

Judging by Giving

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A Sacred Time – Tevet 7

Giving charity is an act of judgment, since we have to make a calculation about to whom we'll give, in what way, at what time, how much, etc. The strongest motivating force for giving tends to be empathy—when we're able to identify with and feel the pain of the other. This drives us to help in any way that we can.

Sometimes, the most we can give is a willing heart and an open ear, and this isn't a small gift, because often the sympathetic heart gives a suffering person enough energy to go on.

This month of Tevet is associated with the tribe of Dan, the last in the line of the tribes, the “gatherers.” This means that they took in Jews who had been ejected from their tribes because of impurity or sin; they gathered them back into the realm of holiness. This month is a perfect time to turn our gaze outward to find the person on the fringe who is just waiting for someone to reach out and gather them in.