoughtful conversations that are meaningful for both the children and their parents.

This activity is meant to create a connection between a school program and a discussion between parents and children about tzedakah and values. We welcome your questions about the program and hope you have a meaningful experience learning about this *mitzvah* and this year's organizations with your child.

Sincerely,

Dana Morgan, Joshua Rabin, Julie Sissman, and Aliza Weinstock

Tzedakah Roundtable Discussion: Gan through Kitah Aleph

Set Induction:

- Watch “Get With the Giving,” a BimBam Video on Tzedakah
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoT5uk8j8Fk>

Discussion Questions:

1. What are ways that people can give besides money?
2. Why does Levi say that he gives tzedakah, given though his family has no money?
3. What lesson does Lila teach about tzedakah?
4. What are things that we can give to other people that “matter” to them?

Text Study: Choose (1) One text study to interpret, and (2) One corresponding activity to use for the child’s interpretation of the text.

	Rabbinic Text	Translation
Choice 1	צַדִּיק יְסֻד עוֹלָם:	Mishlei 10:25: “The righteous person is the foundation of the world.”
Choice 2	אמר רב אסי שקולה צדקה כנגד כל המצוות...	Bava Batra 9a: “Rav Assi said: Tzedakah is as important as all the other mitzvot.”
Choice 3	[לאחרי לעניך ולאביונך]. למה נאמרו כולם? מגיד הכתוב - הראוי לתת לו פת נותנים לו פת, הראוי לתת לו עסה נותנים לו עסה, הראוי לתת לו מעה נותנים לו מעה, הראוי להאכילו בתוך פיו מאכילים אותו בתוך פיו.	Sifrei Devarim, Reeh 118: “You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to the poor, to the needy” (Devarim 15:11). Why are all three stated? To him for whom bread is suitable give bread; to him who needs dough, give dough; to him for whom money is required, give money; to him for whom it is fitting to put the food in his mouth, put it into his mouth.”

Interpretation Activities:

1. **Art:** Draw a picture explaining what this text means.
2. **Storytelling:** Write a story explaining this text. What is an example where tzedakah could be more important than other mitzvot?
3. **Photography:** Find a picture online or take a picture of a person:
 - a. Giving bread
 - b. Giving dough
 - c. Giving money
 - d. Giving food

Tzedakah Roundtable Discussion: Kitah Gimel through Kitah Hey

Rabbinic Text With Modern Translation: Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 33:3

ביומי דר' תנחומא היו צריכין ישראל לתענית אתון לגביה אמרין ליה ר' גזר תעניתא גזר תעניתא יום קדמאי יום ב' יום ג' ולא נחת מטרא עאל ודרש להון אמר להון בני התמלאו רחמים אלו על אלו והקב"ה מתמלא עליכם רחמים עד שהן מחלקין צדקה לענייהם ראו אדם אחד נותן מעות לגרושתו אתון לגביה ואמרו ליה ר' מה אנן יתבין הכא ועבירתא הכא אמר להן מה ראיתם אמרו לו ראינו אדם פלוני נותן מעות לגרושתו שלח בתריהון ואייתיון לגו ציבורא א"ל מה היא לך זו אמר לו גרושתי היא אמר לו מפני מה נתת לה מעות אמר לו רבי ראיתי אותה בצרה והתמלאתי עליה רחמים באותה שעה הגביה רבי תנחומא פניו כלפי מעלה ואמר רבון על העולמים מה אם זה שאין לה עליו מזונות ראה אותה בצרה ונתמלא עליה רחמים אתה שכתוב בך חנון ורחום ואנו בני ידידיך בני אברהם יצחק ויעקב על אחת כמה וכמה שתתמלא עלינו רחמים מיד ירדו גשמים

Long ago, there was a town where there was no rain for many days. The people needed rain for the plants to grow, so they went to Rabbi Tanhuma to ask what to do. The rabbi said the people needed to fast – not eat any food – and then maybe God would make the rain come. The people fasted for one day, then a second day, then a third day, but the rain didn't come.

Rabbi Tanhuma went to the people and said, "Everyone must show kindness to each other and then God will be kind to us and make it rain." So the people started to give tzedakah to poor people. Two of Rabbi Tanhuma's students were walking around giving tzedakah and they saw another student giving tzedakah to a person who had hurt him. They were confused by this and went to talk to Rabbi Tanhuma. "Rabbi," they asked, "What should we do if we see someone give tzedakah to a bad person?" They explained what they saw their friend do. The rabbi asked his students to bring their friend to him. The rabbi asked this student, "How do you know this person?" The student responded, "She hurt me one time." "So why are you giving her tzedakah if she hurt you?" asked the rabbi. "Because she needs help and I wanted to be kind to her," responded the student.

When he heard this, Rabbi Tanhuma raised his hands in the air and called to God, "Ruler of the Universe, this student did not have to help the person who hurt him, but he did anyway because he saw she needed help and wanted to show her kindness! Please have the same kindness for us!" Immediately, the rain started to fall and plants started to grow again.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the student give money to someone that hurt her? How did this affect Rabbi Tanhuma?
2. What lesson does this text teach us about the value of tzedakah over other values?

Interpretation Activities:

1. **Art:** Create a visual representation of this story, using a single picture or series of pictures.
2. **Storytelling:** Tell a story about a time when you gave something to someone who hurt you. How did it make you feel? How it did change the way that person treated you?
3. **Current Events:** Find an example of two people or two groups of people who found a way to give to one another even after they previously did not like one another.

