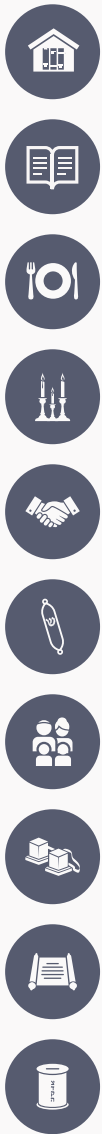


By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

לזכות
הת' מרדכי דובער שיחי'
מרקוביץ
לרגל הגיעו לעול מצוות
כ"ב שבט ה'תשפ"ו

נדפס ע"י
משפחתו שיחיו

MIVTZA TZEDAKAH



TAKING ACTION

THE TEN
MIVTZOIM
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The Greatest Mitzvah

Mivtza Tzedakah

It is difficult to convey in words just how much of the Rebbe's holy work revolves around tzedakah.

Walking in and out of shul, the Rebbe was constantly seen giving coins to children for tzedakah. After weekday farbrengens, the Rebbe would distribute dollars for tzedakah through the *tankistin*. During these farbrengens, the Rebbe often made an appeal (*magbis*) for a tzedakah fund. In countless *sichos*, letters, and *yechidus'n*, the Rebbe encourages people to give tzedakah, or to increase their donations to tzedakah.

Some of the most famous encounters people had with the Rebbe occurred during "Sunday Dollars," a time when the Rebbe would make thousands of individuals his shlichim for the mitzvah of tzedakah. At these encounters, the Rebbe often encouraged his visitors to place tzedakah pushkas in their homes, institutions, or places of business, and to put the dollar they received from the Rebbe in the pushka for tzedakah.

Indeed, the Rambam rules that giving tzedakah is one of the hallmarks of our people and that it serves as an identifying sign for a Jew.

The Jewish people will only be redeemed from their exile, he concludes, in the merit of giving tzedakah.

It is only natural that one of the Ten Mivtzoim established by the Rebbe is the mitzvah of tzedakah.



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Tzedakah: The Act

In the winter of 5734, shortly after the difficult victory of the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe spoke about the low morale of Israeli soldiers and their demand for a spiritual boost.

“The Israeli soldiers have been asking for tefillin, siddurim, and Tehillims,” the Rebbe said. “Tefillin is a practical mitzvah they can fulfill, siddurim will allow them to engage in *tefilla*, and Tehillim is part of Tanach, which will allow them to fulfill the obligation of Torah study. As far as tzedakah—the very fact that they stand guard to protect their brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel is itself the greatest act of tzedakah!”

Nevertheless, the Rebbe called for a more practical and noticeable act of tzedakah to be made available to the soldiers as well.

“Every army base, every division, and every battalion, should be equipped with a tzedakah box, allowing the soldiers to place money inside them, giving them the feeling that they are actively engaging in the mitzvah of tzedakah...”

Later at the same farbrengen, the Rebbe added:

“We spoke about making tzedakah pushkas available for certain individuals in specific places [army bases]. However, in truth, all of the Jewish people are soldiers, referred to as ‘Tzivos Hashem.’ In times gone by, it was taken as a given that every Jewish home would have a tzedakah pushka. Nowadays, people usually just send checks to organizations, and this practice has therefore tapered off a bit.

“As such, it would be a great thing to reestablish this custom: Every Jewish home should have a tzedakah pushka. Its mere presence in the home will serve as a constant reminder to increase tzedakah giving—especially when the person realizes that the tzedakah pushka is not yet full...”

“This can also be an amazing educational opportunity: When the children see the tzedakah pushka in the home, it’ll prompt them to ask about it. This gives the parents a chance to explain to them the meaning of tzedakah; how giving tzedakah is like giving a loan to Hashem (Who will repay the act with interest on top). Children, as well as adults, should be trained in the mitzvah of tzedakah...”¹

Later that year, on Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar, the Rebbe formalized the mitvza in what became known at the time as “The Five Mivtzoim”:

Mivtza Tzedakah: To encourage others to give

tzedakah, and to ensure—as mentioned many times—that in every Jewish home there should be a tzedakah box. This will keep the merit of this mitzvah present at all times, and it will inspire [the inhabitants of the home] to give tzedakah...²

Specifics:

The mitzvah of tzedakah is an all-inclusive one. Tzedakah is considered equal to all the *mitzvos* of the Torah, and in the Talmud Yerushalmi, the word “mitzvah,” without qualification, refers to tzedakah.

It is no surprise that the Rebbe saw this mitvza as a catalyst, bringing to greater engagement in all the other *mivtzoim* and mitzvah fulfillment in general.

