

~**BEGGAR, BEGGING (530)**

[English, vagabond, tramp, drifter, hobo, homeless person]

- While the English word begging may mean simply to **implore or plead**, the discussion here deals primarily with begging in the sense of the **habitual practice of publicly asking for charity**.
- The patriarchal arrangement, which the Bible indicates existed prior to and after the global Flood of Noah's day, doubtless served greatly to prevent situations where individuals would find themselves isolated, in dire straits, and dependent upon public charity, and thus it worked against the development of a pauper class.
- From ancient times hospitality to strangers or travelers seems to have been **quite freely practiced**, such hospitality is at least reflected in the Biblical accounts, with rare exceptions.
- Now the two angels arrived at Sodom by evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot caught sight of them, then he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the earth. (**Genesis 19:1**)
- And he proceeded to say; Please, now, my lords, turn aside, please, into the house of your servant and **stay overnight and have your feet washed**. Then you must get up early and travel on your way. To this they said; No, but in the public square is where we shall stay overnight. (**Genesis 19:2**)
- But he was very insistent with them, so that they turned aside to him and came into his house. Then he made a **feast for them, and he baked unfermented cakes**, and they went to eating. (**Genesis 19:3**)
- So when they came home to Reuel their father he exclaimed: How is it you have come home so quickly today? (**Exodus 2:18**)
- To this they said; A certain Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and, besides, he actually drew water for us that he might water the flock. (**Exodus 2:19**)
- Then he said to his daughters; But where is he? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Call him, that he may eat bread.

(Exodus 2:20)

- Consequently they turned aside there to go in to stay overnight in Gibeah. And they proceeded to go in and sit down in the public square of the city, and **there was nobody taking them on into the house to stay overnight.** (Judges 19:15)
- Eventually, look! An old man coming in from his work in the field at evening, and the man was from the mountainous region of Ephraim, and he was residing for a time in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites. (Judges 19:16)
- When he raised his eyes he got to see the man, the traveler, in the public square of the city. So the old man said; **Where are you going, and where do you come from?** (Judges 19:17)
- In turn he said to him; We are passing along from Bethlehem in Judah to the remotest parts of the mountainous region of Ephraim. That is where I am from, but I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and it is to my own house that I am going, and **there is nobody taking me on into the house.** (Judges 19:18)
- And there are both **straw and fodder for our he-asses, and there are both bread and wine for me and your slave girl** and for the attendant with your servant. There is no lack of a single thing. (Judges 19:19)
- However, the old man said; May you have peace! Just let any lack of yours be upon me. Only **do not stay overnight in the public square.** (Judges 19:20)
- With that he brought him into his house and threw mash to the he-asses. Then they **washed their feet and began to eat and drink.** (Judges 19:21)
- The development of cities contributed to the weakening of the patriarchal arrangement and possibly this, together with a selfish tendency to take undue advantage of the hospitality or charity of others, led to the development of **begging** among humankind.
- **Begging**, or **mendicancy**, is apparently of very ancient origin in the lands of the Orient. This makes all the more notable the fact that in the Hebrew Scriptures there is no indication that **begging** existed to any degree or that it constituted a particular problem in the nation of

Israel from the time of the formation of the nation until it went into exile in Babylon.

- When moving out of Egypt and their slavery in that land, the Israelites **went asking**, a form of the Hebrew verb *sha- 'al'* from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold and mantles, and they **stripped** the Egyptians.
- And the sons of Israel did according to the word of Moses in that they **went asking** from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold and mantles. (**Exodus 12:35**)
- And Yehowah gave the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that these granted them **what was asked**, and they **stripped** the Egyptians. (**Exodus 12:36**)
- This, however, was in accord with God's command and prophecy, and it was evidently viewed as **just compensation** for their long years of **slave labor and the injustices** endured by them at the hands of the Egyptians.
- And I will give this people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and it will certainly occur that when you go, you will **not go empty-handed**. (**Exodus 3:21**)
- And each woman must **ask** from her neighbor and from the woman residing as an alien in her house articles of silver and articles of gold and mantles, and you must put them upon your sons and your daughters, and you **must strip the Egyptians**. (**Exodus 3:22**)
- In case there should be sold to you your brother, a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, and he has served you six years, then in the seventh year you should send him out from you as one set free. (**Deuteronomy 15:12**)
- And in case you should send him out from you as one set free, you must **not send him out empty-handed**. (**Deuteronomy 15:13**)
- You should surely **equip him with something from your flock and your threshing floor and your oil and winepress**. Just as Yehowah your God has blessed you, you should give to him. (**Deuteronomy 15:14**)

