

Keys to I.S.R.A.E.L. FOR KIDS



SIX LESSONS TO
KEYS
TO
ISRAEL
UNLOCKING GOD'S TRUTH



International Fellowship
of Christians and Jews®



LESSON 3

I.S.**R**.A.E.L. — **R**ighteous Giving

LESSON OBJECTIVE

This lesson will help Christian children understand that:

1. God cares deeply for the poor
2. God commands us to take care of the poor
3. In the Jewish faith, giving to the poor is not simply an act of kindness, but an act of righteousness and justice

BIBLE BASIS

Deuteronomy 15:7–11; Ruth 1:1–18; 2:1–23

KEY VERSES

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land. — DEUTERONOMY 15:11

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God. — PROVERBS 14:31

MEMORY VERSE

Whoever is kind to the needy honors God. — PROVERBS 14:31

SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR THIS LESSON

- Snack food, such as pretzels or crackers
- Hand sanitizer or wipes
- Bibles
- Poster board
- Lidded containers, such as empty coffee cans, breadcrumb containers, oatmeal containers — one per student
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Decorations for containers—such as stickers, glitter glue, bingo markers
- Scissors

Getting Started (*optional*)

THE “SNACK ATTACK CHALLENGE”

Enable children to understand that we often require the help of others to provide for our needs.

The object of this game is to give the children a task that they can't possibly accomplish without the help of another child.

Prepare for the game

To prepare for the game, have an easy-to-share snack, like crackers or pretzels. As children enter the room, hand them one cracker or pretzel, but tell them they can't eat it until you say so.

When all the children are seated and have a snack, prepare them for the game, by saying:

Each of you has a yummy snack, which you will be allowed to have in just a minute. But before you can eat your snack, there is a challenge you will have to figure out. You can eat your snack on the count of three, but you can **ONLY** eat your snack without bending your elbows. Does everyone understand?

Make sure all the children are clear about what that means by holding out the snack yourself with a straight arm.

Ok, on the count of three, you can eat your snack! One, two, three!

Give the children a few minutes to work out the challenge. Hopefully, they will soon discover that the only way to eat their snack is by feeding each other.

As the children figure it out, encourage the others by saying,

Tommy and Suzy have figured it out! Good job, Josh and Marie!

Wrap up the game:

Great job everyone! This “Snack Attack Challenge” was a fun way to introduce our lesson for today, which is about helping others, especially those who have less than we do.

Without someone to help you today, would you have been able to eat your snack?

Everyone needed another person to help them get something to eat...didn't you?

While this was just a fun game for us, God tells us in the Bible that those of us who have more than enough need to help others who don't.

NOTE TO TEACHER:

Have a container of hand wipes or hand sanitizer available and have the children clean their hands before you give them the snack.

Also, be aware of food allergies; have a few alternative snacks for students who may have allergies.

Telling the Story

Introduce the story by saying to the children:

Sometimes there are people in our communities, in our schools, and even in our church, who are having a hard time getting what they need — important things like clothing, food, shelter, and medicine. That can be very difficult for these families and their children. But there are other families who have more than enough to clothe, feed, shelter, and keep themselves healthy. Moreover, God tells us in the Bible that those of us who have more than enough need to help others who don't.

Listen to these verses from the Bible:

Read from the Bible:

“If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.” — LEVITICUS 25:35

Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. — PSALM 82:3

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done. — PROVERBS 19:17

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” — MATTHEW 19:21

NOTE TO TEACHER:

If you have older students, have volunteers look up the Bible verses and read them aloud to the class. Read as many of these verses as time permits.

Introduce the Key to I.S.R.A.E.L. today — **R**ighteous Giving:

In the Jewish faith, there is a special word for this type of giving, called *tzedakah* (zeh-dah-kah). It comes from two words — *tzedek*, meaning “justice,” and *kah*, which is a name for God. Together, the word means “the justice of God.”

Giving to the poor and the needy isn't just an act of kindness; it is an act of justice — being fair — and of righteousness — doing the right thing. It is a very important idea in the Jewish faith and to the Jewish people, which is why our Key to I.S.R.A.E.L. today is **R** for **R**ighteous Giving.

NOTE TO TEACHER:

Introducing the word tzedakah, you may want to write it on a poster board so the children can see it.

You can also go to

www.ifcj.org/keys *to listen to a recording of the word. Let the children listen to the word several times, then have them practice saying tzedakah.*

When the Israelites were getting ready to enter the land promised to Abraham, the land God had promised Moses that He would give to the children of Israel as their special possession and inheritance, Moses gave the people God's instructions about helping and caring for the poor.

