

Geography-Based Giving in Jewish Tradition

Malka Z. Simkovich

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew Bible's proscriptions to provide for the poor are embedded in an agricultural context.¹ Besides *ma'aser*, the mandatory tithe that all Israelites contribute—one tenth of their income to the poor in the third and sixth years of the seven year agricultural cycle,² Israelite land-owners were also expected to designate a portion of their produce to their local poor each year. This portion comes in the form of three categories: *leket*, which refers to produce that has fallen from the sickle while the farmer is gleaning,³ *pe'ah*, the produce growing in corners of the farmer's field, which are permanently designated for poor passers-by,⁴ and *shichechah*, produce that has fallen in the field and has been inadvertently left or overlooked by the farmer.⁵ Should the farmer realize that he has left this produce on the ground or the threshing floor, he may not return to retrieve it. This chapter demonstrates that the Hebrew Bible's instructions are concerned with providing for one's local, poor community, and they disregard the question of whether this poor individual is Israelite. Rabbinic and Medieval Jewish statements on charity preserve the focus on geographical giving over giving exclusively within one's religious circles.⁶ In

M.Z. Simkovich (✉)

the past half century or so, Jewish charitable organizations and theologians have begun to advocate for a shift in charitable focus from local to globalized giving, while underscoring policies of giving indiscriminately to both Jews and non-Jews.

The three most explicit and developed proscriptions to giving charity in the Pentateuch appear in the context of agricultural work. All three passages specify the intended recipient of charity beyond simply providing for the poor (usually referred to as the עני or אביון). Each of the passages cited below specifies categories of poor individuals. The first biblical statement, mandating regular charitable giving, appears in the Holiness Code of Leviticus:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field (לֹא תִכְלֶה פְּאַת שְׂדֶךָ; *lo tichaleh*), or gather the gleanings of your harvest (לֹא תִלְקֹט קַצְצֵיךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט; *leket qetsirkha lo telaqet*). You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor (לְעֲנִי; *le'ani*) and the alien (לְגֵר; *velager*): I am the LORD your God.⁷

In this passage, the field-owner is instructed to leave the corners of his field unharvested in accordance with the laws of *pe'ah*, that is, to not reap the edges of one's field. The field-owner is also instructed to not gather any of his harvest that has fallen from his hand or sickle in accordance with the laws of *leket*. Finally, the field-owner is told to not strip the vineyard of immature grapes, and to not gather grapes that had fallen off in the vineyard.⁸

The recipients of this produce are identified as the poor (*'ani*) and the alien (*ger*). There is no clarification that the *'ani* in question is an Israelite; and the *ger*, by definition, is not an Israelite, but an individual who lives among Israelites but is not so assimilated that he may be regarded as an Israelite himself.⁹ This passage is the biblical precedent for providing charity to individuals who are not integrated into the Israelite community. The other foundational statements in the Pentateuch, regarding providing for the poor, appear in Leviticus 23:22, Deuteronomy 15:7–11, 23:24–25, and 24:17–22, which will be examined below.

Like Leviticus 19:9–10, the mandate to provide for the poor in Deuteronomy 24:17–22 specifies protection of the alien, orphan, and widow, all of whom constitute the most vulnerable members of society. In this passage, there is no explicit proscription to give only to the poor in one's religious communities. The text reads,

You shall not deprive a resident alien (גֵר; *ger*) or an orphan (יָתוֹם; *yatom*) of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there;

therefore I command you to do this. When you reap your harvest in your field and forget (וְשָׁכַחְתָּ; *veshakhakhta*) a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien (לָגֵר; *lager*), the orphan (לְיָתוֹם; *layatom*), and the widow (וְלִלְמָנָה; *velalmanah*). When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien (לָגֵר; *lager*), the orphan (לְיָתוֹם; *layatom*), and the widow (וְלִלְמָנָה; *velalmanah*). Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.¹⁰

This passage is clearly structured. The alien, orphan, and widow are mentioned consecutively four times in this passage, and each reference to them forms layering units that separate the mandates between *shikhbekhab*, *pe'ur*, the commandment to not strip unripe olives from the olive tree, and *'olelot*, the commandment to not strip unripe grapes from the vineyard. A clear structure of this passage highlights the centrality of the beneficiaries of this charity:

- A. You shall not deprive a resident alien (*ger*) or an orphan (*yatom*) of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.
- B. When you reap your harvest in your field and forget (*veshakhakhta*) a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it;
 - A. it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings.
- C. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left;
 - A. it shall be for the alien (*lager*), the orphan (*layatom*), and the widow (*velalmanah*).
- D. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left;
 - A. it shall be for the alien (*lager*), the orphan (*layatom*), and the widow (*velalmanah*).

