

# HELP THE POOR

*Have many of us been neglecting the responsibility  
of helping the poor—God's way?*

by A. J. Portune

**I**N these crisis times — with unemployment at a critical level—many of God's people are having to endure financial hardship. Many families find themselves without the bare necessities of life. Some are unable to adequately feed and clothe their little children.

Even in times of prosperity and great abundance in the nation, there are still those in God's Church who, because of unusual circumstances and local conditions, are in critical need.

How are these "poor" among us to be provided for? Have they been overlooked in God's plan, or is there a responsibility that perhaps many of us have not understood?

Jesus Christ knew the poor would always be among us — regardless of the times (Mat. 26:11). Even in ancient Israel that same Christ said: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land" (Deut. 15:11).

Christ did not *overlook* the poor and needy. Rather, he gave definite **COMMANDS** concerning their care. We need to understand this **VITAL** point — and to comprehend **OUR PART** in Christ's planning.

## From Tithes?

Many have inadvertently assumed the poor were to be cared for out of tithes and offerings sent to the work, or from the special **THIRD** tithe commanded by God. However, when closely examined, there is no mention of the **POOR** in *any* of the tithe commands. Let's notice them!

God ordained the **FIRST** tithe originally for the Levitical Priesthood. "And, behold, I have given the children of *Levi* all the tenth [tithe] in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. 18:21).

The Levites were occupied solely with the service of the tabernacle and therefore had no time to care for cattle, raise crops or indulge in a trade. God gave them the **FIRST** tenth of all the increase in the land, they were able to treat this tithe as if it were their own corn and wine (verse 27).

These same tithes today are utilized similarly to pay all those serving *directly* in the service of God's people; and also to pay for services rendered to carry this Gospel to the world as a witness and to feed the flock (compare 1 Cor. 9:13-15 and Heb. 7:12).

No mention of helping the poor is included in this **FIRST TITHE**.

## Second Tithe—Its Use

God mentions another tithe — the **SECOND** tithe. Notice Deuteronomy 14 beginning in verse 22. This tithe is to be used before the Eternal in the place which **HE** shall choose (verse 23). This tithe is a specific command for all to come and rejoice before God on His annual Feast days—especially the Feast of Tabernacles. Included in this tithe — **THE SECOND TITHE** — are also the Levite — because his life is devoted solely to the service of the people (verse 27).

Again there is no mention of the *poor* in this specific **SECOND** tithe command.

## The Third Tithe

The Eternal further commands a **THIRD** tithe to be kept and utilized right in the area—"within thy gates." This tithe is to be saved every third year — or twice in seven years (Deut. 14:28).

This special *third* tithe is to be used for designated purposes. Notice, "... and the **LEVITE**, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the **STRANGER**, and the **FATHERLESS**, and the **WIDOW**, which are **WITHIN THY GATES**, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied" (Deut. 14:29; also compare Deut. 26:12-13).

Under certain emergency situations, the *Levite* needed additional third tithe help from time to time. Occasionally a **STRANGER** (sojourner, wayfarer or foreigner) entering the community needed temporary help until he got his feet on the ground. Special **THIRD** tithe help was *regularly* given to support **FATHERLESS** children and widows whose husbands had either died or deserted them. Again, no specific mention of help for the *poor* and *needy*.

## Direct Command for Poor

In all three of God's tithing commands we find no direct mention of helping the poor. Yet God *has* given a direct command concerning helping the poor. Let's notice it!

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy *brethren* **WITHIN ANY OF THY GATES**... thou shalt **NOT** harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother" (Deut. 15:7).

Here, in the 15th chapter of Deuteronomy — after having just reviewed the use of the *second* and *third* tithes — the Eternal now shows how the poor among us are to be helped. He continues,

"But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shall surely **LEND** him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth (Vs. 8).

Continuing in verse 9, the Eternal shows — even though the year of release be near, (Vs. 1) our hand should be **OPEN** to the poor among us.

Because of our willingness to *give* to the poor among us, God promises us a blessing, "... because that for this thing the Eternal thy God shall **BLESS** thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand to do" (Vs. 10).

This is not an **INVOLUNTARY** choice, but it is a **COMMAND**! "For the poor shall *never cease* out of the land: therefore, **I COMMAND THEE**, saying, thou shalt open thine hand **WIDE** unto thy brother, to thy *poor*, and to thy *needy* in thy land" (verse 11).

## A Loan to God

Failing to loan to or help the poor and needy in this way is a failure to **TRUST** GOD, because God **PROMISES**: "He that hath pity upon the poor *lendeth unto the Lord*: and that which he hath given will **HE** [God] pay him again" (Prov. 19:17). God shows that when we withhold our hand from helping the poor, we, in actuality, are withholding our hand from Him since He considers every loan to the poor as a direct loan to Him, and God, himself promises to repay us.

## A Basic Principle

Now, let's notice a basic principle that many of us have **NOT** been applying.

Since the Eternal knew the poor would always be present, He gave a living principle that would constantly remind the people to **CONSIDER** the poor. That principal is mentioned in Leviticus 19:9-10. "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the **CORNERS** of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather **EVERY** grape of thy vineyard, thou shalt leave them for the **POOR** and stranger [wayfarer]: **I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD**."

