



1. Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 67b

ת"ר העבט, זה שאין לו ואינו רוצה להתפרנס שנותנים לו לשום מתנה. העביטנו זה שיש לו ואינו רוצה להתפרנס שנותנין לו לשום מתנה וחוזרין ונפרעין הימנו לאחר מיתה דברי ר' יהודה וחכ"א יש לו ואינו רוצה להתפרנס אין נזקקין לו ...

Our Rabbis taught: "Lend" (Devarim 15:8) – this [refers to someone] who has nothing and does not wish to be supported [from charity], to whom we give [money] as a loan, and afterwards we give [it] to him as a gift. "Surely lend him" (ibid.) – this [refers to someone] who has [resources of his own] but does not wish to support himself [from them], to whom we give [money] as a gift, and afterwards we collect [it] from him after his death. [These are] the words of Rabbi Yehuda. But the Sages say: [If] he has [resources of his own] but does not wish to support himself [from them], we are not bound to [help] him.

2. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 253:10

עשיר המרעיב עצמו, ועינו צרה בממונו שלא יאכל ממנו, אין משגיחין בו.

A wealthy person who starves himself, and is miserly about his assets, not to eat from them – we pay him no heed.

3. Shut Maharshdam Yoreh Deah 166 (see also Sefer Chasidim 935)

אין חילוק בין מי שיש לו ואינו רוצה להתפרנס למי שאין לו מעות בעין ויכול להתפרנס ממקום אחר ממלאכה או אומנות או סחורה... שרבו מאד האנשים שאין להם מעות בעין והם בעלי מלאכה או דבר אחר, שיתפרנסו מן העשירים, ולא היה הקומץ משביע את הארי.

There is no difference between one who has and does not want to support himself and one who had not money extant, but he could gain sustenance from somewhere else – from work, craftsmanship, or business... for there are many who don't have money extant, but they can work or do something [and if they would be] supported by the rich, "the handful of grain could not satisfy the lion"

4. Sefer Mitzvot Ketanot, 120

שלא יאמר: מה לנו לסייע לפלוני? אם היה רוצה היה מרוויח יותר מצרכו! תלמוד לומר: "לא תאמץ" - שאפילו אתה נותן מהמחשבה הזאת, אתה עובר ב"לא תאמץ".

So you don't say "why should we help him? If he wanted, he could make more than he needs!" Thus we are taught, "don't tighten" – even if you think is, you violate "don't tighten".

5. Rabbi Shlomo Levi (Techumin 29): perhaps this forbids suspecting the needy.

6. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein "The Responsibilities of the Recipient of Charity" (on source 2)

We appear to be dealing with a miser who prefers to save and starve – or to take from charity – rather than use the resources already in his possession. Despite all the criticism that may be leveled against a passive person who takes no steps to help himself, he certainly cannot be compared to a person of means who mortifies himself. Even one who maintains that the latter is responsible for his lot can require the extension of assistance to the former.

7. Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 32a

הלך וישב לו", אומרת המשנה ב'אלו מציאות', 'ואמר הואיל ועליך מצוה אם רצונך לפרוק פרוק פטור שנאמר עמו

[If the owner] went and sat down and said: 'Since the commandment is upon you, if it is your wish to unload, unload,' he is exempt, as it is said: 'With him' (*Shemot* 23:5).

8. Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntshitz, Keli Yakar to Shemot 23:5

ומכאן תשובה על מקצת עניים בני עמינו המטילים את עצמם על הציבור ואינם רוצים לעשות בשום מלאכה אף אם בידם לעשות באיזו מלאכה או איזו דבר אחר אשר בו יכולין להביא שבר רעבון ביתם וקוראים תגר אם אין נותנים להם די מחסורם כי דבר זה לא צוה ה' כי אם עזוב תעזוב עמו הקם תקים עמו כי העני יעשה כל אשר ימצא בכוחו לעשות ואם בכל זאת לא תשיג ידו אז חייב כל אדם מישראל לסעדו ולחזקו וליתן לו די מחסורו אשר יחסר לו ועזוב לעזוב אפילו עד מאה פעמים

This is an answer to some of the poor among our people who cast themselves on the community and refuse to do any work, even if they are able to engage in certain work or in some other endeavor that will bring food to the table, and they complain if they are not given whatever they are lacking. For G-d did not command this, but rather, "You shall surely unload it *with him*," and "you shall surely *help him* to lift them up again" (*Devarim* 22:4). For the needy person must do whatever is in his power to do, and if, despite all his efforts, he fails to earn a living, then every man in Israel is obligated to support and strengthen him, and to provide him with whatever he is lacking, and unload even a hundred times.