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.¹¹

This passage opens and closes with an *inclusio*, referring to God taking the Israelites out of Egypt. The relationship between protecting the resident

alien and the Exodus from Egypt has been discussed elsewhere and need not be reexamined here.¹² For our purposes, we must note the fact that, while it would have been simpler to list all of these laws together and either introduce or end them with a specification that they apply to the resident alien, orphan and widow; the passage instead repeatedly mentions these three groups of people. The emphasis on providing for these three groups creates a tension with Leviticus 19:9–10, which comprises of overlapping commandments but specifies provision only for the poor person and resident alien. Comparing the two passages above is instructive (Table 13.1):

In Leviticus 19, the mandates of *pe'ah*, *leket* and *'olelot* are mentioned. The instruction in Leviticus 19:10 to not strip one's vineyard bare and not to gather fallen grapes apparently falls under the category of *leket*, since it directly follows the latter, and the stripping and gathering of fallen grapes could be regarded as *leket* in the sense that these actions concern produce, which require extra work on the part of the farmer to harvest. The intended beneficiaries of these mandates are the *'ani* and the *ger*. In Deuteronomy 24, the laws of *shikhebab*, *pe'ur*, and *'olelot* are discussed. Here *'olelot* seems to be a separate mandate altogether. The beneficiaries are the *ger*, *yatom*, and *'almanah*. The lack of consistency, both in terms of what the farmer is being told to do and who is meant to benefit from his actions, makes it difficult for one to determine a clear system of charitable giving in the Bible. My aim here is not to study the nature of the mandates themselves, but to consider *who* the intended recipients of this charity are, and whether these passages, when taken together, provide a systematic guide regarding who the recipients of agricultural charity should be.

The fact that other biblical proscriptions, regarding donation of one's agricultural produce, specify other beneficiaries, besides the alien, widow, and orphan, further complicates matters. Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 15:7–11 refer to the *'ani* and the *ger* and the *'ani* and *eyyon*, respectively. No clear definition for these categories are provided. Yet it is striking that at no point in these passages is the most popular signifier for Israelites, the *bene yisra'el*, specified as the recipients of charity. Leviticus 23:22 reads,

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor (*'ani*) and for the alien (גר): I am the LORD your God.

This verse, which repeats the mandate of *pe'ah* that is first iterated in Leviticus 19:9–10, does not indicate that the recipient of the charity must be an Israelite. Likewise, note Deuteronomy 15:7–11:

Table 13.1 A comparison between Leviticus 19:9–10 and Deuteronomy 24:17–22

Leviticus 19:9–10	Deuteronomy 24:17–22
<p>ט ובקצורכם את-קציר ארצכם, לא תכלה קצאת שדה לקצור; ולקט קצירך, לא תלקט. יוכרמך לא תעולל, ופרט פרמך לא תלקט: לעני ולגר מעוב אתם, אני יהוה אלהיכם.</p>	<p>יז לא תטה, משפט גר יתום; ולא תחבל, בגד אלמנה. יח וזכרתי, כי עבד היית במצרים, ויפדך יהוה אלהיך, משם; על-כן אנכי מצווה, לעשות, את-הדבר, הזה. (ס) יט בני-תקצר קצירך בשדה ושכחת עמר בשדה, לא תשוב לקחתו--לגר ליתום ולאלמנה, יהיה: למען יכרמך יהוה אלהיך, בכל מעשה ידך. (ס) כ כי תחבט זיתך, לא תפאר אתריד: לגר ליתום ולאלמנה, יהיה. כא כי תבצר פרמך, לא תעולל אתריד: לגר ליתום ולאלמנה, יהיה. כב וזכרתי, כי-עבד היית בארץ מצרים; על-כן אנכי מצווה, לעשות, את-הדבר, הזה</p>
<p>9 <u>When you reap the harvest of your land</u>, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.¹⁰You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them <u>for the poor and the alien</u>: I am the LORD your God.</p>	<p>17 You shall not deprive <u>a resident alien or an orphan</u> of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge.¹⁸Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.</p> <p>19 <u>When you reap your harvest in your field</u> and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for <u>the alien, the orphan, and the widow</u>, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings.</p> <p>²⁰When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for <u>the alien, the orphan, and the widow</u>.</p> <p>21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for <u>the alien, the orphan, and the widow</u>.</p> <p>²²Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.</p>