Read from the Bible:

Listen to what God said in the book of Deuteronomy:

If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need . . . Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land. — DEUTERONOMY 15:7–11.

That is righteous giving — *tzedakah*!

VIDEO**Introduce the video**

Our Bible story today is all about *tzedakah*, and involves a woman named Ruth, who came to live in Israel with her mother-in-law, Naomi. The two of them were very poor and didn't have enough food to eat. Ruth's story is about her kindness to her mother-in-law, and the kindness of an Israelite who practiced *tzedakah* and helped these two women. Let's begin with a short video introducing our Key to I.S.R.A.E.L. today and our Bible story about Ruth.

Show the video:

BIBLE STORY (RUTH 1:1-18; 2:1-23) — THE STORY OF RUTH**Introduce the Bible story by saying:**

Our Bible story today begins in the land called Moab, which today is the western part of the country of Jordan.

While reading the story, use the map below to show where the land of Moab was located.

A man named Elimelech, who lived in the town of Bethlehem, had moved to Moab with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons because there was no food to eat in the land of Israel. The family lived in Moab for many years, and during that time, Elimelech died. His two sons had married women from Moab, but the sons died several years after their father. Naomi and her two daughters-in-law were left all alone with no one to care for them. Naomi decided to go back to Israel, and told her daughters-in-law that they should stay in Moab with their families. One daughter-in-law did just that, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi.

This is what Ruth told Naomi:

“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.” – Ruth 1:16

Ruth was not going to leave Naomi! She wanted to go with her and take care of her. That’s *tzedakah*!

When the two women got to Bethlehem, they had no way to feed themselves. But it was the beginning of the barley harvest, and Ruth asked Naomi to let her go out into the fields and gather up all the leftover grain. In Bible times, this was a practice called “gleaning,” which meant leaving some of the grain behind during the harvest. All the leftovers were for the poor.

Here’s what God told His people:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.” – Leviticus 23:22

So Ruth went out into the fields and picked up the leftover grain for her and Naomi to eat. While she was working, the owner of the field, a man named Boaz, noticed her working very hard and asked one of his farmworkers, “Who is that young woman in the fields?” When he found out this was the young woman taking care of Naomi, he called Ruth over. He told her to stay in his fields to gather grain for the entire harvest time, and he also offered her water from his well.

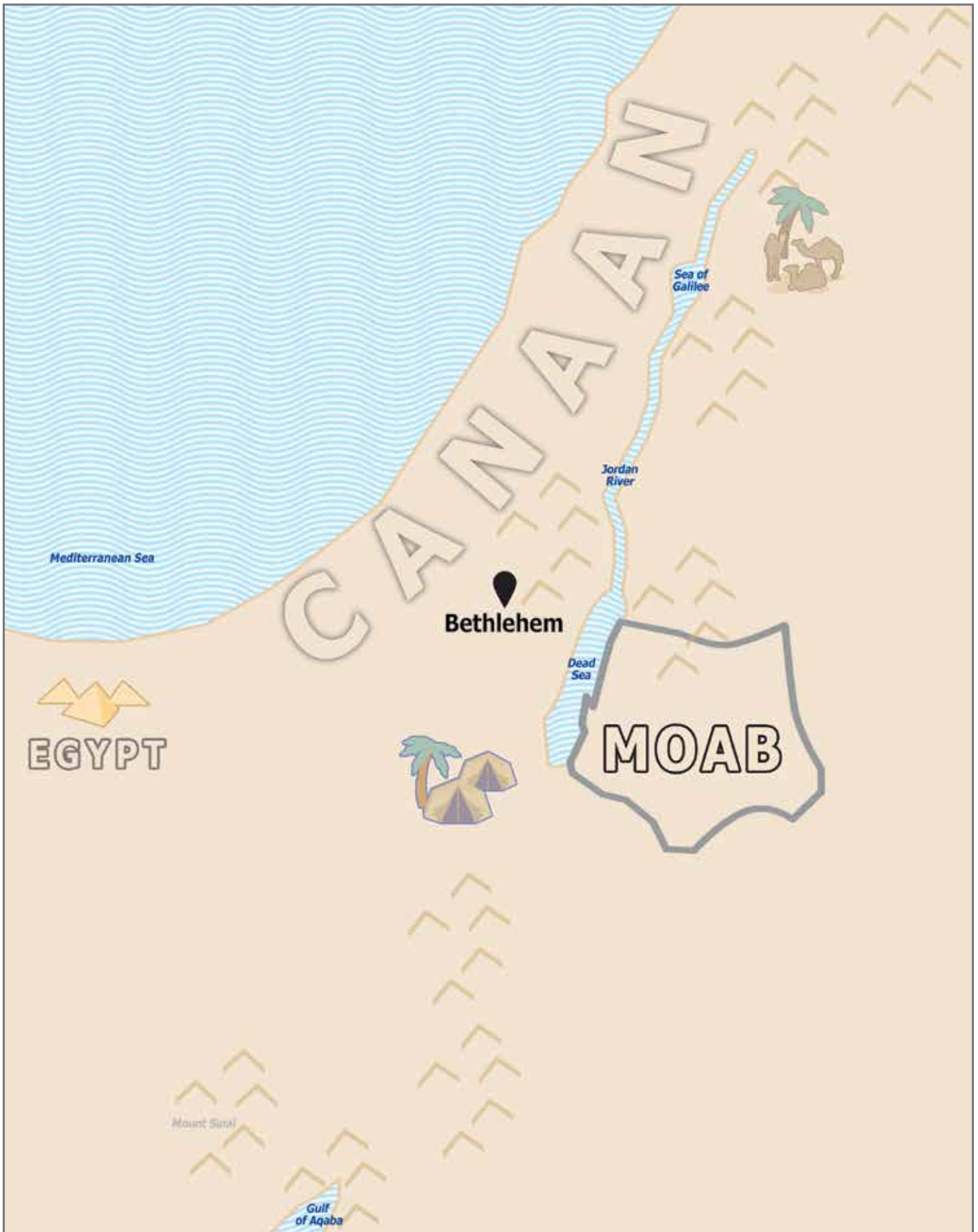
Ruth was amazed! She thanked Boaz over and over, and asked him, “Why are you so kind to me?” And Boaz told her, “I know about the love and kindness you have shown your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard that you left your own mother and father and your home to live among strangers and take care of Naomi.”