An interesting anecdote in this regard: The Rebbe asked that the widely distributed “mivtzoim pushkas,” should feature on them drawings of tefillin, *mezuzos*, and *seforim*. “This way,” the Rebbe explained, “when looking at the pushka, people will be reminded to give tzedakah as well as about all the other *mivtzoim*...”

Additionally, the Rebbe instructed that names of specific organizations should not be written on the pushkas, so people wouldn’t get the impression that this mitvza was a fundraising appeal.³

In the Kitchen

A tzedakah pushka should be affixed to the wall of one’s home, thereby transforming the entire house into a “home of tzedakah.”

The best place to hang the tzedakah pushka is in the kitchen. When a woman prepares food for her family, she needs increased *sayata d’shmaya* to ensure the food



THE MIVTZOIM PUSHKA.

is absolutely kosher to the highest standard. Giving tzedakah before she prepares meals is a great way to invoke Hashem's help in this matter.

Additionally, having the tzedakah pushka in close proximity when she prepares food for her own family will remind her of those who are less fortunate and need the extra money to feed themselves. When she drops coins in the pushka as a result, she is creating a connection, in a sense, between preparing food for herself and her family and feeding the needy at the same time.⁴

In Children's Rooms

Every child should have a tzedakah pushka, a siddur, and a Chumash in their room. This will ensure that their education is not limited to the time they spend in school, but continues at home as well. The tzedakah pushka should be affixed to the wall with a nail or the like, thereby transforming the whole room into a "tzedakah room."

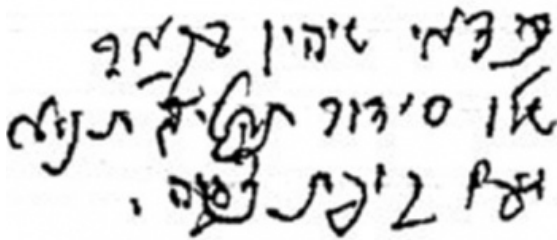
Having these items displayed conspicuously in their rooms will also help them teach others about the *mitzvos*. When the child has a friend over, and the friend will see the *seforim* and the tzedakah pushka, it's only natural that the friend's curiosity will be piqued, giving the child an opportunity to teach and share.⁵

In the Car

The Rebbe writes: "It is worthwhile to have in the car (in an appropriate place) a siddur, Tehillim, Tanya, and a tzedakah pushka. This should be publicized."⁶

In the Air

It would not be possible to enumerate all the instances when the Rebbe instructed people to place a tzedakah pushka in their homes, offices, stores, shuls, schools, *mikvahs*, and many more locations.



עצמי אהיו בקאר
אז סידור תהלים תניא
ואז אף תזדקה

כדאי שיהיו בקאר שלו סידור תהלים תניא וגם קופת צדקה
TRANSLATION: IT IS WORTHWHILE THAT THERE BE IN HIS CAR
A SIDDUR, TEHILLIM, TANYA AND ALSO A TZEDAKA PUSHKA.

Even when the administrators of El-Al came to see the Rebbe by dollars, the Rebbe asked them to place a tzedakah pushka on every one of their airplanes, giving the first three dollars for the first three pushkas. "If you send me an exact list of how many airplanes you have, I will send you a dollar for each and every one!" the Rebbe said.⁷

Every Day

On numerous occasions, the Rebbe instructed people to meticulously give tzedakah every single weekday, and twice on Erev Shabbos and Yom Tov. This would serve as a channel to draw down Hashem's blessings in their lives for whatever they needed, whether material or spiritual.

In 5714, the Rebbe established "**Keren Hashana**" with the goal of ensuring that every person gives tzedakah every single day. Once a person gives a sum to tzedakah, the fund disburses it twice a day throughout the year. The Rebbe would encourage people to donate during the month of Tishrei, but said that joining later also carries the merit of the previous days.

You can join the fund by logging on to www.MyKerenHashana.com.

Tzedakah and Geulah

Chazal famously state that tzedakah is great because it brings *geulah* closer. The Rebbe quotes this statement again and again, encouraging everyone to give tzedakah at all times, even beyond their presumed capacities, in order to finally bring Moshiach here.

In the last farbrengen that we were *zoche* to hear from the Rebbe on Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel 5752, the Rebbe famously spoke about the importance of *ahavas Yisroel*. At the very end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe finished with a call to action:

As mentioned, the practical lesson we must learn from this Shabbos, Shabbos Shekalim, is to increase our giving of tzedakah. This must be done in a manner of giving *ourselves* to Hashem, as the Alter Rebbe explains in his *maamarim*.

