The Jewish Tzedakah (Gifting) Community

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Ce texte s'inspire de l'œuvre de Geneviève Vaughan et cherche à établir une nouvelle économie du don maternel en dehors des confins du patriarcat. L'auteure cherche à appliquer cette idée à la communauté juive Tzedakah pour étudier l'économie du don qui se développe sous le patriarcat et l'oppression et comment, par extension, l'économie du don maternel peut s'être universalisée. L'auteure ensuite examine les avantages et les failles de la société juive Tzedakah comme une forme socio-économique alternative.

Genevieve Vaughan, a friend and philosopher who has been a great source of inspiration for me, has developed an innovative alternative to and critique of capitalist economy—a paradigm for a new social order that is based on free motherly giving. Vaughan argues that motherly giving is an alternative model for economic distribution according to need. Such giving is transitive and community building, other-oriented (respects the value and dignity of the other), inclusive, cooperative, and inspired by Nature. Such gift giving, known from Nature and human conduct—and that especially flourishes these days on the Web and with the help of technology—carries spiritual meaning. Such an understanding leads us to acknowledge the human being as *Homo Donans* [the gift giving human] and empathy as a basic human pattern. The exchange economy, innovatively critiqued by Vaughan, keeps the gift economy hidden and unrecognized, yet, concurrently, uses and abuses it for its benefits.

Although I am far away from religion and religious faith in general and Judaism in particular—even if it is impossible to ignore them in Israel—and despite the injustices committed by the Jewish-Zionist State of which I am part, I find the concept of Tzedakah and its central role in Jewish communities throughout history an interesting and quite successful practice on which to build a society of giving. Tzedakah does not recognize motherhood as its source, as so powerfully suggested by Vaughan, yet, interestingly it views solidarity and fraternity rather than liberty and equality as vital, almost sacred, principles used not only towards members of one's community but towards strangers as well. The Jewish Tzedakah society is built on the commandment for individual giving applied to men and women alike and on communal institutions of Tzedakah. It is indeed a model for a giving community that predates the modern welfare society and has been in operation since biblical times but especially during 2000 years of Jewish Diaspora. In many ways, it is still in operation in Israel and other Jewish communities today. Nevertheless, its patriarchal and class power relations cannot be ignored. Attention has to be given in particular to the efforts made by Jewish leaders to educate donors to give Tzedakah (including its advantages to the donors themselves), in a way, to overcome men's reluctance to give, in contrast to Vaughan's understanding of mother's gift giving as necessary for the growth and survival of the child.

This article is not meant to present a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the Tzedakah society. By understanding its basic premises, I wish to study how the gift economy operates and develops under patriarchy and oppression and what lessons I can draw from such a society to the way the maternal gift economy can evolve into a universal principle, that is, how the maternal gift economy can be universalized.

As my main interest is the above-mentioned two issues, I will not discuss the Tzedakah society fully. Rather, I will focus here on an introduction of the concept of Tzedakah and will dwell particularly on its role in Jewish history while keeping Genevieve's theory (and the welfare society as well) in mind. I will examine the advantages and shortcomings of the Jewish Tzedakah society as an alternative social-economic form.

What is Tzedakah?

Tzedakah is the responsibility to give aid, assistance and money to the poor and needy, or to worthwhile causes. It is one of most important of the 613 mitzvoth or commandments that Jews are obligated to observe and more generally refers to any good deed (Judaism 101). Tzedakah means giving to the poor and the needy. Tzedakah in Hebrew means righteousness, fairness, or justice. In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as an act of generosity; it is simply an act of justice, the performance of a duty, giving the poor their due (Judaism 101). It is the right thing to do. The etymological connection between Tzedakah and Tzedek—generosity and justice—implies that social welfare is viewed as an economic and social justice matter and Tzedakah, giving, is part of Tzedek, justice.

Often human beings assume that all human beings give for the same reasons and in same forms as they do for that is the humane thing to do. However, in fact, when comparing cultures the differences in patterns of generosity are salient. While Christianity and Greek culture usually treat giving as, by definition, "a free gift," something voluntary, not a matter for legal stipulation, Judaism generally regards Tzedakah or tithes as thoroughly a law-regulated duty to the poor who have a right to the payments made to them. That is "just giving" in the sense of giving out of an obligation to justice in carefully measured ways by halakhic sets of priority (Zion, Vol 1: 11).

