

FLASHBACK

THE EIGHT DEGREES OF CHARITY

*Rabbi Moses Ben Maimonides
a Spanish philosopher of the twelfth century*

The First and lowest degree is to give, but with reluctance or regret. This is the gift of the hand, but not of the heart.

The Second is to give cheerfully, but not proportionately to the distress of the sufferer.

The Third is to give cheerfully, and proportionately but not until solicited.

The Fourth is to give cheerfully, proportionately, and even unsolicited, but to put it in the poor man's hand, thereby exciting in him the painful emotion of shame.

The Fifth is to give charity in such a way that the distressed may receive the bounty, and know their benefactor, without their being known to him...

The Sixth which rises still higher, is to know the objects of our bounty but remain unknown to them...

The Seventh is still more meritorious, namely, to bestow charity in such a way that the benefactor may not know the relieved persons, nor they the names of their benefactors...

The Eighth and the most meritorious of all, is to anticipate charity by preventing poverty; namely, to assist the reduced fellowman, either by a considerable gift, or a sum of money, or by teaching him a trade, or by putting him in the way of business, so that he may earn an honest livelihood, and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity.