

Congregation Neveh Shalom's Annual Giving Campaign 2009-2010

If Not Now, When? Today & Tomorrow אם לא עכשו, אימתי? היום ומחר

The third in the "Jewish Giving" study series...Print or copy this "instant lesson" and start a discussion around your Shabbat dinner table – appropriate for ALL ages!

The great scholar Maimonides wrote about the Laws of Gifts to the Poor (10.7-15) in his book the Mishnah Torah. He took Jewish ideas about charity from the Bible, the Talmud and from other rabbinical books of wisdom to create an eight step code called the **Ladder of Tzedakah**. It tells of the *eight degrees of tzedakah* in order of increasing importance. During the coming months, we will briefly examine these steps.

This month we focus on Maimonides seventh rung of giving. Read the following story and see if you can put yourself into the shoes of our characters. What choice would you make?

John and Jane's crisis:

John and Jane are a successful couple who have always given at least 10% of their comfortable income to charitable organizations. Every month they donate to: The American Cancer Society, The Sierra Club, Save the Children, and the Jewish Federation. Jane's father died at a young age of lung cancer; both John and Jane are outdoor enthusiasts and ardent environmentalists; John sits on the board of directors of the Federation; both care deeply about the fate of children in impoverished countries and here in the US. In other words they believe strongly in the mission statement of each of these organizations they help support!

Unfortunately, John and Jane's finances have been hit by the current economic crisis. John was laid off from his job as a marketing director for a large company. His prospects are slim. They are currently living on Jane's salary as a social worker, but she recently found out her position is in jeopardy. With bills to pay and less income to pay them with, they have begun to resent the hole their charitable donations make in their monthly budget. They would like to continue to give, but only to the one organization that they can donate to happily.

What should John and Jane do?

Although John and Jane are making the decision to give less than they have in the past, we can admire their commitment to giving, even when times are tough. According to Maimonides the seventh rung of giving is: **giving happily, but inadequately**. Sometimes we can't give as much as we'd like to, but when we are able to give a little, and give it happily, we are climbing the ladder towards higher forms of giving. If you were John or Jane what would you do?

Thank You...Kol Ha Kavod - Jay Abramovitz and Ron Appelbaum for bringing the first of our "Congregant Reflections" to life!

Come experience the first stories in our series visit the CNS website log on to www.nevehshalom.org/giving/annual and click on video room.

Jay Abramovitz can be contacted at Creative Solutions Photography, call 503-880-0568; and, Ron Appelbaum at Ron Appelbaum Productions www.abaumproductions.com, 503-936-3147.

You can donate online now!

Or, call **Wendy Kahn, Development Coordinator** at 503-452-4614 or rifkashira@comcast.net to submit your *Congregant Reflection* or for questions about donating.