This commandment is directed to both the community as a whole and to the individual. Both are obliged to care for the poor. No other commandment seems to require simultaneous action of the public and of the individual as this commandment does. It is, however, meant not only for Jews.

At the end of every Jewish worship service, the Aleinu prayer states a goal of the Jewish people "to perfect the world under the sovereignty of God." The term "to perfect the world" in Hebrew is Tikkun Olam, which also means to fix or repair the world. The Torah claims, "There will never cease to be needy ones in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

Major Elements of the Practices

In ancient times, the Hebrew Torah was intended for a primarily agricultural economy and addressed Tzedakah in agrarian terms. For example, at harvest time, the Torah instructs believers to leave crops standing in the corners of fields to allow the poor to reap food needed for survival.

However, as the economy of the Near East diversified, rabbis addressed Tzedakah in financial terms. Public and private funds were created to support people in need. Food banks and soup kitchens were developed at a time of no governmental assistance.

The rabbis of medieval times clarified and codified the disparate laws of Tzedakah. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (called Rambam), probably one of the most important and influential Jewish thinker, developed an eight-stage approach to Tzedakah giving that asked, How much should one give? Should giving be done anonymously? What is the ideal form, or amount, of Tzedakah? The highest degree of Tzedakah for Maimonides was helping someone to become able to sustain himself, that is, the most virtuous assistance allows the recipient to become self-sufficient, and the second level is giving anonymously, so that the recipient and the giver are unknown to one another.

Maimonides lists his Eight Levels of Giving, as written in the Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot matanot aniyim ("Laws about Giving to Poor People"), Chapter 10:7-14:

1. Giving an interest-free loan to a person in need; forming a partnership with a person in need; giving a grant to a person in need; finding a job for a person in need; so long as that loan, grant, partnership or job results in the person no longer living by relying upon others.
2. Giving tzedakah anonymously to an unknown recipient via a person (or public fund) who is trustworthy, wise, and can perform acts of tzedakah with your money in a most impeccable fashion.
3. Giving tzedakah anonymously to a known recipient.
4. Giving tzedakah publicly to an unknown recipient.
5. Giving tzedakah before being asked.
6. Giving adequately after being asked.
7. Giving willingly, but inadequately.
8. Giving "in sadness" (giving out of pity): It is thought that Maimonides was referring to giving because of the sad feelings one might have in seeing people in need (as opposed to giving because it is a religious obligation). Other translations say "Giving unwillingly."

Tzedakah is more than giving money to the poor. Done properly, Tzedakah requires the donor to share his or her

compassion and empathy along with the money. In the writings of Maimonides, "whoever gives Tzedakah to the poor with a sour expression and in a surly manner, even if he gives a thousand gold pieces, loses his merit. One should instead give cheerfully and joyfully, and empathize with him in his sorrow" (Learning to Give). Tzedakah has two aspects: one with the hand and one with the heart. Judaism teaches the belief that donors benefit from Tzedakah as much or more than the poor recipients and the belief remains a common theme in Jewish tradition. Whereas the poor receive money or other material assistance, the donor receives the merit of sharing the Almighty's work. Accordingly, Tzedakah involves giving assistance with the hand and consolation with the mouth so the heart is without bitterness. The donor should give with a pleasant expression and with a full heart and the beggar should not hear rebuke (*ibid.*).

It is important to emphasize that unlike other ancient societies, the Jewish Torah adopted new principles of social justice: legalization of the rules, thus disconnecting them from the King's interests; simultaneous individual and social responsibility for the poor, especially the individual duty, according to the Torah, to support the needy; the care for both the survival and the advancement of the needy; the responsibility of the needy themselves to alter their situation; the acceptance of social stratification together with attempting to correct some evils of the free market —by distinguishing between accumulation of assets such as land, slaves and debts that are cancelled every 7 or 49 years, and accumulation of gold, jewelry and cattle by the wealthy that are his forever.

