

Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, my name is Ilana Guez and I go to VTT. Tonight I have chosen to be here to talk about giving tzedakah and how we can all make the world a better place. Also, we need to teach Jewish children at an early age that they need to give tzedakah.

Do you know what tzedakah means? It is a Hebrew word meaning righteousness, fairness or justice. In Judaism, tzedakah is a religious obligation to do what is right and fair.

According to Judaism, G-d created the world 5774 years ago but did not complete it and left it unbalanced. Not all people have what they need. For example, some people have loving parents but some don't. Some people are healthy and some are not. Some people have plenty of food but some don't. According to Judaism, we need to work together to balance the world so that it is fair for all people and everybody has what they need. We need to work together with G-d and help finish the world and make it a better and fairer place by giving tzedakah.

Today tzedakah is commonly used to signify charity. It even says in the torah to give 10% of your earnings to tzedakah.

800 years ago there lived a Jewish scholar named Moses Maimonides. He became the most important Jewish thinker, writer and scholar in the world. He was very famous for his ideas and Maimonides was interested in tzedakah. He thought of an idea of different levels of giving, like steps on a ladder, and our job is to get to one of the highest steps. For example: the second highest step is giving without letting people know it is you who gave and the highest step is to help a person in need become independent. Some people still study Maimonides to try and better understand tzedakah and giving.

So how do children understand the idea of giving tzedakah? After all, it's hard for a child to understand to give what is theirs because we children are used to getting things all the time. But if our parents show us how to give tzedakah and that they do give tzedakah by showing an example, it will help kids learn to give tzedakah through out their whole lives. And this way we can teach our children and it will go on and on.

Some examples of ways that children could collect money on their own to give to tzedakah are to make a lemonade stand or a used toy sale or what ever ideas you have. This way kids can be involved in tzedakah. And that's what I try to do.

When you go home you should think about what I said and keep it in mind for as long as you can. I hope you enjoyed my speech and thank you for being my audience.