Boaz invited Ruth to eat lunch with his workers and gave her so much food that she had leftovers to share with Naomi later. He also told his workers to purposefully leave behind some full stalks, not just the pieces, for Ruth to pick up.

When Ruth returned home that night, she had gathered a half bushel, more than enough to feed Naomi and herself. Naomi couldn’t believe her eyes! “Where did you work? How were you able to gather so much? May God bless the one who helped you.”

When Ruth told Naomi the man was Boaz, Naomi smiled. “He is one of our closest relatives here. He has never stopped showing kindness to whomever needs it.” And Ruth stayed in Boaz’s fields until the harvest was over.





TODAY'S STORY

Explain to the children:

Now we are going to hear a story from the Jewish tradition about *tzedakah* and how God wants us to use what we have to help others. Today's story is from Jewish folklore, a tale that has been passed down for many years.

There is a Jewish tale about two men – one who was rich and one who was poor. Each had a wife, children, and a business. The rich man was very successful while the poor man had trouble making any money at all.

Every month the poor man would visit the rich man and ask him for help. The rich man was happy to give the poor man enough money to last for a whole month, and the poor man was happy that he could take care of his family. This went on month after month, year after year. The poor man continued to try to earn a living on his own, but always found himself needing to ask his friend for help.

After many years of doing this, the rich man began to get tired of his friend's requests. He began to resent his friend, and instead of giving happily to the poor man, the rich man begrudgingly gave money to his friend. The rich man began to think that the poor man had no right to expect charity every single month.

True, the rich man had plenty of money, but that wasn't the point. The point was that it was his money, and it was up to him to decide what to do with it. The rich man decided that he would no longer give any money to the poor man. That would teach him a lesson.

"How dare he expect me to give him money every single month," thought the rich man. "It's my money!" he said aloud.

The next time the poor man came knocking on the rich man's door, his usual smile turned to a frown when the rich man told him that he would not be giving him any charity anymore. The poor man went home empty-handed. He was very sad because he didn't know how he would feed his family now.

But it turned out that the poor man had nothing to fear. Soon after, his business began to boom. The very same business that he had been working at for years suddenly became successful. The man and his wife were so happy; they could meet all of their family's needs.

Things began to change for the rich man, too. At first, his successful business began to have a few problems. Soon, his business had many problems, and the

rich man wasn't very rich anymore. He had enough money to take care of his own family, but his life was nothing like it used to be. He was scared and ashamed that he had lost his riches.