At first glance it seems difficult to reconcile the responsibility of the wealthy to care for the poor with the acceptance of social stratification as a given, perhaps even natural. This apparent contradiction can be resolved if we understand that the Torah's most important value is not equality or liberty but solidarity: the recognition that all human beings are God's children, therefore, friends and brothers and these fraternal relations are the model for society in general and the basis for equality. I may rephrase this assertion by suggesting that gift giving is recognized by Jewish thought as a fundamental economic principle or, put another way, the logic of gift giving is a fundamental principle of the Jewish economy.

Finally, Tzedakah is need-oriented: You are commanded to give according to the need of the other. If he does not have clothing, cover him. If he does not have household wares, buy them for him. If he does not have a wife, find him one. If he was accustomed to ride a horse while a slave ran alongside, buy him a horse, and find him a slave to run beside him.[1] In other words, Rambam recognizes the different needs of each person.

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Tzedakah in the Diaspora

Throughout the 2000 years of Diaspora, the role of Tzedakah in the survival of Jewish communities is very significant. With the absence of a religious institution or state, the Jews in the Diaspora organized their lives voluntarily. If they wished to build a synagogue, a school or cemetery, the only way to do it was by organizing themselves and independently selecting their leaders. Each community was like a mini polis: It determined its own rules, its members decided who could elect or be elected and be dismissed, its institutions collected taxes and organized relations with the authorities. As there was no obligating institution, the variety of Jewish communities was vast. In many ways it was and still is a democratic and representative system, though often only men and tax-payers could vote.

The Talmud, the central rabbinic text of Judaism, gives more detail on the mechanics of charitable giving, instructing that specific institutions be established in Jewish communities. These include, for example, the kuppah, a collection of funds to be distributed to the poor on a weekly basis, and the tamhuy, a daily food distribution for the needy. This ideal was implemented differently in Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora. Most Jewish homes used to have a blue and white tin box called a pushke for the deposit of Tzedakah coins for charity. From early childhood, Jewish children learned their responsibility to care for other Jews in need. Though the methods are now more complex, the motivation for Tzedakah endures today as it did throughout the centuries: to sustain the Jewish people, to enhance Jewish life and to strengthen the Jewish community today and in the future as well as

to benefit the whole world, what is called Tikkun Olam. Even today among religious communities in Israel and abroad, during daily prayer services, a pushke (or charity box) is commonly passed as part of the service, meaning that prayer and charity go together.

In exile, disconnected from the land, the

> Jewish urban community with its power to tax its members generated a new system of social welfare called for the first time tzedakah. This invention which has no Greco-Roman analogies constitutes the first prototype for a modern social welfare. Its concept of society is less analogous to John Locke with the primacy he gives to labor and to private property as the sacred foundation for society, and it is more consistent with the political thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau which may have laid the seeds for the modern welfare state. The communal kuppa, a centralized tzedakah fund responsible for taxing the community and distributing wealth, is like a mini-state and it can legally coerce individuals into paying their share. Further, it distributes the collected funds according to the strictures of the law, recognizing the eligibility and entitlements of the needy. It is this organized compulsory form of tzedakah that relates this ancient practice to the modern social welfare state and the notion of duties to the poor and social justice because the municipal kuppa is designed to support the needy based on a narrative of justice that obligates givers, entitles recipients and judiciously weighs and measures needs, rights, and duties. (Zion, Vol. I: 15)

Further,

> Rabbinic Judaism models the first welfare state with centralized tax collection and distribution—"from each according to one's capacity and to each according to one's need." It is both a continuation of and yet less comprehensive than the modern welfare state, which provides services to all citizens, especially those who are working contributors to its social insurance fund. Rabbinic tzedakah is devoted only to the needy, whether or not they are resident citizens of the community. But this Jewish proto-welfare state provides only maintenance support, not rehabilitation and it does not seek to repair injustice regarding the distribution of wealth and resources. That is the calling of the prophets in the Bible. In Rabbinic tradition it is not tzedakah, but rather tikkun olam, legislative and executive reforms, that seeks periodically to fix or recalibrate what is unjust and ineffective in the system. (Zion, Vol. I: 11)