The main thing is: we will immediately merit to [receive] the tzedakah from Hashem—not the tzedakah that He scattered us among the nations—but the tzedakah that He gathers all the Yidden together to our holy land with *geulah ha'amitis v'hashleima*, immediately *mamash*, carried upon the heavenly clouds!



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A Little Plastic Box Goes A Long Way



Interview with **Rabbi Levi Greenberg**

(El Paso, TX)

By: Rabbi Bentzion Pearson

Many consider the mitzvah of tzedakah as either fulfilling a religious obligation, fundraising for a worthy cause, or making a positive impact in their community or the world at large.

I believe that with Mivtza Tzedakah, the Rebbe revolutionized how we can appreciate tzedakah as the greatest catalyst for bringing Moshiach and make this mitzvah accessible and relatable to everyone.

Everyone Can Make a Difference

My efforts in Mivtza Tzedakah evolved from my involvement with Education and Sharing Day.

Several years ago, I was encouraged by fellow shluchim to arrange an Education and Sharing Day proclamation from the mayor of El Paso in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan, based on the Rebbe's instructions⁸ that every municipality establish one day each year focused on moral and ethical education. I was familiar with the presidential proclamations issued every year, but arranging them locally was new to me. Although the mayor was happy to issue the proclamation in response to my request, I felt it was appropriate to translate its ideals into action.

Armed with the mayor's proclamation, I met

with the president of the local school district and the superintendent and pitched the idea of placing a Tzedakah box in every classroom in the district to encourage the students to start the school day with charitable giving. They were impressed with the concept, but raised concerns about potential legal issues with the idea.

As I continued to discuss the idea with friends, I was introduced to the ARK project launched by Rabbi Dovid Masinter from the Chabad House in Johannesburg, South Africa. Over 700,000 yellow, plastic, boat-shaped (Noach's Ark) tzedakah boxes had already been distributed throughout the country and were wildly popular. ARK is an acronym for Acts of Random Kindness, and the amazing success in South Africa prompted Rabbi Masinter to bring the project to the USA. Convinced these "arks" were the best way to get a tzedakah pushka into the hands of every child in El Paso, I purchased a few samples and started speaking with people about the idea.

The concept of tzedakah itself doesn't need much explaining. Whereas if you want to convince another Yid to put on tefillin, you need to rely on the *kabbalas ol* inherent in the *neshama* of a Yid to motivate them to do the mitzvah, everyone can relate to the need for giving charity.

It's also very easy to illustrate the positive

results of the mitzvah. When you give a dollar to a needy individual who can now buy a sandwich, the tangible impact in the world is obvious.

The uniqueness of Mivtza Tzedakah is in imparting the message that giving even a small amount of money can make a big difference. This is true not only for the beneficiary of the tzedakah, but also for the one giving the tzedakah. By giving tzedakah every day, a person is transformed into a giver. A designated box for giving tzedakah in a home, office, bedroom, or car transforms the space into a giving space.

Furthermore, the goal of tzedakah is not just about the specific result of that charity money. The action of tzedakah is valuable and impactful even before that money is translated into a discernible benefit for the needy.

Chassidus explains that tzedakah has a disproportionately greater effect on elevating the world than other mitzvos.

In Tanya perek 37, the Alter Rebbe explains that tzedakah is the greatest way to make a *dira b'tachtonim*. Taking money, in which so much of the person's life is invested, and using it for a holy purpose, elevates all the physical exertion that went into making that money. When money, which could have been used to sustain one's own life, is used for a holy purpose, it elevates one's entire life.

It follows that every penny given to tzedakah elevates the world and prepares it for *geulah*.

The Rebbe often invoked the Rambam's explanation (cited by the Alter Rebbe in Iggeres Hakodesh siman 21) on the words of the Mishnah "*Hakol lefi rov hamaaseh*": Better to give small amounts of tzedakah more often, than to give a larger amount at once, because every act of giving refines the person a little more, eventually elevating their entire being.

The two main action points of Mivtza



WITH THE MAYOR OF EL PASO AFTER SIGNING THE 'EDUCATION AND SHARING DAY PROCLAMATION' IN HONOR OF YUD-ALEPH NISSAN.

Tzedakah are directly in line with this idea: 1) Encouraging people to give tzedakah every day, 2) ensuring that every home has a tzedakah pushka. This causes many small acts of tzedakah to be performed by many different people, on many occasions.