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near', and therefore view your needy neighbour with hostility and give nothing; your neighbour might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since

there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor (*la’aniyekha*) and needy neighbour (*ule’evyonekha*) in your land.’¹³

This verse, which follows the laws of *shemittah* regarding the remittance of land ownership and loan contracts every seven years,¹⁴ warns Israelites that these laws should not prevent them from giving charity and providing loans. Israelites are encouraged to give specifically to the *’ani* and the *evyon*, two catch-all terms that refer generally to poor people without specifying their class caste or social disadvantage. Upon examining all of these passages side by side, it becomes clear that there is no systematic use of the various terms used for charity recipients (Table 13.2):

This lack of systemization may be deliberate. By following these mandates, land-owners cannot determine a systematic method of discrimination based on religious belief or familial connection. While the orphan, widow, and alien are all marginalized members of Israelite society, who are clearly distinguishable from one another and yet all lack a stable family environment that would ensure their financial security, the other categories—the neighbor, the poor, and the needy neighbor, vaguely overlap with one another. When taking these passages together, the reader’s final sense is that charity must be directed toward anyone, whom they deem to be needy, rather than toward one who fits into a particular social or religious framework. The Hebrew Bible’s emphasis on giving within one’s charitable community is consonant with other statements regarding charity in the ancient world, which also called for local giving, but nevertheless did not advocate for indiscriminate giving.¹⁵

The following section of this chapter will examine a select number of rabbinic and medieval sources on charitable giving. Because of space

Table 13.2 A comparison between Leviticus 19:9–10, Leviticus 23:22–24, Deuteronomy 15:7–11, and Deuteronomy 24:17–21

	<i>Leviticus</i> 19:9–10	<i>Leviticus</i> 23:22–24	<i>Deuteronomy</i> 15:7–11	<i>Deuteronomy</i> 24:17–21
<i>ger</i> (alien)	√	√		√
<i>yatom</i> (orphan)				√
<i>’almanah</i> (widow)				√
<i>’ani</i> (poor)	√	√	√	
<i>evyon</i> (poor)			√	
<i>re’ah</i> (fellow)				

constraints this study only examines a small portion of many Jewish statements on charity. Jacob Neusner has compiled the most important of these statements into a small book and other scholars have examined the laws of charity giving in the Jewish tradition in a broader sense.¹⁶ My objective in this chapter is only to provide a sketch that indicates how the biblical proscriptions to give locally and without discrimination have been preserved in the past two millennia.¹⁷

CHARITABLE GIVING IN RABBINIC SOURCES

Early rabbinic interpretations of biblical statements on charity maintain a geographic, rather than a religious, character. But the agricultural element that is in the Bible is no longer present. Still, it is interesting to see that a number of rabbinic passages imply that it is more important to give to those living in one's close proximity than to focus on giving to one's religious brethren. Midrash *Sifre's* explication of Deuteronomy 15:7 explicitly spells out the Bible's instruction to give locally. In order to appreciate *Sifre's* interpretation, the relevant verse must be studied first. It reads,

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbour. (NRSV)

Sifre is concerned with the seeming extraneous detail in the verse, and seeks to determine how each clause contributes a new idea:

“If, however, there is a needy person among you:” and not among outsiders.

“A needy person:” the most needy is the one that comes first.

“One of your kinsmen:” this is your brother on your father's side.