Later, communal institutions with new demands began to arise. And the granting of citizenship to Jews during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries changed Jewish giving also. Since participation in the Jewish community and its institutions became voluntary, relief for the poor could no longer be mandated as part of communal taxation. Nonetheless, social expectations and norms continued to serve as factors "obligating" donors to help the Jewish poor. The rise of this voluntary philanthropy, in which women played key roles, was also encouraged by the increasing *embourgeoisement* of Jewish society as well as by the establishment of the State of Israel. Present day Jewish philanthropy is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. Eventually, this ancient idea has become philanthropy—and I believe this is a twist in the history of gift giving that needs special attention. However, the ancient methods of Tzedakah are still working and crucial in contemporary Jewish communities, especially among ultra-orthodox ones. Even I, when I was a poor student in Jerusalem, received financial support from one of these so-called Gemilut Hassadim Boxes or charity funds.

Women and Tzedakah

For Vaughan, mothering—an important experience for most women on earth—is the basis for understanding the gift economy. Though Jewish tradition respects mothers' roles and contribution, women and mothers are not central in Jewish thinking and history. In fact, they have been and still are discriminated against by Jewish laws in many ways. Even today we witness the removal of women and girls from public spaces due to religious sentiments. Perhaps, this difference in conceiving motherhood is the most significant one between the gift economy and Tzedakah.

Women have always been part of Tzedakah circles although the communal Tzedakah was mainly managed and distributed by men. Women found their space in the second circle. They built Tzedakah institutes of their own—to support poor brides and poor women in general, to buy wigs (for religious women who must cover their hair), to support women after they give birth or to get medicine. With modernism, many of them translated their experience into the newly developing profession of social work—Henrietta Szold and Bertha Pappenheim (known also as Ana O), two of the founding mothers of social work, are the most famous. But they did more than that: They established a link between women's religious lives and women's domestic or interpersonal concerns—what may be called the domestication of religion representing the intense concern with the well-being of their extended family and community (Sered 10). It reminds me of what

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen calls life rather than good production. Moreover, women are recognized in the Bible and other Jewish sources as gift givers and their teaching is no less important than men's wisdom and morality (what is called Torat Emcha—Your Mother's Torah).

Thus, women indeed have always been involved in the Tzedakah system, especially in response to women's, familial and community needs. Their role has however been considered by patriarchal mainstream Jewish thinkers secondary to men's role. In another Jewish source, the Midrash, we can find a different view that discloses the connection between acts of Hesed (loving-kindness) and the Jewish foremothers, and these acts not only position the mothers as equal to the fathers but also reveal the acts of giving accomplished by the mothers (Einat Ramon, 2005).

By close and innovative reading of the drama of the talmidic mini-story of Mar Ukba and Ms. Ukba, Noam Zion "contrasts *in extremis* two models of tzedakah—male and female: anonymity versus human contact and warmth, secret giving of money versus face to face hospitality, indirect and immediate helping. The contrast is accentuated in the most one-sided way for its literary effect, displaying two personalities as near caricatures. However, the inclusion of both voices in the Talmudic sugya creates a potential dialogue between them. The Rabbinic system of tzedakah is not monolithic or purist. I do not believe that Rabbinic thought wants to trade one extreme—"loving human contact and hands-on compassion"—for another extreme—"anonymous distance and abstract justice." Both aspects of one's tzedakah—respect for dignity and loving care—must be developed (Zion, Vol. II: 8).

He further suggests that unlike anonymous giving, personal gift giving creates community as long as it allows for reciprocity. It is reciprocity that the poor person in Mar Ukba's story wants and needs—to say thank you, to allow his words to repay in some sense the material contribution and thus build new social ties (Zion, Vol. II: 272).

