

**THE JEWISH FEDERATION*****Imagine Israel Podcast:*****"The Father of Philanthropy in Israel"**

Robbie Gringras: Welcome to the Imagine Israel Podcast, brought to you by the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. Imagine Israel is the initiative of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, connecting Washingtonians to Israel and Israelis, through the lens of social change. With every Imagine Israel podcast, we get to meet innovative Israeli influences and changemakers, people addressing social and economic challenges in Israel. We'll hear from people whose lives and whose work intersect as they address issues in Israeli society. And I'm your host, Robbie Gringras, and I'm coming to you from Makom, the Israel Education Lab of The Jewish Agency for Israel.

In this episode, I'm talking with Kaynan Rabino, the vice president at Ruach Tova, which established Good Deeds Day. Now, if you're unfamiliar with it, Good Deeds Day is an annual international day of service, inspiring millions of volunteers around the world to positively impact the lives of others and to change the world one good deed at a time.

Good Deeds Day was created in Israel under Kaynan Rabino's leadership and it's now across the world, reaching 75 countries, including Taiwan, Italy, Kenya, and Brazil. But where did it begin its international expansion from Israel across the world? You guessed it: Greater Washington. The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington was the first community outside of Israel to adopt Good Deeds Day, back in 2012. The Jewish Federation's Sara and Samuel J. Lessans Good Deeds Day in

Greater Washington was the first, and remains the largest Good Deed Day celebration in the United States. It involves some 8,500 volunteers throughout Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

This Israeli Jewish vein of Good Deeds Day, *Yom HaMaasim HaTovim*, is particularly interesting to me because of its name. Even though it was born in Israel to a Hebrew-speaking public, the parent company to Ruach Tova, the Arison Family Foundation chose not to call Good Deeds Day "Mitzva Day", or "*Yom HaMitzvot*", which would be the Jewish way of saying "a good deed", you know, a "*mitzvah*".

Good Deeds Day also places a great emphasis on praising and celebrating the doing of good deeds, which would also seem to go counter to traditional Jewish attitudes to charitable work. The idea of *netina be-seter* - "giving in secret" is the phrase; *netina be-seter*, "giving in secret" - runs strong throughout our tradition. It would seem that the powerful heart of this wonderful day actually emerges from a different liturgical phrase: "*Ki miTzion tetze Torah*," "From Israel shall come forth the Torah." From Israel shall emerge Good Deeds Day throughout the world.

So, what connects Kaynan to Good Deeds Day? And what connects Good Deeds Day to Israel and to Greater Washington? Well, I popped into Kaynan's beautiful office in the center of Tel Aviv, right next to the opera house, to find out.

Good morning.

Kaynan Rabino: Good morning. How are you?

Robbie Gringras: I'm fine. It's been lovely to come up to this gorgeous little building here.

Kaynan Rabino: Thank you very much.

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Robbie Gringras: So, you get to see the opera quite often? 1

Kaynan Rabino: From the window, we see it every day. But, no, I'm not a fan of 2  
the opera. So, no. 3

Robbie Gringras: I see. So, Kaynan, what brings you to good deeds? It always 4  
seems to me that Israelis are really nice. 5

Kaynan Rabino: It's a very nice place, but we always have to talk about good 6  
deeds and about positive things. We see today in the country, and, I 7  
think, the United States sees it even a little more than we see it today in 8  
Israel -- we're talking about a lot of negative things. And I believe there's 9  
a lot of positive, in the person and in the world. But we have to showcase 10  
it and we have to bring all the people that are not in this circles of doing 11  
good -- bring them into the circle. 12