Additionally, the Rebbe often emphasized that, based on sources in *shas* and *poskim*, the mitzvah of tzedakah applies to non-Jews as well.

The Pilot Program

Back to El Paso:

After months of discussions and following several leads, an influential Yid, with whom I had no prior connection, arranged a meeting for me with the president of the town's most prestigious charitable foundation.

All I had with me at that meeting was a yellow ARK pushka and a message: These boxes can help educate the next generation of philanthropists by training students to give charity consistently from a young age. He was intrigued by the idea and decided to test it out by launching a pilot program. Through their other education initiatives, the foundation found a private school and a public school willing to implement the ARK program for one month. Every student was gifted an ARK



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and encouraged to fill it at home over a few weeks. To illustrate how their charity could make a significant difference, a date was set for them to bring their ARKs to school, the money was collected, and the students voted on which worthy cause would receive the funds.

The High School Student

The first collection was a resounding success. More money was collected than expected, but most importantly, the foundation received an email from the school principal describing the impact the program had on the students.

“One of the high school boys was walking down the hall, and he stopped me in my office and told me ‘thank you’ for allowing the students to do the ARK project. He then went on to tell me that even though he lives in Juarez (a city in Mexico adjacent to El Paso—ed.), he doesn’t spend much time thinking about the poor people there because

the city is full of desolate people. But, he told me that every time he put money in the ARK, he felt like that was kind of like sitting alongside one of the migrants.”

“He crosses the border daily with the fast pass and never truly realized the impact of so many other suffering people, until the project. He mentioned that many students say they will give when they grow up and get a job or win the lottery. He told me that he would keep the ARK in his backpack to remind him that loose change can make a difference in the lives of others.”

This was the best feedback I could have hoped for. A confirmation that the small yellow boxes were having a real impact on real people.

Public Displays

Over time, I have found the message of Tzedaka, as expressed by the pushka, to be applicable in many important areas beyond giving per se.

Several years ago, a mass shooting happened at a Walmart in El Paso. The carnage caused by the young man who opened fire was so great that it is considered one of the worst hate crimes in recent history. 23 people were murdered, many more were injured, and the city was shaken to its core.

Later that month, I met with the County Judge in honor of Rosh Hashanah. He was devastated by the shooting and found it hard to discuss anything else. I had an ARK with me and suggested that one way to respond to unspeakable and incomprehensible hatred is by encouraging children from a young age to become givers, nipping blind hatred in the bud. He was so inspired by the message that he gifted over 3,000 county employees an ARK in connection with Education Day. He also discussed this concept on a federal panel convened with leaders from communities around the country that have suffered from mass shootings.

We’ve had similar success with the mayor and other dignitaries. People really connect with the act of giving and the idea of training ourselves to be givers.

In Sivan 5751, before traveling to Washington



RABBI DOVID MASINTER WITH HIS BOAT-SHAPED CHARITY BOXES.

D.C. to deliver an invocation in the U.S. Senate, Rabbi Shmuel Butman went to the Rebbe for Dollars and was instructed to bring a pushka to the chamber and place a dollar into it before the invocation so “they should all know what money should be used for.”

I do the same every time I deliver an invocation, and everyone in City Hall knows that I’m the guy who comes with a charity box. Once the mayor approached the podium and placed a dollar in the pushka, and some employees even asked me to bring them their own. Last year, the mayor gifted all the city hall employees with an ARK. The idea of consistent tzedakah is novel, yet so simple. It resonates very powerfully.

The Pushka that Saved a Life

Although this all sounds like a strategy in promoting Sheva Mitzvos among non-Jews, the pushkas have been making a major impact within our own community. Yidden are much more intentional about displaying pushkas in their offices and stores and, most importantly, appreciate the profound message it projects, and thus feel empowered to share it with others as well. Let me share an interesting story:

We always have a supply of ARKs at the Chabad House.

One day, a Yid I am close with told me, “My friend who’s not Jewish is very ill and currently in the hospital. Can I bring him one of the ARKs?”

I said, “Sure, absolutely.”

He took the pushka, and I forgot about the whole thing.

Two years later, this Yid arranged an event focused on combating hate speech, and he invited me to attend.

The panel included community leaders as well as security professionals, such as a member of the FBI’s counter-terrorism force, a professor at the local university, a prominent

journalist, and several others.

The professor spoke about the power of language in creating narratives and shaping culture, emphasizing the need to protect society from hate speech. Towards the end of the speech, he shared a personal story. Two years prior, he experienced a very serious heart incident, and he was in the hospital close to death, awaiting open-heart surgery. “I was in bed, barely conscious and wondering if I would make it out of there alive. Suddenly, my dear friend appeared and placed a small yellow boat next to my bed, telling me to start giving small amounts of charity every day. I could barely thank him, but after my surgery, I started intentionally placing money into that container, and today it is one of my most meaningful daily rituals with my daughter.”