In spite of such innovative readings of Jewish sources related to women and Tzedakah, it seems to me that the Jewish Tzedakah system is in many ways entirely distinguishable from Vaughan's motherhood as gift giving. Her view includes motherhood's central role in building a matriarchal community, the value system it presents in every living human being's first experience, the source of our mother tongue, and therefore the way we all construct our world, its critical stance towards male-made patriarchal, oppressive and war provoking institutions, motherhood's rejection of the symbolic order of the father and, finally and perhaps the most important—its non-religious yet spiritual character. I would dare to suggest that rejecting God and religion and embracing maternal giving as fundamental for a care society might be refreshing.

The Tzedakah society is comparable to the motherly gift economy, especially in its working within the non-gift economy, its need-orientation and acknowledgment of and respect to the Other, but above all in its attempt to build an alternative social order. Both offer a mode of distribution different from and alternative to the exchange economy.

Tzedakah and Maternal Gift Economy

The Jewish Tzedakah society stems from both religious commandments and situational necessities. Or, put another way, Jewish society in the Diaspora, before it used wisely and innovatively the Jewish mitzvah, responded to the needs of the people and the community alike. It developed a remarkable social order based, though not exclusively, on the gift economy that exists within the general economy, whether capitalist or agrarian, and that predated the welfare state. It reminds me how the gift economy developed in Argentina during the economic crisis of 2002: It was a gift economy responding to the needs of the people (Melchiori). The Tzedakah society is comparable to the motherly gift economy, especially in its working within the non-gift economy, its need-orientation and acknowledgment of and respect to the Other, but above all in its attempt to build an alternative social order. Both offer a mode of distribution different from and alternative to the exchange economy.

Tzedakah and the motherly gift economy share other elements: They both are important in community building and preservation, both use ceremonies for this purpose (though in different ways—transitivity and festivals for Vaughan and building necessary institutions such as the kuppah and Aleinu prayer in the Jewish tradition). Both emphasize care and solidarity as well as social responsibility (what is called in Hebrew arvut hadadit, that is, "reciprocal assurance"). Even what Vaughan calls the "creative receiver" might be found within the Tzedakah system. In both systems all, including the poor and the needy, are gift givers. Both advocate free rather than compulsory gift

giving, though from different angles. And both take from the givers, but unlike exchange systems do not extort and hide it; on the contrary, they acknowledge and respect it.

In many other significant ways, Tzedakah is different from motherly gift giving: whereas maternal gift giving is free and must be free, the Tzedakah is regulated by law:

> when comparing cultures the differences in patterns of generosity are salient. While Christianity and Greek culture usually treat giving as, by definition, 'a free gift,' something utterly voluntary, not a matter for legal stipulation, Judaism generally regards tzedakah or tithes as thoroughly law-regulated duties to the poor who have a right to the payments made to them. That is 'just giving' in the sense of giving out of an obligation to justice in carefully measured ways by halakhic sets of priority. 'Just' giving is not about charity or philanthropy, which are free gifts, something utterly voluntary, not a matter for legal stipulation. However, Biblical law and Rabbinic Judaism generally regard tzedakah or tithes as thoroughly law-regulated duties to the poor who have a right to the payments made to them. (Zion, Vol 1: 11)

The Tzedakah system accepts as given social stratification and assumes that poor, unemployed and hungry people are a fact of life, victims of some social or divine force, but not of man-made economic and social policy that may be altered. Consequently, it searches for no more than a correction of the market. The Tzedakah advocates have not developed a critique of the exchange economy nor do they view mothering as a model or respect mothers at all the way Vaughan has done so powerfully; they do not acknowledge the maternal roots of Tzedakah and gift giving. However, as the Tzedakah sees God and not the rich as the master of the universe, God can oblige the wealthy to give tzedaka other, and as such, tzedakah has an anti-capitalistic element.

Nevertheless, Tzedakah refers also to Tikkun Olam (healing of the world, The Jewish Mandate to Fix the World)—and in fact so is the maternal gift economy: an alternative basis for a new social order. Tzedakah is connected to Tikkun Olam as it views poverty as unjust and the wo:man's role as correcting such a situation, healing the Divine creation.

