

September 16-22, 2019

## 2 Corinthians 8–13

“God Loveth a Cheerful Giver”

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**Summary:** *True saints impart of their substance to the poor—Christ out of His poverty brought eternal riches.*

*God loves and rewards a cheerful giver—Thanks be to Him for his unspeakable gift.*

*Bring every thought into obedience—Paul glories in the Lord.*

*Maintain the simplicity that is in Christ—Satan sends forth false apostles—Paul glories in his sufferings for Christ.*

*Paul caught up to the third heaven—The Lord gives men weaknesses that they may triumph over them—Paul manifests the signs of an apostle.*

*Saints should test themselves as to righteousness—Be perfect, of one mind, and live in peace.*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### How do we become good, more like God??

“In addition to belief in God, one of the important articles of faith of the Jew is that God is good. Often human beings cannot appreciate God's goodness, because no human being can see the whole course of events as God does. A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

#### What has already been quoted about “giving?”

The lesson of [February 25-March 3, 2019](#) states: “Although the idea of charity and almsgiving is spread throughout the whole of the Bible, there is no special term for it. The rabbis of the Talmud, however, adopted the word (*zedakah*) for charity and it is used (but not exclusively so) throughout rabbinic literature in the sense of helping the needy by gifts. The word has since passed into popular usage

and is almost exclusively used for charity. The term *hesed* (“loving-kindness”), which is used widely in the Bible, has taken on the meaning of physical aid, or lending money without interest.” “Everybody is obliged to give charity; even one who himself is dependent on charity should give to those less fortunate than himself. The court can compel one who refuses to give charity --- or donates less than his means allow -- to give according to the court's assessment.” “To give a tenth of one's wealth to charity is considered to be a “middling” virtue, to give a 20th or less is to be “mean”; but the rabbis decided that one should not give more than a fifth lest he become impoverished himself and dependent on charity.” “The rabbis were especially concerned about the manner in which alms are to be dispensed. The prime consideration is that nothing be done that might shame the recipient. About one pious man it was related that if he met a man of good family who had become impoverished he would say, “I have heard that a legacy has been left to

you in such a place; take this money in advance and pay me back later." When the man accepted it he then said to him, "It is a gift."

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### How do we grade our motivation in giving?

"Maimonides lists seven ways of giving *zedakah* which are progressively more virtuous: to give (1) but sadly; (2) less than is fitting, but in good humor; (3) only after having been asked to; (4) before being asked; (5) in such a manner that the donor does not know who the recipient is, (6) in such a manner that the recipient does not know who the donor is; and (7) in such a way that neither the donor nor the recipient knows the identity of the other.

"The highest form of charity is not to give alms but to help the poor to rehabilitate themselves by lending them money, taking them into partnership, employing them, or giving them work, for in this way the purpose is achieved without any loss of self-respect at all."

"This last way of helping the poor is known as *gemilut hasadim*, "dispensing kindness." This term also includes aiding people who need help and encouragement and includes such matters as visiting the sick and looking after them and inviting needy guests to eat at your home. One of the greatest acts of charity is to provide for orphans."

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### How can mercy be viewed as an obligation?

"The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and

perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rahum* ("Merciful") and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: "As He is merciful, so be you merciful." Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature.

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### What is the "silver lining" of suffering?

On one occasion, a professor of religion went to the Western (wailing) Wall, microphone in hand, and began asking religious Jews why they were chosen. One responded, "We are chosen to suffer." Later, in making a point about the Savior's suffering, he said, "No one is chosen to suffer other than the Lord." Yet, the difficulties, calamities, and sufferings of the Jews will ultimately bring them closer to the Lord who covenanted to remember and save His people. Sufferings bring us closer to Him and those having the highest responsibilities of serving Him often suffer greatly. These special witnesses of the Lord, often "sink to new heights." "And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (Doctrine & Covenants 122:7-8)

### **How does overcoming our own vanities, bring us to a greater realization of mercy?**

"Ecclesiastes or Kohelet, is one of the five *Megillot* (five Scrolls, Song of Songs, the Book of Ruth, the Book of Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and the Book of Esther). It has won enduring popularity because of its wise maxims and its counsel on life. "Ecclesiastes" from the Greek and "Kohelet" in Hebrew, mean leader or teacher of a group. The Book reveals the wisdom acquired by Kohelet on his journey through life. He experiences joy and sorrow, faith and doubt, vanity and humility, hypocrisy and truth. The struggle to find meaning and purpose in life was as baffling for him as it is for us today. Kohelet arrives at the conclusion that the true joy of life lies not in wealth nor in vain pleasure but in spiritual riches of fulfilling *mitzvot*, God's commandments. Love and reverence for the Almighty help man to accept his fate and to overcome the obstacles and temptation that continually beset him." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Once reconciled to God, the adversity in life brings His peace, resulting in a spirit of

fulfillment, completeness and serenity that enables us to comfort and bless others in their difficulties. The prophet Jonah sank to new heights and testified, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." ([Jonah 2:8](#))

### **"Where can I turn for peace?" (Hymn 129)**

"It is generally thought that the Hebrew word *shalom* means peace, but it is really much more than that. The main problem in understanding *shalom* is that there is no single word for it in English, and even many words when they are strung into deep philosophical theories, cannot capture the full meaning of the simple Hebrew. *Shalom* in Jewish thought has a positive connotation and, as such, is central to Judaism. Peace, on the other hand, is a negative concept; the absence of war, strife, and fighting. *Shalom* is more like fulfillment, completeness, serenity, or security. Its opposite is not only war and strife, but adversity, injustice, fragmentation or disunity." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))