- And you must **remember that you became a slave in the land of Egypt** and Yehowah your God proceeded to redeem you. That is why I am commanding you this thing today. (**Deuteronomy 15:15**)
- It set no precedent for the practice of **begging**.
- The Mosaic Law contained forceful legislation on behalf of the poor, which, when observed, removed all cause for **begging**.
- And when you people reap the harvest of your land, you must not reap the edge of your field completely, and **the gleaning of your harvest you must not pick up**. (**Leviticus 19:9**)
- Also, you must not gather the leftovers of your vineyard, and you must not pick up the **scattered grapes** of your vineyard. For the afflicted one and the alien resident you should leave them. I am Yehowah your God. (**Leviticus 19:10**)
- In case some one of your **brothers becomes poor** among you in one of your cities, in your land that Yehowah your God is giving you, **you must not harden your heart or be closefisted toward your poor brother**. (**Deuteronomy 15:7**)
- For you should **generously open your hand** to him and by all means **lend him on pledge as much as he needs**, which he is in want of. (**Deuteronomy 15:8**)
- Watch out for yourself for fear a base word should come to be in your heart, saying; The seventh year, the year of the release, has come close, and your eye should indeed become **ungenerous toward your poor brother**, and you should give him nothing, and **he has to call out to Yehowah against you**, and it has become a **sin on your part**. (**Deuteronomy 15:9**)
- You should by all means **give to him**, and your heart should **not be stingy in your giving to him**, because on this account Yehowah **your God will bless you in every deed of yours** and in every undertaking of yours. (**Deuteronomy 15:10**)
- In case you reap your harvest in your field, and you have forgotten a sheaf in the field, **you must not go back to get it**. It should stay for the alien resident, for the fatherless boy and for the widow, in order, that Yehowah **your God may bless you in**

**every deed of your hand. (Deuteronomy 24:19)**

- In case you beat your olive tree, **you must not go over its boughs following up yourself.** It should stay for the alien resident, for the fatherless boy and for the widow. **(Deuteronomy 24:20)**
- In case you gather the grapes of your vineyard, **you must not gather the leftovers following up yourself.** They should stay for the **alien resident, for the fatherless boy and for the widow.** **(Deuteronomy 24:21)**
- **The Hebrew Scriptures strongly express trust in God's providence for those adhering to righteousness, even as David in his old age exclaimed;**
- **A young man I used to be, I have also grown old, and yet I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his offspring **looking begging** for bread. (Psalms 37:25)**
- **All day long he is **showing favor and lending**, and so his offspring are in line for a blessing. (Psalms 37:26)**
- **Compare this with the experience of apostate Jerusalem at;**
- **All her people are sighing, they are looking for bread. They have given their desirable things for something to eat, in order to refresh the soul. See, O Yehowah, and do look, **for I have become as a valueless woman.** (Lamentations 1:11)**
- **The tongue of the suckling has cleaved to its palate because of thirst. Children themselves have asked for bread. There is no one dealing it out to them. (Lamentations 4:4)**
- **Because of winter the lazy one will not plow, he will be begging in reaping time, but there will be nothing. (Proverbs 20:4)**
- **Portrays the **lazy man** as **begging** in reaping time,**
- **And without fail let his sons go wandering about, and they must do **begging**, and they must look for food from their desolate places. (Psalms 109:10)**
- **Describes the execution of punishment on the wicked as obliging his sons to go wandering about, and they must do **begging**, and they**

must look for food from their desolate places. In these two latter texts the word **begging** translates the Hebrew *sha- 'al'*; which term basically means **ask** or **request**.

- And each woman must **ask** from her neighbor and from the woman residing as an alien in her house articles of silver and articles of gold and mantles, and you must put them upon your sons and your daughters, and you must strip the Egyptians. (**Exodus 3:22**)
- And God went on to say to him; For the reason that you have **requested** this thing and have not **requested** for yourself many days nor **requested** for yourself riches nor requested the soul of your enemies, and you have **requested** for yourself understanding to hear judicial cases. (**1 Kings 3:11**)
- However, in these two cases the implication is that the **asking** is done in the active, and perhaps public, manner characterizing **begging**.