When Scripture says, “*One of your kinsmen,*” it indicates that your brother on your father's side takes precedence over your brother on your mother's side.

“...in any of your settlements:” the inhabitants of your town take precedence over the inhabitants of any other town.

“... in the land:” the inhabitants of the land take precedence over the inhabitants abroad.

When Scripture says, “in any of your settlements,” if someone was dwelling in a given locale, you are commanded to take care of him.

If he went begging at doors, you are not obligated to him for every little thing.

“...[in the land] that the Lord your God is giving you:” Anywhere. ¹⁸

According to *Sifre*, the commandment to give charity begins at the most local level possible: within one's own community. Had the midrashic exposition closed here, the reader may still have thought that the Midrash interprets the biblical passage to be focused on giving charity specifically to Israelites. The expositor then clarifies, however, that the community in question is geographic. On the most local level, the subject's family and local community are merged into the same identity. But as the Midrash moves outward, the concentric circles of giving become geographic rather than familial. Rather than proscribe giving to one's immediate family, and then, say, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, the Midrash instead picks up on the Bible's emphasis on geographic giving that makes no distinction between giving to one's own family or religious group versus giving to another family or religious group. Moreover, there is no indication here that *Sifre* is referring to an exclusivist, theoretical end-time in which the community in question includes only Israelites.

Likewise, the Mishnah, the early rabbinic code of law recorded in about 200 CE, makes no distinction between giving to Jews versus non-Jews. Rather than doing so implicitly by omitting such a distinction, the Mishnah explicitly insists that non-Jews be provided for in the same manner as Jews. In the following Mishnah, the issue of giving charity to non-Jews is addressed within a different context than the exegetical one found in the *Sifre*. Instead of expositing a biblical mandate to give charity, the Mishnah explores charity-giving within the context of other behaviors that do not have an explicit source in the Hebrew Bible. In the following passage, the Mishnah preserves a record of various encouraged Jewish practices that are designed "to advance peaceful behaviors" (מפני דרכי שלום; *mipne darkhe shalom*).¹⁹ This passage includes an explicit statement allowing non-Jews to gather from one's field any produce that is designated for the poor. The Mishnah reads,²⁰

(8) The following rules were declared in the interest of peace (*mipne darkhe shalom*)...If a poor man cuts on the top of an olive tree [to take olives which are due to the poor for someone else to take] that which is now lying [on the ground] beneath him is considered theft, in the interests of peace (*mipne darkhe shalom*). Rabbi Yose says: [The Rabbis instituted that] it is actual robbery [and recoverable]. Poor non-Jews may not be prevented from gathering individual stalks (Leviticus 19:9), forgotten sheaves (Deuteronomy 24:19), and the corner of the field (Leviticus *ibid.*) [these being gifts to the poor], in the interest of peace (*mipne darkhe shalom*).

According to this passage, a field-owner may not discriminate in any way between Jewish and non-Jewish poor people. The Babylonian Talmud, a rabbinic exposition of the Mishnah, likely edited sometime in the early sixth century, builds on this idea by extending the injunction, which Jews must provide for the non-Jewish poor, to other legal categories as well:

Our rabbis taught: We financially support the needy of the Gentiles along with the needy of Israel, and we visit the sick people among the Gentiles along with the sick people of Israel, and we bury the dead of the Gentiles along with the dead of Israel, in order to advance peaceful behaviors.²¹

It is unclear what galvanized the rabbis to make such explicit statements about indiscriminate giving. In addition to the fact that the Hebrew Bible never specifies that one should only provide for a fellow Israelite, it is also possible that Roman accusations of Jewish misanthropy encouraged rabbinic writers to clarify their values.²²

MAIMONIDES' TREATISE ON CHARITY

The twelfth century Jewish philosopher Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, wrote an entire treatise on charitable giving. This treatise includes two statements, which relate to the non-Jewish poor. The first statement does so implicitly by means of omission, while the second statement does so explicitly. In *Charity Giving* 4:12, Maimonides writes,

One who does not permit the poor to glean or who permits one but prevents another or who assists one of them rather than another is considered a robber of the poor.²³