> Rabbinic tzedakah is devoted only to the needy, whether or not they are resident citizens of the community. But this Jewish proto-welfare state provides only maintenance support, not rehabilitation and it does not seek to repair injustice regarding the distribution of wealth and resources. That is the calling of the prophets in the Bible. In Rabbinic tradition it is not tzedakah, but rather tikkun olam, legislative and executive reforms, that seeks periodically to fix or recalibrate what is unjust and ineffective in the system.
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> The term "tzedakah" is usually restricted to the challenges of poverty, but of late it has been absorbed into a broader and deeper world view called tikkun olam. That term has become central to contemporary American Jewish identity, but it harks back to a rich evolution of Jewish notions of justice and social activism aimed at treating the issues of poverty and injustice at their root. (Zion, Vol. I: 16)

In fact both Tikkun Olam and the maternal gift economy look for transformation of the existing world to another world, that is more harmonious and moral. As such, both have a utopian aspect. At the same time both are rooted in the existing world and suggest a dynamic procession towards the New World. However, whereas Tikkun Olam—at least as a process—accepts the existing problematic reality whereas, the maternal gift giving rejects it.

The maternal gift giving is understood as a fundamental and universal human logic. As such, unrestrained by patriarchy and capitalism, it constructs the human subjectivities as Homo Donna (the gift giving human being). Tzedakah discourse and practice, on the other hand, is full of internal contradictions, difficulties. and tensions: unwillingness to give; the dignity of the poor and the needy; does our neediness make us truly human or does it demean us by making us dependent on others? Supporting Torah Study or the Poor? There are also different concepts of justice, and so o, as so eloquently and comprehensively presented by Noam Zion throughout his monumental work on the Tzedakah system.

Additionally, this system of giving allows some sorts of accumulation while rejecting others, whereas Vaughan advocates the circulation of gifts and gift festivals as vital ways for wealth distribution. As the Tzedakah system accepts social stratification as given, giving is directed mainly towards the poor and the needy, and as such, it may be conceived as no more than a kind of allowance for the disadvantaged. Vaughan's approach, in contrast, views the gift economy as a comprehensive social system that governs society and its conduct in general. Gifting for Vaughan is not only a series of individual acts but a main human logic and central social principle. In addition, Jewish thinkers understand that free giving might be done reluctantly so they invest efforts in showing how Tzedakah benefits donors. The motherly gift giver, on the other hand, acts in response to the children's needs as their survival depends on it; mothers do not expect to benefit from it, neither do they do it instinctively or naturally, as some patriarchal men

suggest. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, whereas a motherly gift economy can easily become the foundation of alternative social order, especially when it is integrated with gift based matriarchal societies, a Tzedakah based community, as I understand it, never tried to develop an alternative non-capitalist and non-patriarchal social order and turned into philanthropy through the shift of Jewish existence to modernism, which brought more prosperity and an independent state. And philanthropy, charity and hospitality - the European customs closest to gift giving as American-Native Professor, Barbara Alice Mann, suggests - are personal benevolence done by the wealthy, done often in privacy, and are easily evaded (Vaughan *For-Giving; The Gift in the Heart of Language*).

Conclusions and Lessons

What are the lessons the maternal gift economy can drive from Tzedakah communities ? The Tzedaka system can be viewed from two angles relevant to the advocates of the gift economy: first, the practice of gift economy under patriarchy, especially the conditions gift economy survives and been evident and respected (Tzedakah or gift giving as a process), and, second, developing gifting as a general principle for human societies (Tzedakah or gift giving as a social vision).

Gift Economy Under Patriarchy

The Jewish Tzedakah system is remarkable in that it has lasted for thousands years.[2] The Jews have lasted as a minority under oppression and prosecution, though to a different degree and facing, so it is believed, the loss of twelve tribes. Quite a few explanations have been suggested such as the insistence on Torah reading and study that make literacy and education most important elements; the oppression that enhances unity as well as the Jewish theological emphasis on separation between Jews and non-Jews (Goyim) that blocked assimilation; the emphasis on community preservation on the expense of individual desires; the commandment to teach the Jewish narrative to the next generations; a theological belief that the Jews are the eternal people, who hold a special connection to God and a unique historical role; solidarity and identification among Jews everywhere, establishing a transnational identity.[3]

I believe that the Tzedakah system—especially women's way of Tzedakah with its emphasis on dignity and community building— has also played a major role in upholding the Jewish people throughout history particularly since it has preserved solidarity and communal attachment, and the livelihood of less affluent Jews.