Robbie Gringras: And have you always been doing good? 13

Kaynan Rabino: First, I'm trying. It's every day a reminder. Yeah, from a young 14  
age I was in the Boy Scouts. I went -- also did what's called a *shnat* 15  
*sherut*, so I volunteered for a year, before my army service, in a town, a 16  
small town next to Haifa, in Atlit, working with the youth there in the 17  
school and in the scout movement. Then I went to my army service and, 18  
after the army service, I almost worked more than ten years in the scouts, 19  
in different positions. The last position was the international -- 20  
coordinator for the International Department. 21  
So, doing good is in my blood. I learned [to be a] social worker. So, I'm a 22  
social worker also. I worked in the youth prison in Israel. I opened a 23  
halfway house for girls. So, working in the society and doing good is part 24  
of who I am, and I chose it, from a very young age, to have this as my 25  
journey. And then I came 14 years ago to work in the organization, 26  
Ruach Tova (Good Spirit); it's a volunteer center in Israel, a one-stop 27

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shop for if you want to volunteer, connect between people who want to 1  
volunteer, their places of volunteering. And after two years of working, 2  
we said, "Hey, why don't we have, like, a birthday for all the volunteers 3  
and people are doing good? Why don't we have a date to recognize all of 4  
this?" So, we created Good Deeds Day. 5

Robbie Gringras: Now, what was the first time that you said to yourself, "That was 6  
a good deed that I did"? 7

Kaynan Rabino: I think maybe the first time that I recognized that I may be doing 8  
something more unique is in my last year in schooling, when I was in the 9  
scouts; I said, "Okay, let's go volunteer. Let's take the group. And I said, 10  
"Let's go every Friday." We were, like, 50 kids in the group. I said, "Let's 11  
every week, five people, go to the pediatric ward in one of the hospitals 12  
in Haifa and let's have, like, a *kabbalat Shabbat*. We have some songs. 13  
We bring balloons. I found this bakery that will give me all the leftovers 14  
on Friday. We have, like, the whole thing. And I thought this was the 15  
simple thing ever. I never thought it was something very special. 16  
In the end of the year in the school, they told me, "Just dress [up], 17  
because you're going to get an award." I said, "What award? I'm not good 18  
in" -- well, I was average in school; I was not bad. I'm not getting any, 19  
you know -- 20

Robbie Gringras: You're not getting it for your academics. 21

Kaynan Rabino: No, I'm not getting -- I said, "Why am I getting a" -- they said, 22  
"No, it's a surprise." And they gave me -- it's the first time they gave in 23  
the school a recognition for people that are doing for the other, or 24  
volunteering. 25

Robbie Gringras: I see. 26

Kaynan Rabino: Now, I thought this was part of my -- you know, my destiny, 27

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something I did. It wasn't hard for me. It was on the way. And the school  
thought it was something exceptional.

Robbie Gringras: What's interesting, the story that you told when you're brought up  
for this award at school, was not that that made you do what you'd  
already done, but there was a point of recognition.

Kaynan Rabino: Right. So, first, I think it's very important, recognition. I think we  
should recognize good things. Why? Because people recognize, all the  
time, bad things. And we're not giving them any counter for these bad  
things.

Look, let's open the newspaper, let's find a good article. It will be very  
hard for us to find a good article. Even a good article is probably in a  
negative way, it's shown. And I'm saying we have to bring positive in,  
and recognition, celebrating doing good, not only because this is a day  
that I worked on and -- you know, and I lead and I'm happy. It's because  
it's bringing all these people who say, "You're doing great work. Let's  
bring more people."

I have a lot of struggle with the companies when I tell them, "I want to  
do an article about you," and they say, "No," you know, "So, in the  
Jewish faith, you give quietly." But I say, "Exactly the opposite. We have  
to tell your story." "Why?" "To inspire other people, not to tell them,  
'Oh, you're so great. Everybody buys your product, your' -- no; to inspire  
another company who says, "Ah, he's doing it? Why shouldn't I do it  
also?"

Robbie Gringras: That's interesting that you talk about that there's some traditional  
Jewish reticence in talking about doing Good Deeds, the *netina be-seter*,  
the idea that the highest form of charity is that which no one knows that  
you've done. And ideally, you don't even know for whom you've done it.

