

## Jewish Readings

The immense distance between the world's poor and the world's prosperous continues to increase. That poverty is the handmaiden of disease, malnutrition, despair and rage. Such is the reality of our world.

We tend to forget, to shut our minds to the suffering of fellow human beings far away, because we have our own problems, or we are too busy, or because there is so little we can do. And sometimes we commit an even graver sin, and allow ourselves to think that all receive what they deserve.

God, let us not be content when others lack their daily bread, let us not be serene while some have no roof over their heads. Teach us to give thanks for what we have by sharing it with those who are in need. And teach us how to build a world in which all Your children will enjoy your blessings and praise Your goodness.

Adapted from Siddur Lev Chadash pp. 285-287

To be just is to be angry when justice is violated.  
*To be just is to choose just means to right wrongs.*

To be just is to wish that the guilty be convicted and the innocent acquitted.  
*To be just is to withhold judgement until the facts are known.*

To be just is to listen to all opinions.  
*To be just is to give every person the benefit of the doubt.*

To be just is to demand justice for others as well as yourself.  
*To be just is to demand justice for other peoples as well as your own.*

To be just is to desire that the rights of all shall be respected.  
*To be just is to desire that the needs of all shall be satisfied.*

To be just is to disbelieve that the rich deserve to be rich and the poor deserve to be poor.  
*To be just is to disbelieve that the successful are more to be respected than the unsuccessful.*

To be just is to reverence the Divine Image in every human being.  
*To be just is to work for a society in which these ideals are realised.*

Siddur Lev Chadash pp. 343-4 By Rabbi John Rayner.

O God, as we live in prosperity, help us to be mindful of the needs of others and to use our blessings for the benefit of all. We remember now:

Those who have been driven from their homes by wars they never made;

And those who hunger for their daily bread, whose water is undrinkable;

Those who suffer for their country's debt

And those whose labour is bonded in perpetuity.

All who are persecuted because of their beliefs or ethnic group

All who are deprived of their rights by the callousness and selfishness of others.

For our negligence we ask forgiveness, O God, from you and from our fellow men and women; for the unfinished task of building a better world we seek Your help; for the knowledge that it is never too late to try again, we give thanks.

Adapted from Machzor Ruach Chadashah p. 380

#### **NOTES FOR JUBILEE DEBT DEMONSTRATION. Thurs June 7.2007**

I am Rabbi Leonard Tann

The Jewish Faith rests solidly on the authority & divinity of the Torah - the 5 Books of Moses, given to us by God himself at Mt Sinai

In addition to the laws of Sabbaths, festivals, dietary laws & ritual, there are the divine commandments concerning honesty in business, kindness, care, consideration & charity towards others.

In ancient Israel, the Jewish farmer - and 95%...- had to leave the corner of each field - wheat, barley, oats, rye & spelt - for the poor & needy, the hungry & the stranger - to help themselves. When gathering up the grain into sheaves, the ears & stalks that fell to the ground were also left for the poor who gleaned in the fields. Likewise when picking the olives, dates, figs & grapes-from the trees, those that fell to the ground had to be left for the poor & needy. This was in addition to the money given to charity in each town & village. The Sabbatical year decreed in Leviticus, meant that everything that grew by itself, throughout the land of Israel, was for everyone, particularly the poor & needy.

The Jubilee year - commanded in Lev 25, - was designed to call a halt to debt. All debts were cancelled; it was as though God commanded - stop! Now start again with a clean sheet.

The Code of Jewish law - that classifies & clarifies the laws of the Torah, lays down the different levels of charity. The highest is to give someone a job - so that his human dignity and personal self-esteem is honored - he can earn his own living, and provide for himself. Other levels are to give him enough to live on while he finds himself a job.; or to give him enough to buy food for the day; or at least, enough to buy a cup of tea and a sandwich. It is consonant with the dignity of the poor that they do not know who gives it to them, and the giver does not know the identity of the person receiving his charity.

If all this is translated from the individual to the community - the responsibility of the community - even of the nation-state - yes, we have a duty to give to the poorer nations our surplus - like the corner of the field, like the grapes & olives that fall from the tree - and like the community charity-box. We have a duty to help poorer nations maintain their human dignity - to help them to help themselves, to give them enough to ensure they can survive while putting in place their own means of producing & earning.

Most of all, the Jubilee - to call a halt to endless payments, to reach the boundary - pay so far - but then, pay no more. The concept was to give hope to the poor - yes, we have to pay back loans and credit - but there is an end - and then we can breath again.

All this, we believe is how Almighty God commands us to order our society, to help the poor, to reach out a hand to the needy - to give them hope, dignity and self-esteem. And to that end today, I repeat the Jewish commandment here, and say - in the Name of All might God - let the rich nations help the poor and needy nations. No one needs to starve, no one needs to be hungry, desperate and without hope. It is for man to organize the resources that God gives us. Let us declare a jubilee - and full stop to debt. All mighty God the creator of us all, places this response on us. If we fail to give voice, we fail the moral & ethical teachings He has given us. We cry out - LET THERE BE A JUBILEE NOW.

Rabbi Leonard Tann June 7<sup>th</sup> 2007