

A Universe of Chesed

by Rabbi Jack Abramowitz

Want to perform acts of *chesed* (loving kindness) but not sure of all the details?

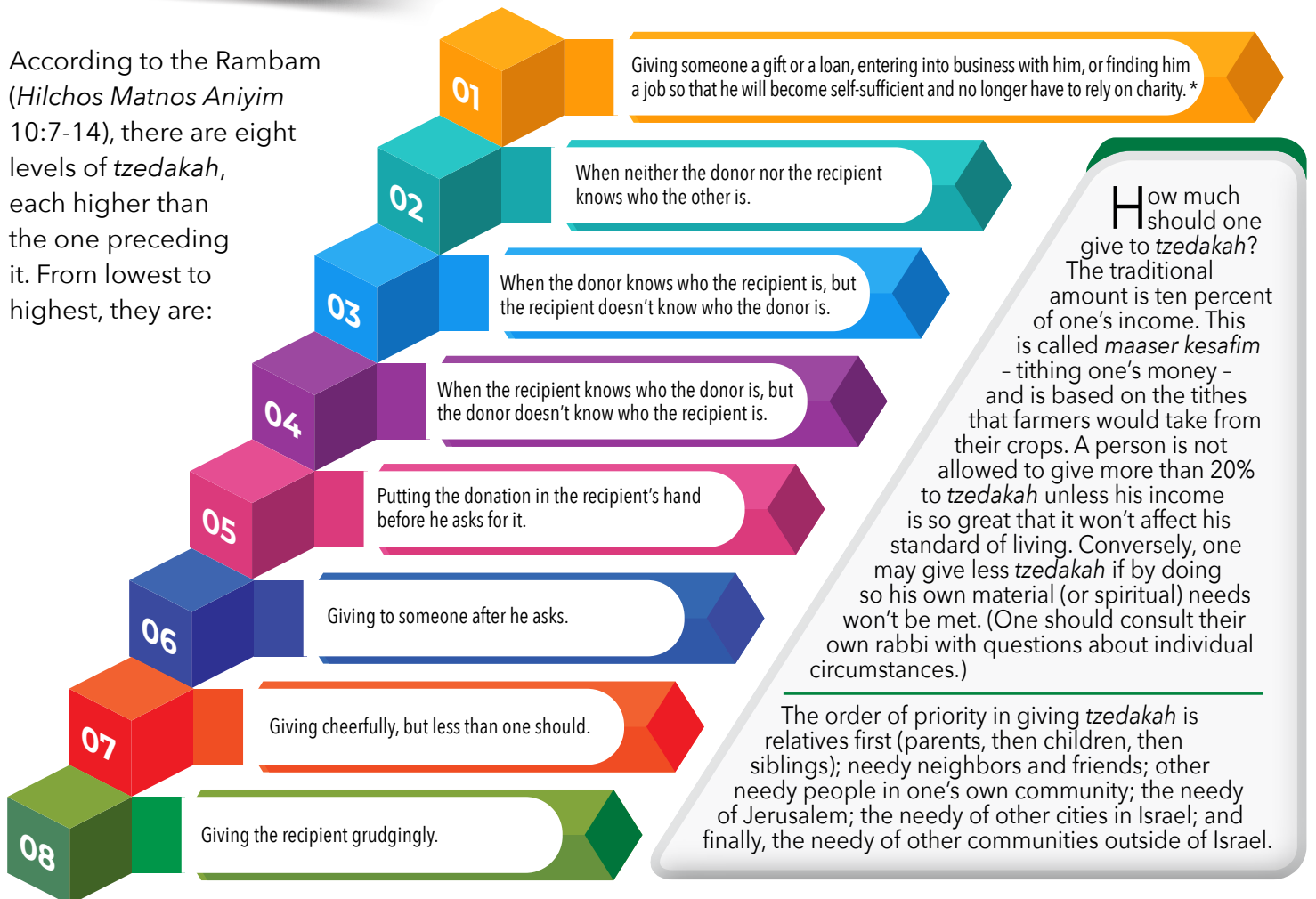


Here's a handy guide to help you get started with some of the more common deeds we can do. *Please note that this guide is not a substitute for a thorough study of these mitzvos.*



How To GIVE TZEDAKAH

According to the Rambam (*Hilchos Matnos Aniyim* 10:7-14), there are eight levels of *tzedakah*, each higher than the one preceding it. From lowest to highest, they are:



How much should one give to *tzedakah*? The traditional amount is ten percent of one's income. This is called *maaser kesafim* - tithing one's money - and is based on the tithes that farmers would take from their crops. A person is not allowed to give more than 20% to *tzedakah* unless his income is so great that it won't affect his standard of living. Conversely, one may give less *tzedakah* if by doing so his own material (or spiritual) needs won't be met. (One should consult their own rabbi with questions about individual circumstances.)

The order of priority in giving *tzedakah* is relatives first (parents, then children, then siblings); needy neighbors and friends; other needy people in one's own community; the needy of Jerusalem; the needy of other cities in Israel; and finally, the needy of other communities outside of Israel.

*Regarding this, Leviticus 25:35 teaches: "You shall support him - the convert and the native born - and he will live alongside you."