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- Kaynan Rabino: You know, I'm not sure, you know. It says, "*netina be-seter*"; 1  
then we had all these rabbis now telling what does that mean. 2
- Robbie Gringras: Okay. 3
- Kaynan Rabino: I'm not sure when the person that wrote it just didn't say, "Don't 4  
brag about it." So, I'm not sure what the rabbis did after, but I think, to 5  
bring more people, we have to show them that there are more people. 6
- Robbie Gringras: I know that in England, in UK, they call it the Mitzvah Day. 7
- Kaynan Rabino: Yeah. 8
- Robbie Gringras: Here we are in Israel, and "*mitzvah*" happens to be a Hebrew 9  
word, which is the language which is spoken by most people here. 10  
What's behind the choice of "so, we're not doing *netina be-seter*, we're 11  
not calling it "*mitzvah*"? What's behind that phrase -- 12
- Kaynan Rabino: We never said it was a Jewish day. We never said it was a Jewish 13  
day or an Israeli day. Okay? 14
- Robbie Gringras: Okay. 15
- Kaynan Rabino: It's a day. It's interesting, because we're doing this podcast for the 16  
Greater Washington Federation, and it's interesting because one of my 17  
first meetings when we went out of Israel and said, "Let's do it outside of 18  
Israel," was in Washington in D.C. I had there, like, 20 people around the 19  
table, and I'm telling, you know, passionately, "Good Deeds Day. Good 20  
Deeds Day." And I had there a really very interesting talk with one of the 21  
rabbis and talking why isn't it called "Mitzvah Day" -- 22
- Robbie Gringras: Right. 23
- Kaynan Rabino: -- why isn't it called -- and I said, "It is not a Jewish day." So he 24  
says, "Why are you coming to me?" I said, "I'm coming because you're 25  
good people." And we are proud it is from Israel, but we wanted to bring 26  
all of the people together. We wanted -- for sure in Israel, we wanted also 27

the Arab society and also the Jewish society to connect. And if we  
 connect around a word that's like "good deeds day", "*yom maasim  
 tovim*", both parties can connect, because the idea of giving is in every  
 religion, doesn't matter which ones. But bringing together, today in  
 Israel, it's the only day, that I believe there is today, that connects all the  
 people: Arabs, Jews, orthodox, secular, north, south, West Bank, not  
 West Bank.

We had everybody in, because everybody can connect on good deeds.  
 Now let's sell the story it's from Israel, because when the Washington,  
 D.C. does it and when they have to talk about it, they -- I hope they say,  
 "This is a day from Israel." And we can bring everybody.

We know also in the Washington, D.C. area and also in other  
 communities, we see a lot of organizations that are not Jewish, taking  
 part. But the Jewish -- or the Jewish people or Israel started it, and that's  
 an essence for us.

So, when we go to Taiwan, when we go to Brazil -- you'll see Brazilian  
 people, "He's not Jewish," and he will say, "This started in Israel." You  
 will see that on the press release, you will see it in the newspapers, you'll  
 see when he talks. And I think that's the pride that we need to see, that  
 things are coming from Israel and from the Jewish people, to the world,  
 and we can bring everybody together and we're not, again, closed in our -

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Robbie Gringras: So --

Kaynan Rabino: And, well, just say, and I love Mitzvah Day. It's a great day. I'm  
 not saying -- keep on doing Mitzvah Day. Keep on doing good. Each one  
 connects to different things.

Robbie Gringras: Okay. So, we're saying it's not *netina ba-seter*, it's not Mitzvah

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Day, but it is *ki miTzion tetze Torah*. 1

Kaynan Rabino: Oh -- 2

Robbie Gringras: So, coming out from Israel, the good words. 3

Kaynan Rabino: Exactly. And we're very, very proud of it. 4

Robbie Gringras: So, tell me a little bit about the story, how you connect with 5  
Greater Washington. 6