In his statement that one must not favor one poor individual over another, Maimonides does not specify whether this poor is or is not Jewish. It is possible that Maimonides is responding to popular presumptions that one should favor Jewish poor over Gentile poor, but this possibility is only speculative. The prohibition of turning away the non-Jewish poor is explicitly articulated later in the treatise:

One is required to feed and clothe the non-Jewish poor together with the poor of Israel, this for the sake of the ways of peace. In the case of a poor person going from door to door, one is not required to give such a person a large gift, but only a small one. It is forbidden, however, to allow a poor

person who asks for charity to go away empty-handed—you must give at least a dry fig, as it is stated, “Let not the oppressed turn away in confusion.” (Ps. 74:21)²⁴

Maimonides’ argument is that when giving charity, one may not discriminate according to the needy individual’s religion. This correlates with the tannaitic statement in the Mishnah that all poor people, including Gentiles, must be cared for. But Maimonides advances the statement of the Mishnah in two fundamental ways. First, the Mishnah is speaking only in an agricultural context, while Maimonides is speaking to all Jews, regardless of whether or not they are field-owners. According to the Mishnah, the field-owner must not designate the *pe’ah*, *leket*, and *shikhekhah* for Jews only, while in *Charity Giving* 7:7, there is no terminology specific to agricultural work.²⁵ Removing the agricultural context would have made it easier for Maimonides’ readers to appreciate and implement the biblical commandments. Second, Maimonides is broadening the boundaries of the Mishnah in terms of the identity of the subject giving the charity (from field-owner to every Jew) and in terms of the charity itself (from produce to any kind of gift). Finally, while the Mishnah instructs the farm-owner not to actively prevent non-Jews from taking produce from his field, Maimonides is proscribing proactive behavior that requires the subject to take the initiative.

JEWISH CHARITABLE GIVING IN THE MODERN ERA

Leading Jewish thinkers in the modern era have emphasized the integral nature of Jewish charitable giving to Jewish identity and survival.²⁶ This emphasis correlates with the recent trend among modern Jewish organizations to explicitly present themselves as being concerned for Jewish and non-Jewish poor equally. Mazon, for instance, an organization that provides food to thousands of poor families throughout the world, includes the following declaration in its mission statement:

MAZON responds to all in need regardless of race, region, ethnicity or religion. Hunger is a human issue, and MAZON’s mission is to end hunger for all, regardless of faith.²⁷

The Jewish Vocational Service likewise provides assistance to anyone who applies for help, and The Jewish World Service also provides help to Jews

and non-Jews without discrimination. Even *Hatzalah*, the Red Cross-equivalent ambulance service in New York and Los Angeles funded by Jewish philanthropists and originally founded as a service for Jews, now responds to emergency calls by anyone, regardless of religion. Their mission opens with the following statement:

Chevra Hatzalah, a non-profit corporation, is the largest all-volunteer Ambulance Service in the United States, providing premium quality pre-hospital emergency medical treatment and transportation at no cost to all who need it, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.²⁸

It should be noted *Hatzalah* is run almost primarily by ultra-Orthodox Jews, who tend to suffer a reputation of being closed to outsider communities.

Finally, in the first two sentences of its mission statement, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) states that it is devoted to protecting the civil rights of all people:

The Anti-Defamation League was founded in 1913 "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all." Now the nation's premier civil rights/human relations agency, ADL fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals and protects civil rights for all.²⁹

While the ADL is not devoted specifically to charitable giving, the deliberate globalizing of its mission to support the civil rights of all people, regardless of religion, reflects a larger trend in Jewish organizations to think on a global, rather than religious, scale.

Jewish organizations that do focus on giving charity only to Jews have globalized their work. Jewish Federations across the United States, for example, have been raising the percentage of their funds that are sent overseas. The Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, for instance, allocated over twenty-eight million dollars to Israel and overseas giving as part of its one hundred and seventy four million dollar budget in the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2014. An additional five million dollars were sent to organizations in the United States that are outside of Chicago.³⁰ These numbers, when compared with the annual reports of other Jewish federations in the United States, present fairly typical percentages.³¹ The model of a Jewish organization giving only to Jews, however, is becoming an exception to the rule. In any case, the shift from

the classical Jewish attitude that local giving takes priority over global giving to the more recent emphasis on globalized giving, is remarkable.