The man was so upset that he went to see the town's rabbi. He asked the rabbi, "Why did I lose my money? Why did God take my riches away from me?" The holy rabbi who knew many secret things was able to answer the rich man. He said, "God entrusted you with more than enough money for your family and also for the poor man's family. It was your job to give his portion to him. Since you decided that you no longer wanted the job, God took the job away from you. Instead, God gave the poor man his money directly. That money was never meant for you in the first place."

From then on, the rich man never became rich again, and the poor man never became poor. But only the poor man was happy – just as he'd always been.



Talk about it!

Use the following questions and discussion to help children understand what God expects of us when it comes to giving money and helping others less fortunate than ourselves.

Use as many of the questions below as you like to discuss the main points of the lesson with the children. Your students may not know the answers to all the questions, but challenge them to think about possible responses before you share the answer. Choose questions that you think will enhance your discussion, and use others for background information if students have questions.

In our Bible story, how did Ruth show kindness to Naomi? How did Boaz show kindness to Ruth?

From today's story, what did we learn about our money and the things we have? To whom do they really belong

Ruth chose to leave her home and her family and go to a strange land so that she could help Naomi.

When she saw that it was the harvest time, Ruth volunteered to go into the fields and gather the leftover grain. Ruth looked for opportunities to help Naomi and herself, and she was willing to work hard and faithfully.

When Boaz saw how faithful, kind, and hard-working Ruth was, he responded in kind. He went far beyond what was required by the biblical laws of the day to demonstrate kindness and generosity to Ruth. Out of his abundance, he happily gave to those in need.

And God rewarded both Ruth and Boaz — and Naomi — because Boaz eventually married Ruth, and their child, Obed, was the grandfather of King David!

Everything in the world belongs to God — the trees, our houses, and even our very lives. This is God's world — He made it, and He takes care of it. Certainly, that means that all the money in the whole world belongs to God, too. He even says so in the book of Haggai: “*The silver is mine and the gold is mine,*’ declares the LORD Almighty” (2:8).

In Psalm 50:10, we read:

*for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.*

God gives us all different amounts of money to use as a gift to us. But with this gift comes the responsibility to do the right thing with our money. Sometimes, that means helping those who have less than we do.

NOTE TO TEACHER:

For your older students, to discover how important Ruth and her story is to Christians, have a volunteer read from Matthew 1:2-6 to show that Jesus was descended from David's family tree and was related to Ruth!

What are some reasons that people give to others?

There are many reasons. Sometimes it's because we feel bad for less fortunate people. Or we may feel guilty that others are suffering while we are so comfortable. Sometimes we give to others because it makes us feel good about ourselves, or we enjoy making others happy, or because it is the right thing to do.

There are many reasons to give, but in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, we give to others because God commands us to do so, and also because when we do, we honor God.

*Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
but whoever is kind to the needy honors God. — PROVERBS 14:31*

What else does the Bible tell us about giving to others?

The Torah, what Christians call the Old Testament, and many other places in the Bible, teach us that we must help the poor. Let's look at some examples:

"If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you." — LEVITICUS 25:35

If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. — DEUTERONOMY 15:7

*Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD,
and he will reward them for what they have done. — PROVERBS 19:17*

*The generous will themselves be blessed,
for they share their food with the poor. — PROVERBS 22:9*

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" — Matthew 25:40

*God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.
— HEBREWS 6:10*

What do these verses tell you about why we should give to others?

God commands us to take care of those who are less fortunate.

God will reward us for being generous to others; we will be blessed when we give to others. When we help others, it's as if we are serving God Himself.

**Do we have to
give away all of
our money?**

In the Jewish Bible, we learn about giving something called a tithe to the Lord. A tithe was a portion, a tenth, of a person's income or harvest, or whatever resources they had. In biblical times, the law required that every three years the people set aside a tenth of whatever they had to help the needy among them.

When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. — DEUTERONOMY 26:12

The Jewish people today continue that practice of giving a tithe of their money to the poor as commanded by God, and many Christians follow the same practice of tithing. Maybe you've heard in church when the offering is taken, "And now it's time to give to God our tithes and offerings."

We also find in the Bible instructions on giving offerings from the heart, and as we saw in today's story, *how* we give is as important as *what* we give. Listen to what the Bible says about that:

"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give."
— EXODUS 25:2

Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. — DEUTERONOMY 15:10

Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. — 2 CORINTHIANS 8:11-12

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver
— 2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

Apply It!

Say to the children:

Who remembers what our Key to I.S.R.A.E.L. is for today?

Allow for responses, then say:

That's correct! **R** is for **R**ighteous Giving. Can anyone remember the Hebrew word we learned that means Righteous Giving?