It is important to note that Tzedakah has lasted for such a long time probably as it is both a religious commandment and a major factor in community preservation. On the other hand, its prevalence has become more limited in the last two hundred years by processes of secularization and State building.

In a somewhat similar vein, maternal gift giving is central and preserved as long as children's needs have to be met and maternal gift giving is crucial for the working of socioeconomic institutions—patriarchy and capitalism in particular.

At the same time, maternal gift giving is constrained and devalued by the never ending patriarchal alchemical attempt to eliminate motherhood altogether (see other articles in this issue for elaboration).

Put another way, what enables the (still) durability of the maternal gift economy is exactly its crucial services to and exploitation by patriarchy and capitalism. The moment it will not be needed any more—as it seems happening these days (as a result of reproduction and robot technologies, trans-humanism and post-genderism), motherhood and mothering may be easily eliminated.

To avoid such outcome, it is important to universalize gift giving acknowledging its maternal roots.

At the same time, the gift economy not only survives as an alternative economy but also expands drastically due to growing unmet needs, the new technology and the growing understanding of the failures of capitalism.

Universalizing Gift Economy

(1)The Tzedakah system provides two interesting approaches to establish social justice and to formulate a gift giving social policy fitting to modern society: the first approach emphasizes the three Tzedakah circles—individual contribution, communal actions, and state duties.[4] In the modern world in which solidarity and social responsibility have been dissolved, such an approach obligates the re-use and application of terms and perspectives such as the African Ubuntu (I am because I belong or the individual is always part of a community and the larger world, and never stands by her:himself) or the Jewish "mutual assurance" (every Jew is responsible for the welfare of every other Jew—a concept translated in the modern world to cooperative endeavors). Such a view is supported by Rambam's position that there is a public obligation for Gemilut Ḥasadim, that is, acts of loving kindness or benefit society.

Not only the Israeli kibbutzim and other agricultural settlements like Moshavim as well as some corporate services (public transportation and health care) in the beginning years of the State exemplify the applicability of this approach in modern time but also the new cooperatives and urban kibbutzim established in the last few years do so

Another approach, highly regarded by one of the central Zionist thinkers, Zeev Zabotinsky, as a model for modern Israel refers to the Jewish laws of the Yovel, jubilee or fiftieth anniversary:

> The most developed Biblical system of helping the poor especially the debtor is the Jubilee and Sabbatical system described in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15. It too is based on the metaphor of God as a Landlord. Whereas the central message of the Exodus narrative demands a concern for the stranger, the Jubilee is about helping one's kin or brother. The Jubilee allows for the redemption of each member's original land holding, calls for a cancellation of debts and liberates slaves from their masters. Its central term is geulah (redemption of land, slaves and debts) among brothers who are responsible for the welfare of one another. The nearest blood brother is the personal redeemer (go'el), whose role is to prop up falling brothers unable to cope with economic failures. The goal is to enable the poor to properly rehabilitate and reintegrate themselves into society. Thus, it can be seen as a safety net that affirms brotherly equality and satisfies mutual interests. From this perspective, poverty is not considered the result of moral failure, sin or class exploitation and therefore prophetic critique is unnecessary. The solution to the cyclic phenomenon of impoverishment requires a grassroots effort by the community, renewed economic opportunities and periodic redistributions of the basic capital—land and labour in ancient Israel. Leviticus 25 is not concerned with the eradication of injustice or economic persecution, rather it is based on the principles of brotherhood, equality and mutual responsibility. (Zion, Vol. I: 13)

This second approach is even more radical than the first: It presents the possibility for active role by state institutions in equal distribution of wealth among all members of society, the control of wealth accumulation and the revolutionary and uncompromising understanding that all assets and resources ultimately belong to the state or the public and may be nationalized if necessary—the same way Torah seeks to persuade Jews to regard their material wealth as God's gift (Devarim) or even as God's property (Vayikra 25).

