

Tzedaka

A coin a day keeps the world spinnin' round





Tin Power

What makes a Jewish house Jewish? Well, there's a mezuzah on the doorpost. Books of Jewish wisdom on the shelves. Guests are welcome and when a needy soul knocks on the door, he doesn't go away empty handed. And then there's a little box or tin can sitting on a counter somewhere. Every day, a little spare change gets dropped in there, plus a few more coins before Shabbat. When it's full, it goes to a good cause, whichever the family chooses.

There may be a top-of-the-line entertainment system in this house. Maybe a leading edge computer—among many other expensive appliances and gadgets. But none have as great an impact on people's lives, fill the house with as much meaning and add as much beauty as that little tin can.



“How often is more important than how much.”

—Maimonides, 12th century

Why? Because when you write a check for \$365, a good cause gets another \$365. But give a dollar every day for 365 days—and your hand becomes a giving hand. As an anonymous Jewish sage wrote, “A person is more influenced by the things he does than by the knowledge he is taught.”

So if you want to pick yourself up, get into some elevated habits. Like dropping coins in a box.



Holy Space

It’s not just you—that little box will pick up your living space as well. “A charity box in a home or office,” the Rebbe taught, “redefines the entire space. It is no longer just a home, just an office. It is a center of kindness and caring.”

That is why he suggested making a tzedaka box a permanent fixture of your home or office. Put it somewhere it will stand out and be noticed. Keep one in your kitchen and drop a few coins in whenever you start to cook. Affix it to a wall of your house. Or more correctly: Affix your house to it.

Elevated Moments

Then there’s your time. Time needs to be elevated, too.

And that's why the Baal Shem Tov taught, "Don't let a day go by without its own act of giving."*

The Kabbalists call this, "elevating time, space and person." Or you could just call it, "making a better world."

Don't Give Charity

Charity, everyone knows, means being a nice guy and giving your money to someone with less. That's why, in Jewish tradition, we never give charity. It's unheard of.

Because everyone knows that whatever we have doesn't really belong to us to begin with. We are no more than treasurers, our sages taught, and everything that comes through our hands is given us to use for good things. Like educating our kids. Like buying kosher food. And like giving it to people who are short on what they need.

That's why, in Jewish tradition, we call it "giving tzedaka". Tzedaka means "doing the right thing." Putting your stuff where it really belongs. That's where your money will reap you the most benefit and bring you the most good—because that's where it's meant to be.

* On Shabbat or Yom Tov, when we don't handle money, you can put some coins in a tzedaka box just before sunset. And you can do other forms of giving on Shabbat—like feeding and teaching Torah.



It's an old obsession

Since we left the oppression of Ancient Egypt, the Jewish people have been obsessed with the act of tzedaka. In the fourth century, when the Roman Emperor Julian ordered the setting up of hostels for transients in every city, he referred to the example of the Jews “in whose midst no stranger goes uncared for.” Historical records from every era, wherever there were Jews, provide long lists of societies—free loan funds, soup kitchens, wedding funds, widow funds, orphan care, new mother care, free education and much more. There wasn't a Jew who wasn't either giving or getting—and often both.



Today, when Jewish values have been universally adopted, Jews continue to give more to both Jewish and non-Jewish causes than the rest of the population. Giving tzedaka is one of the things we are most proud of.



Do It Yourself

That little box or tin can—it’s called a “pushka”. If you don’t have one yet, you can make your own. We suggest you print the following instructions and use them as a label:

How to use this device for Full Empowerment:

1. Place strategically for maximum exposure in office and/or home.
2. Get habitual. Get obsessed. Each day, deposit a few coins in device. Make this awesome act the core event of your day. Every day.
3. Once device is full, choose a worthy cause. Call them up for further instructions.

Note: *Best when supplemented with random acts of kindness beyond reason.*