Kaynan Rabino: So, we -- after four years, about, of doing Good Deeds Day in 7  
Israel, thought that "This is a great idea. Let's take it outside. Let's spread 8  
the word." And we went to our friends. We went first to our friends, who 9  
we know. So, this is the Jewish people. So, we did this big meeting, and, 10  
you can say, smartly and cautiously, they said, "Okay, let's take one 11  
project. Let's take one project, see what happens, starting small, seeing 12  
how to do it, working very smart." It's really -- we gave them the idea, 13  
we gave them the structure, and now they took it, really, and they own it. 14  
We believe, with all our partnership, we needed the person on the 15  
ground, own it. There's no fees to good deeds or things that -- we're just 16  
giving. We're, like -- we're giving materials, ideas, graphics. We're, like, 17  
really trying to help the network, and it's really -- it's their own, and I'm 18  
so happy to see it. And they're the biggest Jewish community, outside of 19  
Israel, doing Good Deeds Day. 20

Robbie Gringras: Yeah, wonderful. 21  
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*The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington organizes the largest 23  
Good Deeds Day celebration in the United States, bringing together 24  
8,500 volunteers for this international day of service. For the sixth year 25  
in a row, the Jewish Federation is proud to lead the Sara and Samuel J. 26  
Lessans Good Deeds Day on April the 2nd, 2017 - that's April the 2nd - 27*



*uniting 80 local organizations across Virginia, D.C., and Maryland. The  
Greater Washington community joins more than half a million volunteers  
around the world, putting into practice the simple idea that every single  
person can make a positive impact on the lives of others and change the  
world.*

*You're invited to join the movement to help people in need. Sign up for  
impactful hands-on volunteer projects at [gooddeedsdaygw.org](http://gooddeedsdaygw.org). That's  
one word: [gooddeedsdaygw.org](http://gooddeedsdaygw.org).*

I can see, around your room, there are all sorts of different graphics of  
Good Deeds Day. What language is this here behind you?

Kaynan Rabino: That's from Italy, three years ago. We were there. 12

Robbie Gringras: That's a big heart. 13

Kaynan Rabino: Yeah. 14

Robbie Gringras: And it's all written in Italian. 15

Kaynan Rabino: Exactly. So -- 16

Robbie Gringras: Although "Good Deeds Day", it's in English. 17

Kaynan Rabino: It's a -- yeah, "Good Deeds Day" -- 18

Robbie Gringras: Does it have to be said with an accent, though? 19

Kaynan Rabino: This is how we see Good Deeds Day; it has to connect to the  
culture that we come from. So, we have Good Deeds Day and we have  
"doing good". Now, when we came to Italy and told them that's how we  
see it, they told us, if we'll translate "doing good", it will be too  
questioned. So, they left the "doing good" and they had another sentence  
saying, "For the common good". So, they have that in Italian --

Robbie Gringras: I see. 26

Kaynan Rabino: -- and left the -- 27

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- Robbie Gringras: *per il bene comune.* 1
- Kaynan Rabino: Yeah. So, that's, like, "for the common good". That's a good 2  
story, Italy, because three years ago we said, "We'll go to Rome. We'll do 3  
a big event," and we had 20,000 people. And I think the highlight was 4  
that the pope met personally Shari Arison, the initiatory (sic) of Good 5  
Deeds Day and also the head of the Arison Group, the foundation it sits 6  
under. And he recognized Good Deeds Day. And he said also in his 7  
ceremony -- he blessed all the people that came to do good today, on 8  
Sunday. 9
- Robbie Gringras: How lovely. 10
- Kaynan Rabino: Now, for the people, you have to see that they were, like, all 11  
ecstatic and, like -- and I'm so happy that we have this recognition, 12  
because for the people it's so important. 13
- Robbie Gringras: Which is a fascinating combination, isn't it? On the one hand, we 14  
don't want to call it something Christian, and at the same time the 15  
recognition from a leader of the Christian faith is huge. 16
- Kaynan Rabino: Exactly. And they understand. 17
- Robbie Gringras: Interesting dance -- 18
- Kaynan Rabino: Yeah. 19
- Robbie Gringras: -- between -- 20
- Kaynan Rabino: Everything is a dance, in the end. Where do we keep or -- when 21  
we started Good Deeds Day, we said, "Okay, 'doing good', English, 22  
international." When you go to South America, it's not international. So, 23  
that's a lot of learning that we did during our journey when I was in 24  
Africa a month ago. 25  
So, when I came to them and said, "Look at all our great materials," and 26  
I'm going and I'm getting embarrassed on every material that I'm 27