(2) The main target for giving according to Jewish tradition are the poor, the widows and the orphans—but also the foreigners and non-Jews. The biblical rationale for the last ones—foreigners and non-Jews—is the suffering position of the Israelites in Egypt.

Thus, based on such understanding of Tzedakah, I may suggest that to universalize gift economy it might be important to show it first, as a basic and universal human character (as new research on empathy among babies show), closely connected to Nature, and, second, as the foundation of a more developed type of welfare society that support all human beings within its territory. In other words, making the connection between the gift paradigm, environmentalism and ecology, and statehood.

(3) Unlike philanthropy, that give gifts to states, parties or institutions, Tzedakah as seen in the Jewish tradition is primarily directed at the poor, can be carried out by all social classes and is designed to prevent a hierarchical class system from arising. The pursuit of philanthropic honor surely plays a role in motivating the giving of money in the Jewish community as well. However, Rabbinic literature barely mentions or commends contributions for the sake of public institutions and its reservation about this model promoted by Hellenist society are explicit.

Unlike monarchs and neo-liberal politicians and tycoons, that symbolize the excessive accumulation of wealth and exploitation of individual subjects, the lesson of the Triple Shabbat—Shabbat, the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee (all connected to the idea of Tzedakah and concern the poor), with its demands to relinquish control, raises a moral sensitivity towards destitute individuals through its egalitarian institutions and policies of economic reform. The Triple Shabbat aims to promote economic justice, uplift the human spirit and proclaim liberty throughout the land (Zion, Vol. I: 14).

I believe that emphasizing the universal nature and spread of gift giving, its ability to distribute goods and services so as to make our society more equal and the ability of each of us to gife giving and its preservation over history—somewhat like the Tzedakah system—may encourage the understanding and implementation of the gift economy. Developing and emphasizing the various ways gift economy, like Tzedakah and the triple Sabbath, promotes equality, mutual assurance and balance, may make this perspective more acceptable.

On the way to universalizing gift giving, it seems important to further develop the critique of the existing capitalist patriarchal real world in which we are living and, at the same time develop practical steps to slowly but surely transform the existing real world.

To make gift giving closer and more understandable to current generation, I also suggest to outline the connection with current discourse and issues, especially welfare society, Distributive Justice and Social Justice. For example, to show the ways gift economy distributes the communal funds and prevents wealth accumulation, recognizes the eligibility and entitlements of the needy and enhances empathy and bondng. On the path to gift economy, such changes enhance awareness to the pitfalls of the current system.

Additionally, it is important to make the gift economy implementable: to develop practices that people every where can implement it (for example, some of the practices of the G'mach (gemilut hasadim, acts of loving kindness) system—modern version of Tzedakah popular among ultra-orthodox Jews and is somewhat like Time Bank but may refer to all kinds of needs.

Indeed the utopian world proposed through Tikkun Olam as well that of the gift economy are often criticized for being static as it reaches the absolute harmonious and moral existence or being utopian. I therefore suggest that the theory of the gifting society should be concerned also with presentation of conflicts and dilemas and conflict resolution as well as transformation and progress witin such society.

Finally, Tzedakah is highly respected by Judaism and Jews. It is a response to the needs of the poor, it is done since it is his or her right (social justice) and for the good of the whole world (Tikkun Olam).

So is gift giving—but unlike Tzedakah it is not sacred but belittled, it does not steams from Devine, ideological or statist commandment—as it is a basic human logic (*Homo Donanas*) yet unacknowledged, and it is not recognized as a path to Tikkun Olam, to a new post-patriarchal, post capitalist global order. The first step towards this fundamental understanding is, what Vaughan has been advocating for many years, transforming the basic paradigm for conceiving human practice, behavior and organizing.

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Endnotes

[1]I certainly disapprove the last recommendation. Yet, it reflects both the need-orientation and the acceptance of class structure as given.

[2]Jews and Judaism are not the only ethnic group or religion that has lasted so many years. The Persians and Budhists, for example, have lasted as well.

[3]I avoid here a wide discussion of this issue.

[4]I avoid also here a wide discussion of this issue.

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