In addition to shifts in organizational giving, leading Jewish intellectuals are also now thinking about charitable giving in a more globalized sense. Their change of focus, like those of major Jewish organizations, is probably due to technological advances that make it possible to have greater awareness and information about extreme poverty plaguing regions all over the world. As Elliot Dorff has noted,

Jewish law's preference for the poor near-at-hand over those far away is much harder to define and justify in a world of instant communications. Within the North American Jewish community, some of the most pressing and costly needs concern Jews in places as distant as Israel and the former Soviet Bloc countries. Both morally and strategically, Western powers must be concerned with third world poverty. We may still have primary responsibility for the poor who are near and dear, but it is not as simple to apply that criterion as it was when people knew little of conditions away from home.³²

For Dorff, the awareness of Jews, particularly those in North America, of impoverished communities in the Third World is a phenomenon specific to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and requires a reevaluation of giving structures in Jewish law. The twentieth century theologian Rabbi, Joseph Ber Soloveitchik, also notes that part of the Modern Jew's identity is inherently enmeshed in the affairs of all of humankind, and therefore he or she must work to aid and "alleviate the pressing needs" of all people, regardless of religion:

The Modern Jew is entangled in the activities of the Gentile society in numerous ways – economically, politically, culturally, and on some levels, socially. We share in the universal experience. The problems of humanity, war and peace, political stability or anarchy, morality or permissiveness, famine, epidemics, and pollution transcend the boundaries of ethnic groups. A stricken environment, both physical and ideological, can wreak havoc upon all groups...It is our duty as human beings to contribute our energies and creativity to alleviate the pressing needs and anguish of mankind and to contribute to its welfare.³³

For both Dorff and Soloveitchik, the recent globalization of society demands that Jews make their philanthropic decisions on a more global scale.

There has also been some push-back on this recent shift. In 2006, a study was published by Corinne and Robert Sauer for the Jerusalem Institute for Market Studies called *Jewish Economic Theory and Practice*. In it, the authors supported a welfare reform act known as the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,” in which public assistance was decentralized and the federal government reduced its involvement in charity distribution by giving grants to individual states and allowing them to determine the types of cash support system they want to organize. Sauer and Sauer point out that this act is in line with the Jewish tradition of decentralized charitable giving.³⁴ Yet the dominant approach has been to shift toward centralized and globalized giving models.

CONCLUSION

The biblical and rabbinic Jewish mandates on charitable giving require that the non-Jews of one’s community be provided for alongside the Jewish poor. A decentralized model of giving, in which Jews give first within their localized community and then centripetally expand their giving outward, is the enduring model in the classical Jewish tradition. Funds for poor people living throughout the world should therefore not be drawn from a small number of select centralized organizations, but rather from local communities. More recently, however, leading Jewish thinkers have advocated for a different paradigm in which giving is directed toward those with the greatest needs, regardless of location and religion. Having established that Jewish tradition places geographic location over religious affiliation, the question remains whether we may, upon returning to our original texts in Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 15 and 24, interpret them in terms of protecting one’s geographic community rather than one’s religious kinsmen. If so, then רֵעֵךְ, *your neighbor*, in Deuteronomy 15:7 and 15:11 should be understood not in light of neighboring Israelites but in light of neighboring people—regardless of the religious group with which they affiliate. Finally, the biblical paradigm of centripetal giving must be reevaluated in light of the past century’s rapid globalization and the increased opportunities to address economic crises occurring throughout the world.