I was shocked. The friend was, of course, the Yid, whom I mentioned earlier.

The professor had no idea that I was in the crowd or that I had anything to do with this gesture. I saw clearly how Mivtza Tzedakah can have a tremendous impact in ways we could previously not have imagined.

We were introduced after the panel, and he told me he believed the pushka literally saved his life.

An Easy Mitzvah

It’s essential to have pushkas at all events we host and to discuss tzedakah and the concept of giving.

When the Rebbe was visited by people during Sunday dollars, the Rebbe often gave them an extra dollar for the pushka in their home, office, business, or anywhere. The Rebbe constantly encouraged people to give, whenever, wherever, and however they could.

As the Rebbe emphasized very often, it’s an easy mitzvah. All it takes is a small penny. It’s a mitzvah that every person can do and, I believe, most importantly, appreciate.

I read an incredible story about the



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legendary chossid, Reb Avraham Hersh Cohen from Yerushalayim. He used to stand at the Kosel for a few hours every Friday and help Yidden put on tefillin.

One Friday, he asked an Israeli kibbutznik if he'd like to put on tefillin, but the fellow declined. So Reb Avraham Hirsh pulled out a ten-Agurot coin and said to the Yid, "You know what? Do a different mitzvah. Put this coin in the pushka."



RABBI GREENBERG DISTRIBUTES ARK CHARITY BOXES.

The Yid put the coin in the pushka, and a few minutes later, he came back to Reb Avraham Hirsch and said, "I've changed my mind. Let's put on tefillin."

I think this story has two powerful lessons:

Number one: we're always trying to get other Yidden to do *mitzvos*, and we sometimes get frustrated when we're not successful. But perhaps our fellow Yid is not yet ready for an intense commitment like putting on tefillin or putting up a mezuzah. Why not just give him a penny and have him do an easy mitzvah? Anyone would be ready to do that!

Secondly: *Mitzvah goreres mitzvah*. Don't underestimate the power of tzedakah. Perhaps this mitzvah will serve as a catalyst to inspire more *mitzvos* in its wake.

This Is Who We Are

The Rebbe was always giving tzedakah. Whether on his way in and out of shul, out in the street, or at a farbrengen.

At every opportunity, the Rebbe connected with others through the mitzvah of tzedakah.

There's an incredible video of the Rebbe during the first meeting of members of the Machne Yisroel Development Fund. The donors were all standing in the foyer of 770 when the Rebbe walked into the room. The Rebbe went straight to the pushka, placed a coin inside, and said, with a smile: "After charity, everything goes easier."

This was a room filled with wealthy supporters donating huge sums to Lubavitch institutions every year. And yet, the Rebbe first put a small coin in the pushka, illustrating the power of tzedakah, even the smallest amount.

The Rebbe was consumed with tzedakah. We should spread the awareness of this mitzvah as much as possible.

When people see us, they should see that we are people who encourage and promote giving. No one else presents tzedakah the way we do.

Based on my many conversations, I never take for granted that people know how to use the



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THE REBBE PLACES A COIN IN THE PUSHKA BEFORE ADDRESSING MEMBERS OF THE MACHNE YISROEL DEVELOPMENT FUND.

pushka effectively. It is important to clarify that they should place small amounts of money into it daily. Suggest to them that they keep a collection of coins nearby for this specific purpose. (“Who walks around with cash nowadays?!”) When the pushka is full, they should not hand the loose change to a poor person. They should empty the contents, count the money, and give the total value to a worthy cause of their choice or someone in need. Once they see how practical and easy it is, and especially when they realize you are not promoting this for your own benefit, they will appreciate the message much more deeply.

Moreover, in my experience, this mivtza

becomes a channel for many personal *brachos* as well.

And the greatest *bracha* of all: “*Gedolah tzedakah shemikareves es hageulah*”; it will hasten the coming of Moshiach, now! **T**

1 19 Kislev 5734; Toras Menachem vol. 74, pp. 288–291.

2 Likkutei Sichos vol. 13, p. 212.

3 Shabbos Parshas Korach 5734; Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 2, p. 237.

4 24 Elul 5748; Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 4, p. 348.

5 Ibid., p. 346.

6 Likkutei Sichos vol. 23, p. 402.

7 6 Teves 5751.

8 20 Av 5738.



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