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showing them, because there's no black person there. 1

Robbie Gringras: Oh, boy. 2

Kaynan Rabino: So, it's, like, "Okay. Reboot. This year, take a lot of pictures. We 3  
need you in" -- we don't have the pictures. So -- 4

Robbie Gringras: Presumably in Greater Washington you'd need different colored 5  
faces as well. 6

Kaynan Rabino: Yeah. Yeah. So, then we get a little more, because, like, one or 7  
two we have but, when you have, like, five -- 8

Robbie Gringras: Yeah. 9

Kaynan Rabino: -- white people on one -- so, it's not -- it's -- 10

Robbie Gringras: The proportions are very different. 11

Kaynan Rabino: Yeah, the proportion. So, we have -- that's how we -- it's 12  
important for us to get to each culture, learn it, get connected always to a 13  
local partner, also to understand the culture and also to build a 14  
community. 15

Robbie Gringras: So, it started here. By whom and why? What -- 16

Kaynan Rabino: But this is a secret, so you cannot tell anyone. 17

Robbie Gringras: Okay, we'll not broadcast this anywhere. 18

Kaynan Rabino: In one of our meetings with Shari Arison - like I said, she's the 19  
owner, she's a businesswoman, philanthropist in Israel, she's the owner 20  
of the Arison Group. So, Arison Group is a group that has also a 21  
financial or business side and a philanthropic side. And in one of our 22  
meetings, as the CEO of Ruach Tova, like I told you, the volunteer 23  
center, we were thinking how to make a bigger impact, how -- 24

Robbie Gringras: "Ruach Tova" means "good spirit". 25

Kaynan Rabino: Yeah, "good spirit". Yeah. So, we were thinking how to have a 26  
bigger impact, how to bring more people. And then Shari said, "Let's do 27

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- good deeds. Let's do something simple." We see Good Deeds Day as 1  
basic-level. Volunteer is a higher level: When you take a commitment, 2  
you take responsibility; things like that. But Good Deeds Day, it's, like, a 3  
basic thing: smile; I made coffee now, like, make another coffee for your 4  
co-worker; call your grandmother; things that are simple -- 5
- Robbie Gringras: What, that counts as a good deed, calling my grandmother? 6
- Kaynan Rabino: Yeah, sure. 7
- Robbie Gringras: Oh, that's easy. 8
- Kaynan Rabino: Exactly; that's easy. But how many people are doing it? Not a lot, 9  
because, you know, each time that I have a presentation and ... good 10  
deeds calling your grandmother, have this weird picture and everything. 11  
You know how many people say, "Shit, I forgot. I'll call her now"? And 12  
you say something -- 13  
So, that's what Shari thought, and said, "Okay, let's do a Good Deeds 14  
Day. Let's bring a lot of people." Now, this is a secret: no strategy. We 15  
said, "Great idea. Let's do it." And we did it. So, the first year, we had 16  
7,000; then we had 12,000; then we had 36-. And then we understand 17  
maybe we have here something. And then we started to build a strategy, 18  
working with municipalities, working with government, because in the 19  
end, a million and a half people in Israel - that's more than 20% of the 20  
population of Israel - are going to -- 21
- Robbie Gringras: Are calling their grandmother. 22
- Kaynan Rabino: No, no, no. They will do more. Calling Grandmother we're not 23  
counting, because I don't know them. I'm talking about a million and a 24  
half people that were registering and doing something that's connected to 25  
Good Deeds Day. It can be a kid in the kindergarten, doing a nice picture 26  
and walking to the senior house next door and giving them that, then, 27

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with some candy or something like that, and playing with them. So, it  
can be all kinds of -- and volunteering: going and renovate a soup  
kitchen or serving a soup kitchen.  
So, you have -- but you have a million and a half people on this day,  
doing good. You see the newspapers, you see the -- you get this --

Robbie Gringras: A million and a half people, and the population of Israel is?