Allow for responses, then say:

Tzedakah! Let's say that all together — **TZEDAKAH!**

Today we have learned:

- Why God wants us to give
- How God wants us to give
- What God wants us to give

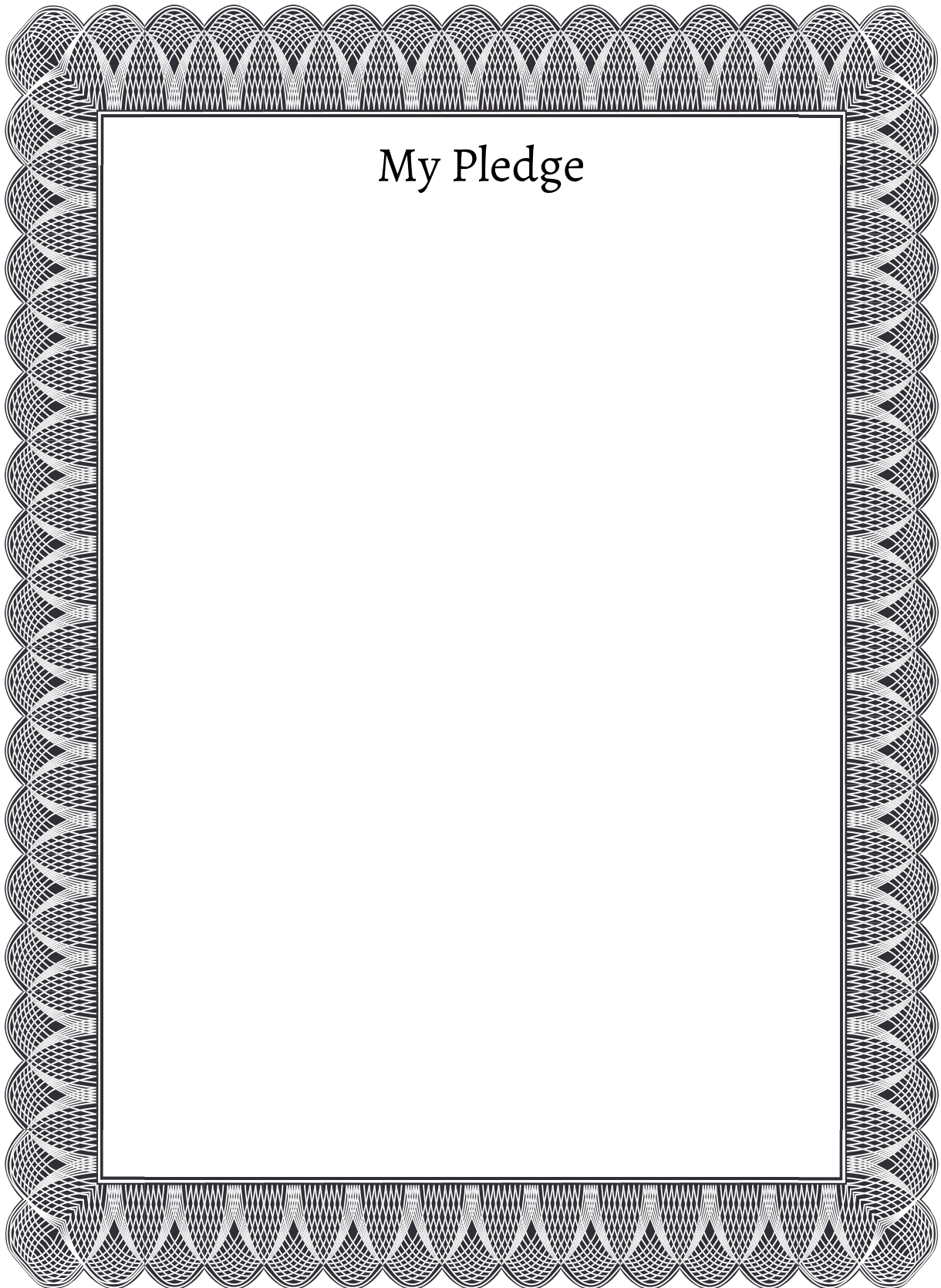
One of the ways we can be purposeful givers is to make a pledge — a promise — of what we intend to give back to God to help others.

For example, you can promise to give a certain amount each month to the poor. Or set aside a portion of your weekly allowance. Or donate your old clothes or toys to needy children. There are many ways you can give.

Today, we are going to make a "Pledge Card" that you can take home and share with your family. Ask them to help you keep your promise!