9. Rabbi Lichtenstein

On the one hand, there is the mitzva of *gemilut chasadim*, with all the halakhic and social obligations that it involves,

which demand of the benefactor maximal assistance. On the other hand, there is a demand, perhaps no less legitimate, to minimize the aid and to share the burden. This demand has at least three components – one related to the limitations of the benefactor, and two connected to the welfare of the recipient.

First of all, since we are talking about dividing up limited resources, generosity toward one person always comes at the expense of his fellow. This consideration is true about every act of benevolence, but it is especially valid with respect to a public system built on the money and efforts of others upon whom are made coercive demands....

Second, unqualified giving, even were it possible in a practical and budgetary sense, is liable to clash with the fundamental objective of any relief plan: the rehabilitation of the recipient to the point that he is capable of standing on his own two feet, emotionally and functionally. If Rambam placed at the top of the scale of charity “a person who assists a poor Jew by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment – in a word, by putting him where he can dispense with other people’s aid,” then it is clear that the highest goal in helping a person who has already fallen low is the restoration of his independence.... It is precisely abundant aid that is liable to block the attainment of this goal, by intensifying the reality and the feeling of dependence to the point of degeneration and even paralysis of the emotional strengths that are necessary for the rehabilitation process.

Lastly, the participation of the recipient is necessary for his moral benefit, no less than for his psychological benefit. ...This clash necessitates a dual approach, in the spirit of the words of Napoleon – that a person should pray as if everything depended upon G-d and fight as if everything depended upon him. When relating to the needy person, one ought to encourage personal effort and stimulate self-confidence. This point has a universal moral foundation, but it draws special strength from the enormous emphasis that Judaism places on free will.

10. **Rabbi Shlomo Levi** cites his father, **Professor Yehudah Levi** as saying you violate “placing a stumbling block before the blind by not requiring people to work when they can.

11. **Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 9b** notes that a rich man could relinquish his rights to all of his property, and take *peah*, the corner of the field left for the poor. **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein** (YD 4:37) derives from here that even one who is responsible for his poverty must be supported. This is part of a general discussion of when you must save someone from self-destruction.

12. **Talmud Bavli, Sotah 14a**

... מאי דכתיב (דברים יג, ה) אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו... להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה מה הוא מלביש ערומים... אף אתה הלבש ערומים...

"What is the meaning of the verse, 'After Hashem, your G-d, shall you walk (Deuteronomy 13:5)?' ...To follow the character traits of G-d. "Just as he clothes the naked....

13. **Mishneh Torah, Laws of Mourning 14:1**

אלו הן גמילות חסדים שבגופו שאין להם שיעור... הרי הן בכלל (ויקרא יט-יח) "וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעִדָּ כְמוֹדִי".

These are ‘acts of kindness’ that are done with one’s body, that have no measurement...they are included under "Love Your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18)...

14. **Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein**

Based on “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” it is unreasonable to obligate a person to do for his neighbor that which he would not make the effort to do for himself. The obligation towards his neighbor and his neighbor’s right to receive acts of kindness seem to be conditioned on his neighbor’s readiness to do his share. However, the obligation to imitate G-d does not depend upon any other factor, for G-d’s kindness is unconditional.

15. **ibid**

Beyond a certain point, however – and I openly admit that, practically speaking, I don’t know where to draw the line – it is so easy for the needy person to help himself that his situation cannot be called one of distress. When his own salvation is easy to achieve, but for some reason he refuses to help himself, it is difficult to view him as in need.

16. **ibid**

The degree of recognition depends in no small measure on the idea of free will. This is why the halakhist will be inclined to adopt an ambivalent attitude towards the struggle over welfare budgets across the Western world today, between conservative politicians who are “stingy” and social workers who are “generous.” On the one hand, Halakha’s excessive valuation of *chesed* and of society’s responsibility toward the needy brings him to support the expansion of aid. But on the other hand, the more that this demand is based on the argument that aid must be expanded because psycho-social circumstances fetter the needy and prevent them from joining the work force, it clashes with the emphasis that Judaism places upon free will.