#### **See Also GIFTS OF MERCY**

- It appears that during the period from the time of the Jews return from exile **537 B.C.E**, down to the time of Jesus appearance on the earthly scene, the concept developed among the Jews that the act of **giving alms, or gifts of charity**, had merit in itself toward salvation.
- This is evidenced by the statement contained in the Apocryphal book of [**Ecclesiasticus 3:30**], written in the early part of the **Second century B.C.E**, that **almsgiving atones for sins**. Such view undoubtedly served to encourage **begging**. The much-publicized giving denounced by Jesus at,
- Hence when you **go making gifts of mercy, do not blow a trumpet ahead of you**, just as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you; They are having their reward in full. (**Matthew 6:2**)
- Domination by the foreign powers brought oppression to the Jewish people and doubtless caused considerable disruption of the application of the Mosaic Law concerning ancestral land rights and similar provisions. This, together with false religious philosophies, which failed to inculcate a genuine and principled love of neighbor
- Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you give

- the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These things it was binding to do, yet not to disregard the other things. (**Matthew 23:23**)
- But, wanting to prove himself righteous, the man said to Jesus, Who really is my neighbor? (**Luke 10:29**)
  - In reply Jesus said; A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who both stripped him and inflicted blows, and went off, leaving him half-dead. (**Luke 10:30**)
  - Now, by coincidence, a certain priest was going down over that road, but, when he saw him, he went by on the opposite side. (**Luke 10:31**)
  - Also likely shared responsibility for the growth of **begging** in Palestine. Thus we find a number of references in the **Christian Greek Scriptures** to **beggars** in that land.
  - The **blind, the lame, and the diseased** figure among the **beggars** described in the time of Jesus and the apostles. Ophthalmia, a disease of the eyes still common in the Middle East, perhaps caused some of the blindness among these men.
  - And they came into Jericho. But as he and his disciples and a considerable crowd were going out of Jericho, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, a blind **beggar**, was sitting beside the road. (**Mark 10:46**)
  - When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he started shouting and saying; Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me! (**Mark 10:47**)
  - At this many began sternly telling him to be silent, but he kept shouting that much more; Son of David, have mercy on me! (**Mark 10:48**)
  - So Jesus stopped and said; Call him. And they called the blind man, saying to him; Take courage, get up, he is calling you. (**Mark 10:49**)
  - But a certain **beggar** named Lazarus used to be put at his gate,

full of ulcers (**Luke 16:20**)

- Now in course of time the **beggar** died and he was carried off by the angels to the bosom position of Abraham. Also, the rich man died and was buried. (**Luke 16:22**)
- Now as he was getting near to Jericho a certain blind man was sitting beside the road **begging**. (**Luke 18:35**)
- Because he heard a crowd moving through he began to inquire what this might mean. (**Luke 18:36**)
- They reported to him; Jesus the Nazarene is passing by! (**Luke 18:37**)
- At that he cried out, saying; Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! (**Luke 18:38**)
- And those going in advance began to tell him sternly to keep quiet, but that much more he kept shouting; Son of David, have mercy on me. (**Luke 18:39**)
- Then Jesus stood still and commanded the man to be led to him. After he got near, Jesus asked him. (**Luke 18:40**)
- What do you want me to do for you? He said, Lord, let me recover sight. (**Luke 18:41**)
- So Jesus said to him; Recover your sight. Your faith has made you well. (**Luke 18:42**)
- And instantly he recovered sight, and he began to follow him, glorifying God. Also, all the people, at seeing it, gave praise to God. (**Luke 18:43**)
- Now as he was passing along he saw a man blind from birth. (**John 9:1**)
- And his disciples asked him. Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind? (**John 9:2**)
- Jesus answered; Neither this man sinned nor his parents, but it was in order, that the works of God might be made manifest in his case. (**John 9:3**)



- **We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night is coming when no man can work. (John 9:4)**
- **As long as I am in the world, I am the world's light. (John 9:5)**
- **After he said these things, he spit on the ground and made a clay with the saliva, and put his clay upon the man's eyes (John 9:6)**
- **And said to him; Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which is translated Sent forth. And so he went off and washed, and came back seeing. (John 9:7)**
- **Therefore the neighbors and those who formerly used to see he was a beggar began to say; This is the man that used to sit and beg, is it not? (John 9:8)**
- **And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was being carried, and they would daily put him near the temple door that was called Beautiful, in order to ask gifts of mercy from those entering into the temple. (Acts of Apostles 3:2)**
- **When he caught sight of Peter and John about to go into the temple he began requesting to get gifts of mercy. (Acts of Apostles 3:3)**
- **But Peter, together with John, gazed at him and said; Take a look at us. (Acts of Apostles 3:4)**
- **So he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to get something from them. (Acts of Apostles 3:5)**
- **However, Peter said; Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I do have is what I give you; In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk! (Acts of Apostles 3:6)**
- **With that he took hold of him by the right hand and raised him up. Instantly the soles of his feet and his anklebones were made firm. (Acts of Apostles 3:7)**
- **And, leaping up, he stood up and began walking, and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. (Acts of Apostles 3:8)**