PRACTICE RIGHTEOUS GIVING—MAKE A TZEDAKAH PLEDGE CARD

Use the card below to either write down your pledge, or to draw a picture of what you intend to do. Take your pledge card home and share with your family. Ask them to help you keep your promise!



My Pledge

Activity — Tzedakah Box

Tell the children:

One way that Jewish families practice the idea of giving to others on daily basis is by having a *tzedakah* box in the family kitchen or den or anywhere it can be seen every day. Family members are encouraged to put their spare change into the *tzedakah* box, which is then given to charity at the end of the month. What families have discovered is that even a little sum of money, given daily, adds up to a larger sum! It's a wonderful — and easy — way for the entire family to practice being “cheerful givers.”

NOTE TO TEACHER:

Prior to this lesson, collect any type of lidded containers — such as empty coffee cans, breadcrumb containers, or oatmeal containers — enough for one per child. You may ask parents to contribute containers..

MAKE THE TZEDAKAH BOX

Follow the instructions below to create your own *tzedakah* box.

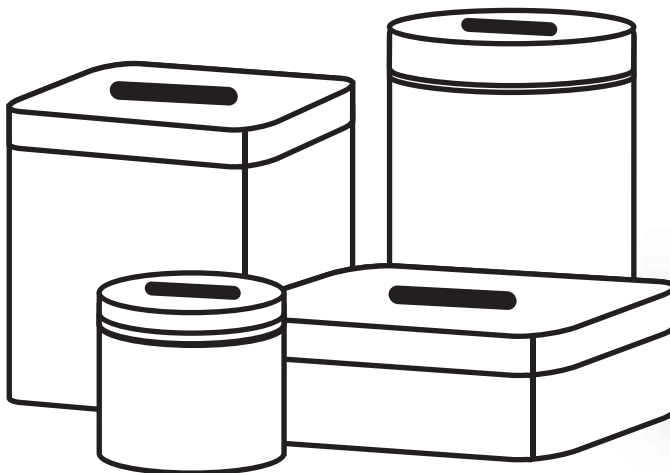
- 1. Cover the container** with construction paper, gluing it to the container. Or you can use scraps of wrapping paper or foil to cover the container.
- 2. Decorate the container** with stickers, glitter glue, or other types of decorations that can be glued to the container, such as bingo markers. Some students may also want to write a Bible verse, such as Proverbs 14:31, 2 Corinthians 9:7 (“*God loves a cheerful giver*”) or Acts 20:35 (“*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*”)
- 3. With the teachers’ help, cut a small slit into the top** of the container for a coin slot.

NOTE TO TEACHER:

To save time and avoid any scissor mishaps, pre-cut the coin slots on the container lids.