NOTES

1. Leviticus 9:9–10; Deuteronomy 14:22–29, 24:17–21.
2. Deuteronomy 14:28, 26:12–13.
3. Leviticus 9:9–10.
4. Leviticus 19:9–10, 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19.
5. Leviticus 23:22.
6. Rather than attempting to cite every rabbinic and medieval statement on charity-giving to reach a harmonized picture of what the Jewish perspective towards charity might be, this chapter conducts a more narrow case-study that focused on select sources which seem to directly engage with the biblical mandates to give charity. These sources are, I believe, representative of a larger tendency in Jewish tradition to regard *Tzedakah* as a commandment in which one is “religion-blind.” For more comprehensive studies of rabbinic references to charity, see Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *The Tzedakah Treasury: An Anthology of Torah Teachings on the Mitzvah of Charity* (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 2000).
7. Leviticus 19:9–10 (NRSV).
8. It seems that the passage’s final statement regarding the laws of the vineyard fall under the category of *leket* in that the immature grapes and fallen grapes are noticed by the field-owner while harvesting other ripe grapes from the vine. Deut. 24:21’s parallel phrase כִּי תִבְצֹר כַּרְמְךָ, לֹא תְעוּלֶל אֶת־רִיבְךָ rendered by NRSV as “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left,” seems to fall under the law of *shichechab*; in this passage the laws of *leket* are not mentioned, and therefore the phrase in Deut. 24:21 is probably referring to grapes that have been forgotten.
9. Tigay, Van Houten, and Kaminsky, among others, concur that a גר is a resident alien who hasn’t naturalized into Israelite law. Joel Kaminsky, “A Light to the Nations: Was There Mission and or Conversion in the Hebrew Bible?” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16.8 (2009) 6–8. Van Houten has shown that biblical material regarding the גר is progressively more inclusive, but again, this inclusion does not imply full conversion. See Christiana Van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (JSOT Sup 107; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 43–155. On the question of the גר’s status, see also Terence L. Donaldson, “Proselytes or Righteous Gentiles? The Status of Gentiles in Eschatological Pilgrimage Patterns of Thought.” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 7 (1990) 12; Joel S. Kaminsky, “Israel’s Election and the Other in Biblical, Second Temple, and Rabbinic Thought.” In *The ‘Other’ in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins*, ed. Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) 20; Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 72–73, 136–137.
10. Deut. 24:17–21 (NRSV).

11. Deut. 24:17–21 (NRSV).
12. See in particular Christiana Van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (JSOT Sup 107; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).
13. NRSV.
14. The laws of *shemittah* are discussed in Exod 23:10–11, Lev 25:1–22, and Deut 15:1–6. According to Exod 23:10, “[in] the seventh year you shall let [your land] rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat” (NRSV). Lev 25 does not refer to concern for the poor as the reason for *shemittah*, but instead emphasizes the aspect that the land of Israel, like the Israelites who are to reside in it, must observe its own Sabbath (Lev 25:1, 4, 6). Deut 15 underscores the welfare of needy individuals, placing emphasis on the remission of debt during *shemittah* and protection against creditors (Deut 15:2, 7–9). This passage segues well into the passage in Deut: 15:7–11 regarding the *'ani* and the *evyon*, which more directly concerns this chapter.
15. According to Hesiod, for instance, “Call your friend to a feast; but leave your enemy alone; and especially call (him who lives near you; for if any mischief happen in the place, neighbors come ungirt [without weapon] but kinsmen stay to gird themselves.... Give to one who gives, but do not give to one who does not give Hesiod,” *Works and Days*, 342–345 in *Hesiod*, ed. Glenn W. Most (LCL 57; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) 115, 117. Cf. Kattell Berthelot, *Philanthropia Judaica: le débat autour de la “misanthropie” des lois juives dans l’Antiquité* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
16. Jacob Neusner, *Tzedakah: Can Jewish Philanthropy Buy Jewish Survival?* (New York: UAH Press, 1997).
17. This chapter also does not address the historical reality in which diaspora Jews, beginning in the Second Temple period, continuously sent funds to Jerusalem to support the Temple. For attestations to such donations see Cicero, *For Flaccus*, 67; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 155–156 in *The Works of Philo* (trans. C. D. Yonge; 10th ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993) 771; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14.7.2 in William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987) 373. This chapter studies only biblical and rabbinic *proscriptions* and *policies* of giving, and is not a historical review of what Jews in the land of Israel and in the diaspora were actually doing, which would reflect, of course, a very complex portrait of giving that cannot be syncretized into a single policy.
18. Jacob Neusner, trans. *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation, Volume One: Pisqaot One Through One Hundred Forty-Three* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 290.