- And all the people got sight of him walking and praising God. (**Acts of Apostles 3:9**)
- Moreover, they began to recognize him, that this was the man that used to sit for gifts of mercy at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they became filled with astonishment and ecstasy at what had happened to him. (**Acts of Apostles 3:10**)
- Like **beggars** today, they often situated themselves along public thoroughfares or near places frequented by crowds, as at the temple. Despite the prominence given to almsgiving, **beggars** were looked down upon, so that the steward of Jesus parable said; I am ashamed to **beg**.
- Then the steward said to himself; What am I to do, seeing that my master will take the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, I am ashamed to **beg**. (**Luke 16:3**)
- The two **Greek** verbs used to refer to mendicancy are related to *ai-te'o*, meaning **ask**.
- Keep on **asking**, and it will be given you, keep on **seeking**, and you will find, keep on **knocking**, and it will be opened to you. (**Matthew 7:7**)
- The **Greek** word *pto-khos'*, used at;
- But a certain **beggar** named Lazarus used to be put at his gate, full of ulcers (**Luke 16:20**)
- Now in course of time the **beggar** died and he was carried off by the angels to the bosom position of Abraham. Also, the rich man died and was buried. (**Luke 16:22**)
- In recording Jesus reference to Lazarus as a **beggar**, describes one who **crouches and cringes, and it refers to the very poor, the destitute, the beggars**. This same term is used at,
- Happy are those **conscious of their spiritual need**, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them. (**Matthew 5:3**)
- With regard to those conscious of their spiritual need [those who are **beggars for the spirit**, *Footnote*, poor in spirit, **KJ**. Concerning the use of *pto-khos'* in this text, **M. R. Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament**

(1957, Vol. I, p. 36) says that; It is very graphic and appropriate here, as denoting the **utter spiritual destitution**, the consciousness of which precedes the entrance into the kingdom of God, and which cannot be relieved by one's own efforts, but only by the free mercy of God.

- This same term is also used by Paul at;
- But now that you have come to know God, or rather now that you have come to be known by God, how is it that you are turning back again to the **weak and beggarly elementary** things and want to **slave for them over again?** (Galatians 4:9)
- In expressing his concern over those who were turning back again to the **weak and beggarly** Greek *pto-kha'* elementary things formerly practiced. Such things were **beggarly** in comparison with the **spiritual riches obtainable through Christ Jesus.**
- Although Jesus and his apostles showed kindness to **beggars**, they did not encourage **begging**, though they gratefully accepted hospitality, they did not **beg**. Jesus told those who followed him merely to obtain bread that their concern should be, not for the food that perishes, **but for the food that remains for life everlasting.**
- Jesus answered them and said; Most truly I say to you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate from the loaves and were satisfied. (John 6:26)
- **Work, not for the food that perishes, but for the food that remains for life everlasting,** which the Son of man will give you, for upon this one the Father, even God, has put his seal of approval. (John 6:27)
- Peter told a lame **beggar** at the temple; **Silver and gold I do not possess**, but what I do have is what I give you, using his **spiritual gifts to heal the man.**
- However, Peter said; Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I do have is what I give you; In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk! (Acts of Apostles 3:6)
- Though at times **hungry, homeless, and lacking clothing**, the apostles toiled, **working with their own hands, night and day**, so as not to be a burden on others.

- Down to this very hour we continue to **hunger** and also to **thirst** and to be **scantily clothed** and to be **knocked about** and to be **homeless** (**1 Corinthians 4:11**)
- And **to toil, working with our own hands**. When being reviled, we bless, when being persecuted, we bear up. (**1 Corinthians 4:12**)
- Certainly you bear in mind, brothers, **our labor and toil**. It was with **working night and day**, so as not to put an expensive burden upon any one of you, that we preached the Good News of God to you. (**1 Thessalonians 2:9**)
- The standard among Christians was; **If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat.**
- In fact, also, when we were with you, we used to give you this order; **If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat.** (**2 Thessalonians 3:10**)
- For we hear certain one's are walking disorderly among you, not working at all but meddling with what does not concern them. (**2 Thessalonians 3:11**)
- To such persons we give the order and exhortation in the Lord Jesus Christ **that by working with quietness they should eat food they themselves earn.** (**2 Thessalonians 3:12**)