

# This is the Gate of the Lord

Contributed by [MAZON:](#)

Source: MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

When you are asked in the world to come, “What was your work?” and you answer, “I fed the hungry,” you will be told, “This is the gate of the Lord; enter into it, you who have fed the hungry.”

That hunger exists throughout the world is clearly a reality but it need not be so. Hunger is not the result of scarcity – the world produces twenty percent more food than is necessary to feed every man, woman and child on the planet.

For Jews, the issue is clear. The traditional obligations of *tzedakah* refer not to charity but to justice. We needn't look far to see the pain of people who do not know whether they will be able to feed themselves and their children. In our own land of abundance, hunger exists in shocking proportions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture tells us that 49 million of our fellow Americans are “food insecure” – the official term for hunger. That number includes more than 17 million children. In a land of plenty, this is not merely a shame – it's an outrage..

Many of the families seeking help have at least one person in the household who is working. To work and still be forced to choose between buying food and paying rent or utilities is a scandal. Justice – *tzedakah* – requires that we invite all who are hungry to enter and eat.

While we each must do all we can, we as individuals cannot do all that is required without a safety net of benefits like food stamps (now called SNAP) and school lunch programs to enable poor and needy people to overcome the scourge of hunger. Our commitment must include not just feeding people today but demanding systemic changes that address the root causes of hunger. We can all be the voice of the voiceless. This advocacy, fueled by our outrage about the prevalence of hunger, will truly fulfill our obligations for *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*.

**Barbara H. Bergen**

**Acting President**

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