Let's *consider* this principle a moment! The Eternal is showing — by command — that it is actually *wrong* for us to use every last cent of our income or increase on ourselves.

How inconsiderate many of us have been!

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Every harvest season, when the children of Israel reaped their INCREASE, they remembered they had a responsibility to the poor. They remembered God had said not to take the very last head of grain and ripe grape for themselves—but to consider the poor and needy in the land—to leave a little for them.

Many of us—payday after payday—reap our increase and have no thought or consideration for the poor. The Eternal, knowing the poor would always be among us and need OUR help, gave this living command. Today we still have the poor, yet God's command is too often neglected.

### A Missed Blessing

God promises direct blessings for obeying this command. "Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will *deliver him* in time of trouble. The Lord will *preserve him* and *keep him alive*; and he shall be *blessed* upon the earth: and Thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will *strengthen him* upon the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his *sickness*" (Ps. 41:1-3).

Think of the blessings many of us have been missing because of not applying this command!

### More Examples

Jesus Christ, in the 6th chapter of Matthew, taught His disciples to help the poor. "Take heed that ye do not your ALMS [gifts to poor] before men. . . . But when thou doest ALMS [give gifts to poor] let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thy *alms* may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall *reward thee* openly" (verses 1, 3 and 4).

This was one of Christ's primary teachings, mentioned in the *same* chapter in which He taught the disciples to *pray* and

*fast*. Yet, many of us are letting down in this responsibility—and place no stress upon it.

Because of the diligent prayer and *alms* of Cornelius, a Gentile, God sent an *apostle* to baptize him and his family. "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius . . . a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much *alms* to the people and prayed to God always." An angel of God appeared to him and said, "...Thy prayers and ALMS are come up for a MEMORIAL before God" (Acts 10:1-4).

Yes, God takes *note* when we obey this law. God is very concerned with our diligence in helping the poor.

### Our Responsibility

Each one of us personally should make it our responsibility to help those among us who—although diligent—are poor and in need because of special circumstances. We should be eager to fulfill this command of God.

Perhaps we may not know of any family or individual in need. Then, we should tactfully inquire of the minister or one of the deacons or leaders in the Church who may know of a special case, or anonymously give to a special POOR FUND that your minister may use for this purpose.

There are always poor among us. There will always be this need—God says so. It is OUR responsibility to do our part.

With your support and obedience every Church area can have a reserve to help the poor. Used clothing and shoes are always in need and also a very welcome gift. If you do not have a local church, send them to headquarters in Pasadena.

Remember, Brethren, although this is our responsibility, it is also a blessing to help the poor. "If ye know these things, HAPPY are ye if ye *do* them" (John 13:17).

the result of man's own doing, God never intervened!

"And for the Sadducees, they take away fate [the determination of God], and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its [God's] disposal; but they suppose that *all* our actions are in our power, so that we are ourselves the cause of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, xiii, 5, 9; *Wars of the Jews*, ii, 14).

The Sadducees were wrong in this! In the Scripture it shows that God at times directs individuals and nations to do certain duties (Isa. 10:13-15, etc.). Of course, not every single action an individual does is being determined by God (Eccl. 9:11). The Pharisees, in this case, understood correctly that God intervenes in the affairs of mankind when He considers it necessary for the carrying out of His plan, but on the whole, mankind's actions are his own (*Antiquities of the Jews*, xiii, 5, 9).

The Sadducees certainly did not have belief in many truths of the Scripture. By disbelieving in the resurrection, disbelieving in the spirit world and also rejecting the fact that God ever intervenes in the affairs of man, they show clearly that they had little regard for the Word of God.

"They [the Sadducees] were very nearly free-thinkers, and in all cases were men of little religion, mere worldlings. Their wisdom was all worldly. The doctrines attributed to them by Josephus, concerning liberty and divine Providence [that is, the lack of divine Providence], are interpretations or compromises after the Greek fashion. For them all [the Sadducees] this was only an attempt to reduce the supernatural to its minimum, a process for eliminating God" (Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, vol. v, p. 40).

As pointed out by Schurer: "*Their interests were entirely in this world, and they had no such intensively religious interest as the Pharisees*" (*The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, sec. ii, vol. ii, p. 39).

### Brief History of the Sadducees!

When religious authority was again established among the Jews after the period of religious anarchy, the Pharisees were anxious for the people to start living a religious life, even though they brought into their religion many of the new customs from Hellenism. However, the majority of Sadducees made no real attempt to return to religion. They certainly saw no reason for accepting the many new customs as extra religious duties to perform.

The majority of Sadducees were priests

## JUDAISM *the Law of Moses?*

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### Sadducees Reject Other Scripture Teaching!

Throughout the Scriptures we are distinctly shown by prophecies and by examples that God at certain times intervenes in the affairs of individuals and of nations. There are multitudes of prophecies which

show that God is very soon going to personally intervene in the affairs of mankind. See, for example, the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

But the Sadducees believed not a word of this! They believed that God did not direct the mind of man in any form or manner—all things that happened were