Tzedakah Roundtable Discussion: Kitah Vav through Kitah Het

Rabbinic Text: Bava Metzia 71a	
<p>איכא דמתני לה להא דרב הונא אהא דתני רב יוסף אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך עמי ונכרי עמי קודם עני ועשיר עני קודם עני ועני עירך ענייך קודמין עניי עירך ועניי עיר אחרת עניי עירך קודמין</p>	<p>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).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Discussion: Would You Rather?

The next page of the packet is a discussion called “Would You Rather?,” which proposes a series of scenarios where one has to choose between two different options. This exercise is taken from the *Where Do You Give* curriculum of the American Jewish World Service (AJWS); the lead writer, Lisa Exler, is a former faculty member at Schechter Manhattan.

WOULD YOU RATHER? QUESTIONS

1. Would you rather give to:
 - a. An organization that fights poverty?
OR
 - b. An organization that protects the environment?
2. Would you rather give to:
 - a. An organization that helps homeless people in your city?
OR
 - b. An organization that helps homeless people in Israel?
3. Would you rather give to:
 - a. An organization that sends doctors to clinics in villages in India to perform surgery and train health workers?
OR
 - b. A local clinic that provides medical care to low-income residents of your city?
4. Would you rather give to:
 - a. Your local public library, which runs an after-school program that helps low-income elementary school students improve their reading and writing skills?
OR
 - b. Your synagogue's scholarship fund that helps Jewish students in your community go to Hebrew school, day school or Jewish summer camp?
5. Would you rather give to:
 - a. An organization that fights hunger by providing people with hot meals at a soup kitchen?
OR
 - b. An organization that fights hunger by teaching people job skills so that they can get jobs and earn a living?
6. Would you rather give to:
 - a. An organization that tutors low-income high school students in math?
OR
 - b. An organization that tries to convince the government to give more money to public high school math programs?
7. Would you rather give to:
 - a. Your cousin who is participating in a walk-a-thon to raise money for cancer research?
OR
 - b. An organization that runs a camp for children with cancer?
8. Would you rather give to:
 - a. An organization that provides new sports equipment to children who live in the slums in Kenya?
OR
 - b. Your friend who is raising money for new uniforms for his/her basketball team?

How Can Prioritize Among Worthy Organizations?

(Adapted from Amplifier - amplifiergiving.org)

Read through the four categories of why people may give tzedakah.

These can help guide your decisions for giving tzedakah to the four organizations selected for this year's Tzedakah Roundtable.

Tikkun Olam: I Want to Create Justice/Equality	You want the money you give to help make the world a better place.
Areyvut: I am Responsible for Others and Obligated to Give	You believe you are part of a bigger community and have a responsibility to help care for it.
Kedusha: I Give Because it Feeds my Soul	You give money because it is a special thing to do and it makes you feel good to do it. It is part of how you express Judaism.
Tzedakah: I Give Because it Helps Others	You want the money you give to help others who are experiencing different challenges or do not have access to the same things as you.

Discussion Questions

1. Would you assign priority to one of these categories? If so, which one and why?
2. How do these different categories interact in your own giving, if at all? What other ideas factor into your own decisions about giving?

Now that you've discussed how you might prioritize among organizations, let's apply it to this year's Schechter Manhattan Tzedakah Roundtable choices.

Please read about the four organizations, the Water Project, Rainforest Conservation, Innovation Africa, and Hand in Hand, and choose your top two choices for receiving your class's tzedakah money this year. Please complete the "Tzedakah Roundtable Priority Sheet" (last page of this packet) and bring it to school by **Monday, March 25, 2019**.

Information about 2019 Non-Profit Organizations

Hand in Hand (יד ביד): Hand in Hand is building integration and equality in Israel through a growing network of Jewish-Arab public schools and shared communities. In six locations across the country, thousands of Arab and Jewish students, teachers, and families come together every day in multicultural, bilingual classrooms, and integrated communities.

- Learn more here: <https://youtu.be/LXE4ofvd9vk>
- Website: <http://www.handinhand.org.il/>

Innovation Africa: Innovation Africa brings Israeli solar, water and agricultural innovations to rural African villages. Founded in 2008, Innovation Africa has completed over 140 projects providing light, clean water, food and proper medical care to over 1 million people in communities throughout Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Senegal.

- Website: <https://www.innoafrica.org/>

The Water Project: The Water Project invests in local solutions to the local water crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Providing access to clean, safe water helps capable and determined people realize the hope they have for their own futures. The Water Project works closely with local in-country teams and partners to develop clean water programs alongside these heroes.

- Learn about their mission: <https://vimeo.com/110654996>
- Learn how they work: <https://youtu.be/8STrs78yxO0>
- Website: <https://thewaterproject.org/thewaterchallenge>

Rainforest Conservation: Rainforest Conservation work is to bring real, measurable benefits to forests, communities, and wildlife around the world. Today, they work with rural communities in 76 countries around the world to conserve forests, support sustainable livelihoods, and restore balance to the planet we call home.

- Learn more here: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/curricula>

Tzedakah Roundtable Priority Sheet

INSTRUCTIONS: Please review the non-profit organizations on the previous pages (which we've presented in alphabetical order) and complete this form with your chosen top two priorities.

Please RETURN by MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019

Name _____

Choice A: _____

Reasons:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Choice B: _____

Reasons:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____