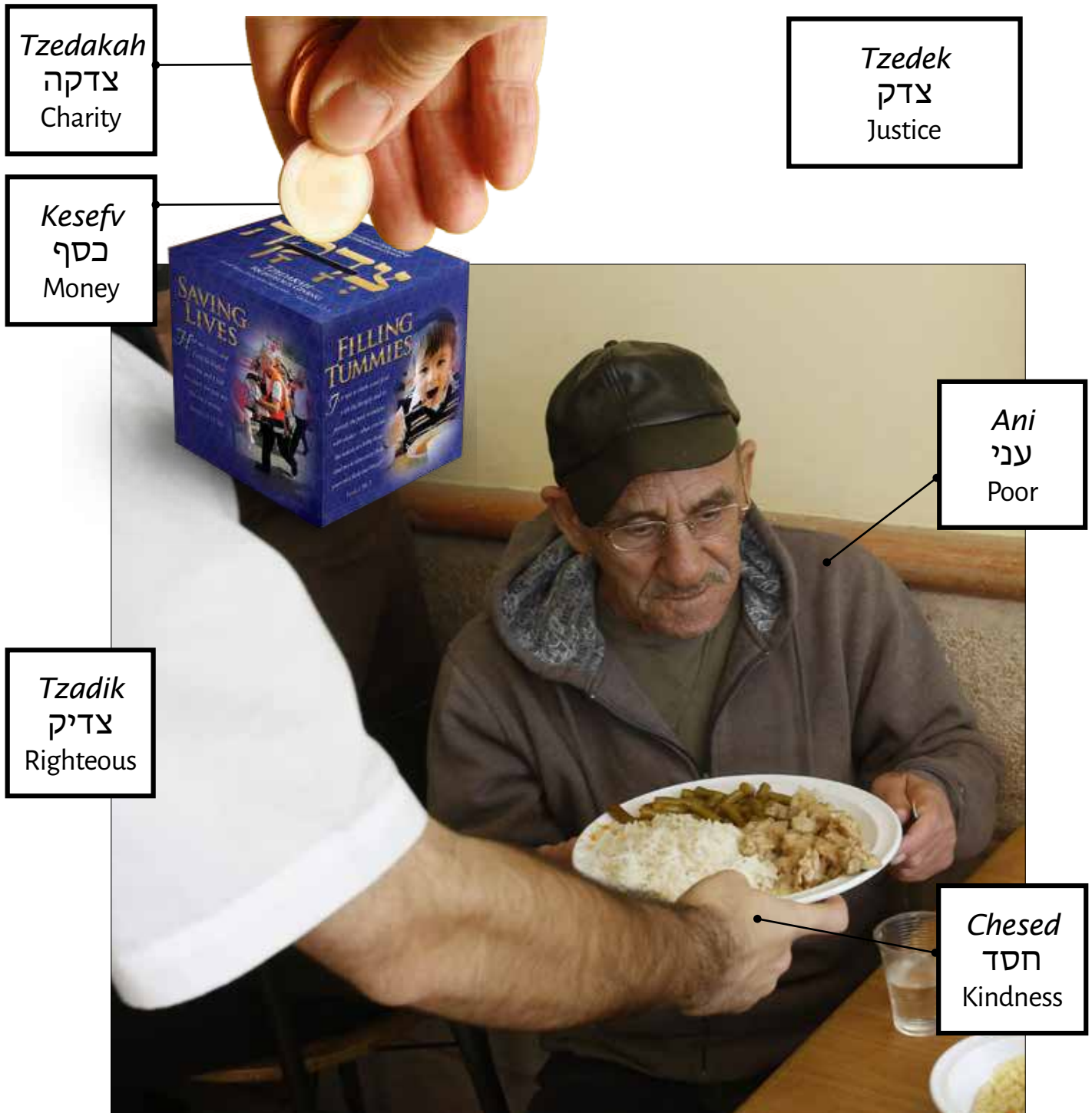
NOTE TO TEACHER:

*Another option for creating a *tzedakah* box is to request a ready-to-assemble *tzedakah* box from The Fellowship. Visit www.ifcj.org/box and fill out the form. Allow two to four weeks for delivery.*