Kaynan Rabino: 8.3.

Robbie Gringras: 8.3.

Kaynan Rabino: Yeah.

Robbie Gringras: So, that's a fair number. If you --

Kaynan Rabino: If you want to do it -- it's 40 million in the United States.

Robbie Gringras: You got that, Greater Washington? 40 million.

And how did this spread beyond the Jewish sector, into the Arab world,  
into the orthodox world?

Kaynan Rabino: We just went to ask. First, we have an Arab worker. We just  
asked them, "Come and join." And when we talked about Good Deeds  
Day - and he can say "Good Deeds Day" in Arabic and he can say it in  
English and he can say it in Hebrew --

Robbie Gringras: Have we got it in Yiddish?

Kaynan Rabino: No. Wow, that's a good one. No.

I think the success of Good Deeds Day is, first, it's a simple concept and  
everybody can connect to it. And the second thing: that we're giving  
materials and ideas how to run it, not to only say, "Go, do good deeds.  
Goodbye," but giving also, like, a strategy or a plan how to do it. Some  
people did it exactly, some people did their own strategy; but giving  
them. And in the end, more and more people -- when more and more  
people connect, you say, "I have to be there. I want to connect also." You

see that in one of the cities in the south. In one of the meetings, the  
mayor --

Robbie Gringras: In the south of Israel? 3

Kaynan Rabino: In the south of Israel, yeah. -- the mayor had a little talk with the  
manager of Good Deeds Day, and he said, "I wasn't happy from this. I  
wasn't happy from this. This didn't work." Then she says, "Okay, you  
don't have to do." And he told her, "Are you crazy? I have to do Good  
Deeds Day. The people are asking to do Good Deeds Day. It's out of my  
ability now not to do Good Deeds Day. That's why I'm talking with you:  
because we have to do. We want to. We have to, we want to. The people  
want it." And this is where it's now. 11

It's the essence. If a neighbor is hungry, it is a responsibility of the  
government. I'm not taking off the government. But it's your  
responsibility as a neighbor also. You cannot call the government and  
say, "I have a neighbor that is hungry." Take a schnitzel, and you made  
probably 25,000 schnitzel, and give him. That's it. That's it. And then call  
the welfare and say, "I think there's a person here that I think you should  
visit," and things like that, etc. But you made these 25,000 schnitzels.  
Give 3 away. 19

You know, there's basic things: coming and just saying, "Hi, how are you  
today," for the elderly person in your building. "How are you today?  
Everything's okay? Great. Have a great day." And go. That's it. That's it.  
And this is the basic stuff we're talking about. And people that have more  
timing can commit; I will be happy. They will move to volunteering ...  
works. We do need the commitment, we do need responsibility, and  
things like that. 26

Robbie Gringras: It sounds like you're shifting things, because I suppose -- why 27

was there -- or why has there been an assumption that you just call the  
government to fix it? Because wasn't that what Zionism was for? It was  
to say that the Jewish people are now going to look after themselves,  
with their own country, with their own welfare state, and therefore the  
state should be doing it?

Kaynan Rabino: Yeah, you know in '48, nobody --

Robbie Gringras: Are you guys undermining Zionism?

Kaynan Rabino: Zionism also, in '48, probably the first 10, 20 years, everybody  
helped. People didn't call the government for help; people called their  
neighbor for help.

So, I think we have to remind ourselves. I think there's a lot of things that  
we can do; that we can do. We just have to remind ourselves. And we  
really build projects to remind. Like, we have this project on Good Deeds  
Day; it's a table of stickers that have a chair, a table, babysitter, all the  
icons, a driller, a screwdriver, hammer. The idea: that each person in the  
building gets this. This is only where we have buildings. I know in  
Washington, a lot of you -- in townhouses. But this is in buildings. And  
you put the stickers, what you can give. So, I have a driller, I have a  
hammer, and I can do a babysitter. Now a person is easier for him to  
approach this apartment, to ask for a driller, because he already said, "I  
have a driller." Now, this will start the communication.

