



Gifts for the Poor: Moses Maimonides' Treatise on Tzedakah

Joseph Meszler

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The College of William and Mary Department of Religion released this Hebrew-English annotated translation of Moses Maimonides' treatise on philanthropy, Gifts for the Poor by Rabbi Joseph Meszler. This part of Maimonides' law code, the Mishneh Torah, describes the philosophy and history of Jewish giving. Beginning with legislation found in the Torah, Maimonides traces the origins of Jewish philanthropy from the individual Israelite farmer in biblical times to Maimonides' contemporary scene where charity had become a communal obligation. Rabbi Meszler's introduction to the treatise explains Maimonides' understanding of the reason for giving. Rather than see tzedakah (philanthropy) as a commandment to be fulfilled for a divine reward, Maimonides views giving tzedakah as a way of ennobling the giver on a path of virtue.

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