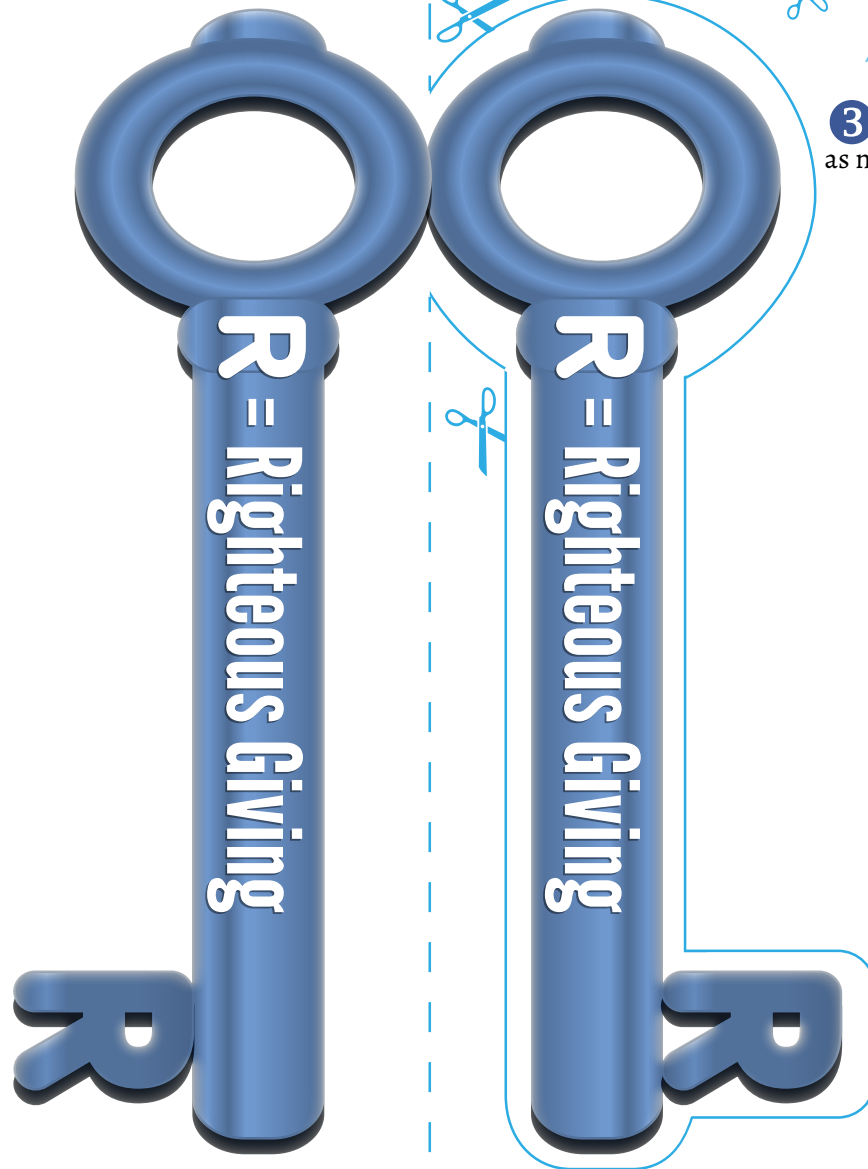
Let's Learn Hebrew

Listen to our Hebrew words for this lesson at www.ifcj.org/keys.



Your Key to I.S.**R**.A.E.L.

Make the key.



(Don't Cut!)
FOLD
HERE
(Keep it
folded)

Family Time

OPEN OUR HANDS

*Do not rob the poor, because he is poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate . .*

— PROVERBS 22:22, ESV

There once was an experiment in the United Kingdom where a young boy sat with a sign asking for food. The experimenters wanted to observe how people reacted to poor people. It took hours before one elderly woman finally stopped to ask the boy why he was on the streets instead of in school and why he needed food. Noticing the woman speaking with the boy, three younger women joined in and decided to buy the boy some food. However, the reality was the boy had been ignored for several hours before anyone chose to act.



There is another story with a different kind of outcome.

A newspaper printed a story about a young child sitting in a restaurant with his mother when he noticed a homeless man outside the large glass windows. The poor man was looking at the lucky people who were dining inside. The child asked his mother to feed the hungry man.

At first, she hesitated, even though she was proud of her son's concern, because she did not know how the other people in the restaurant would feel about the homeless man walking in. But after thinking it over, she invited the man to dine with them. The man was very grateful for their kindness. As he ate what might have been his first good meal in days, all he could say over and over again was "Thank you," with tears in his eyes.

In Hebrew, the word used to mean "charity" is the word *tzedakah*. However, "charity" is not the best translation. The word *tzedakah* comes from the Hebrew word *tzedek*, which means "justice." A more accurate definition of *tzedakah* would be "righteousness." According to Judaism, when we give charity we are not being kind; we are being just. In truth, we are returning to the poor what is rightfully theirs, which God has given us to look after and use for their benefit.

When we look at charity in that way, giving to the poor is not a favor or a kindness that we are bestowing on that person. Rather, we are fulfilling our God-given duty to distribute His resources. In Proverbs we read: "*Do not rob the poor . .*" (Proverbs 22:22, ESV).

How can someone rob the poor? Poor people don't have anything to be taken from them!

The answer is that when we withhold charity, when we refuse to help those less fortunate, we are robbing the poor of what truly belongs to them. God has entrusted us with what is theirs. It is our duty to distribute it. If we fail to fulfill our obligation, it is as if we have stolen from those who are most in need.

This perspective also explains a verse in Psalm 145:16 where we read:

"You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing."

If God opens His hand to every living thing, how could there be millions of people around the world who are starving? The truth is that God has opened His hand and has provided plenty for everyone. It is our responsibility to take what God has given us and open our hands to others so that all people will have what they need.

Only then, will all God's people be cared for and satisfied, and no one will go hungry anymore!

FAMILY TALK

1. As a family, talk about your reactions to the two examples of giving to the poor in the reflection above. How did the first story make you feel? How do you react when you see a poor person begging on the street?
2. How did you react to the second example? Can you think of a time when you have shared something with a friend or a classmate when they were in need? How did that make you feel? How did that make them feel?
3. It's ok to feel uncomfortable or sad or helpless when we see someone in need. What's more important is what we do because of those feelings. As a family, brainstorm some ways that you can safely reach out to people in need.
4. As a family, talk about goals you can set to give to others. How can even younger family members put some money aside for the poor?
5. What do you feel is more important – how much money we give or our attitude toward giving to others? What do you think is most important to God?
6. Organizations like *The Fellowship* provide many opportunities to give to those who are less fortunate. As a family, brainstorm ways you can give to those in need. Is there a family in your community who needs food or clothing? What organizations that help others can you support with a donation?