You know, in the United States, I see it less what I see in Israel. In Israel  
today, when you build a house, you first build a fence. Now, the idea is  
why do we have fences? What is this -- you know, the burglar can jump  
the fence, okay? Let's get -- this is not what will stop him. And when you  
have the fences, it says, "I'm closed. Don't come in if you're not invited.  
And I don't want to see also you," because the fences are very high. I

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want that we will have a society that won't have fences. If I want to  
approach somebody, I approach somebody. And if something happens to  
me, I want somebody to approach me.

Robbie Gringras: What would be the jewel in the crown, as far as you're  
concerned? What's the one project or the one thing that you've been  
doing with Good Deeds Day that you say, if nothing else, that one made  
it?

Kaynan Rabino: I think every country that I come -- like I just told you, I came  
back from Kenya less than a month ago, and they're going to do a huge  
Good Deeds Day. In this convention center, the middle of Nairobi -  
everybody's there - they will be there on the 2nd of April, a whole fair  
with NGOs, volunteers, stage, everything. They're getting also  
government officials. Good Deeds Day flags and everything. And that's  
something that they're doing. It's good for their society. They're building,  
strengthening. They're bringing more people in the circles. And it started  
in Israel.  
I'm happy and proud that we're doing it, and I'm so happy and proud with  
Greater Washington Federation that is our example, for the other Jewish  
Federations, of how to do Good Deeds Day, and the great impact that it  
can have for the community.

Robbie Gringras: And, so, when is Good Deeds Day?

Kaynan Rabino: 2nd of April.

Robbie Gringras: 2nd of April.

Kaynan Rabino: Bye, Washington. Love you.

Robbie Gringras: Okay, so I have to admit that I'd heard about Good Deeds Day  
and placed myself firmly in the camp of the other six and a half million  
Israelis who didn't tend to take part. But Kaynan is pretty persuasive.



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Maybe this April the 2nd I'll take the plunge. Maybe you will too. 1

Kaynan gave me a very bright and clear picture of a little conundrum 2

Jewish education geeks have been playing with for decades, if not 3

centuries: What is the Jewish people, they ask. What is Jewish 4

peoplehood? Think quite often we brush off the question and just say 5

that the Jewish people is made up of people who follow the Jewish 6

religion, which is easy to say but quite difficult to demonstrate, when 7

you come down to it. Like, your ultra-orthodox uncle and your atheist 8

feminist second cousin, they're both bound by the same religion? The 9

reform rabbi, the head of an orthodox yeshiva, and Jerry Seinfeld? As the 10

old joke goes, they're all divided by a common religion. 11

So, a wise friend of mine, who also happens to be my boss, Jonny Ariel, 12

has always defined the Jews as a people who are connected through three 13

overlapping drives: there's the covenantal drive that says that "I'm Jewish 14

because of the covenant with G-d, because of the Jewish religion, 15

because of my traditions." Okay, that's the covenantal drive. And then 16

there's communitarian drive that says, "I'm Jewish because I was born 17

into a community and an extended family, a tribe, if you like, and I look 18

out for my fellow Jew." And then there's the third drive that Jonny Ariel 19

calls the cosmopolitan drive; that says, "I'm Jewish because I believe in 20

justice, because I believe in fixing the world and doing good for the 21

world." Kaynan Rabino and Good Deeds Day, established in Israel and 22

radiating across the world, is a shining example of the cosmopolitan 23

Jewish drive: looking beyond religion and family to help the world. 24

See you all on April the 2nd. And thank you for listening. This podcast, 25

part of the Imagine Israel initiative, is brought to you by the Jewish 26

Federation of Greater Washington and hosted and produced by me, 27

Robbie Gringras of Makom. You can find us on 1  
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