19. The numerous translations to the phrase מפני דרכי שלום are generally interpretive. Sola and Raphall's 1843 translation of the eighteen tractates of the Mishnah renders מפני דרכי שלום as "for the sake of promoting peace." (David Aaron De Sola and Morris Jacob Raphall, eds. *Eighteen Treatises From the Mishna* (2nd ed; London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1845) 292). Blackman renders the opening of the Mishnah as "And these things did they prescribe in the interests of peace." Philip Blackman, ed. *Mishnayoth, Volume III: Order Nashim* (New York: Judaica Press, 1963) 419; this is basically followed by Neusner who translates it as "And these rules did they state in the interests of peace." *Jacob Neusner, The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 476. Kehati explains the phrase as "כדי שלא יהיו קטטות ומחלוקות בישראל," "so that there would not be quarrels and arguments within Israel," but this is problematic because the closing statement of the Mishnah regarding non-Jewish charity is not an explicitly intra-Jewish issue. Urbach suggests the very rendering, "paths of peace," which has the advantage of being both literal and betraying no indication of motive. Ephraim E. Urbach, "Self-Isolation or Self-Affirmation in Judaism in the First Three Centuries: Theory and Practice," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Volume Two: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 279. Yet I believe that this category was, in fact, driven by motive. The translation "to advance peaceful behaviors," is mine, and should be read as a condensed version of what I believe was intended to be understood as "in the interest of advancing peaceful relations."
20. M.Gittin 5:8. Cf. b.Gittin 61a. t.Gittin 3:13.
21. *Babylonian Talmud* Gittin 61a; translation mine.
22. Although Berthelot does not explore rabbinic responses to these accusations, she does place them within the context of the Jewish rebellion against Rome in 66–70 CE Berthelot, *Philanthropia Judaica*, 156–170. Jonathan Magonet suggests that this term was meant to build on Jeremiah 29:7, which quotes Jeremiah's letter to Judeans living in exile, and his advice that they "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile...for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (NRSV). Magonet calls this attitude "enlightened self-interest." Jonathan Magonet, *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* (London: Tauris, 2003) 78–79.
23. *Charity Giving*, 4:12 in Marc Lee Raphael, ed. *Gifts for the Poor: Moses Maimonides' Treatise on Tzedakah* (trans. Joseph B. Meszler; Williamsburg, VA: The College of William and Mary, 2003) 30. Available at http://rab-bimeszler.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/Gifts_for_the_Poor.27084324.pdf.

24. *Charity Giving*, 7:7 in *Gifts for the Poor*, 54. Cf. *Hilkhot Melahim* 10.12: אפילו העכו"ם צוו החכמים לבקר חוליהם ולקבור מתייהם עם מתי ישראל ולפרנס ענייהם בכלל עניי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום הרי נאמר טוב ה' לכל רחמיו על כל מעשיו ונאמר דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום.
25. Maimonides' statement in *Charity Giving* 4:12 does refer to agricultural work, because Maimonides is concerned with clarifying the nature of the biblical commandment. But his later statement in chapter seven clarifies that these biblical mandates must be applied as broadly as possible.
26. Solomon Schechter, *Notes of Lectures on Jewish Philanthropy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1925); Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002) 105–123; Neusner, *Tzedakah*, 67–79; Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988) 369–372.
27. <http://mazon.org/about-us/>.
28. <https://www.hatzalah.org/organization.php>.
29. <http://www.adl.org/about-adl/>.
30. The JUF's annual report is available at http://www.juf.org/annual_report/default.aspx.
31. http://www.jfnareport.org/downloads/Financials_for_Annual_Report_Exh_A.pdf.
32. Elliot Dorff, *To Do the Right and the Good* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 153.
33. Joseph B. Soloveitchik "Universal Experience," in Abraham R. Besdin, ed. *Man of Faith in the Modern World: Reflections of the Rav, Volume Two* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Press, 1989) 75.
34. Corinne Sauer and Robert M. Sauer, "Jewish Economic Theory and Practice: Why the Distaste for Economic Liberalism?" *Jerusalem Institute for Market Studies* (2006) 17–18.