

Inspiration Israel

“Why is this day of good deeds different from all other mitzvah days?”

We are a people who have felt commanded to do good, repair the world and step up to our responsibilities every day for thousands of years. Yet there is a back-story as to why our community has joined with hundreds of thousands of Jews and their neighbors all over the world on what has been called International Good Deeds Day. If Good Deeds Day had a product label, it would proudly say Made in Israel!

Shari Arison is an American-born Israeli leader of a business and philanthropic global empire (world-wide advertising agencies, Carnival Cruise Line and the Ruach Tova Philanthropic fund). In 2012, she was ranked by Forbes magazine as one of the world’s most powerful women, and one of the World’s Greenest Billionaires.

Shari increasingly felt physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausted from a lifetime of fighting to succeed. She asked herself “Is that all there is? Is there something else I was meant to do?” One day she said to herself:

“I want to do good; I want to think good; I want to feel good!”

She saw other Israelis wanting more out of life than simply surviving and taking from society. She heard people saying that if they only had time and some opportunity, they would give back to society. Shari understood the limits that government has on making changes in a society. It was time to step up as a citizen.

She first asked herself, “What is my role? What can I offer to the world, given my specific skills, life experiences and through the platforms I attained?” Shari felt optimistic about her ability to make changes and influence others. Her plan was to create a framework for people to do good together and be influenced and reinforced by seeing other people join in.



Through the philanthropic NGO called *Ruach Tova* (Spirit of Good), the first Good Deeds Day was held in Israel in 2007. Over 7,000 people participated in that first year. By 2014, 500,000 people in Israel alone took part. In 2012, MTV became a global sponsor and helped spread the word to various countries. Using TV, social media and volunteer organizations, Good Deeds Day spread to 50 countries around the world. The Greater Washington community, coordinated by The Jewish Federation, is the single largest region outside of Israel to participate in Good Deeds Day.

Good Deeds Day has reached a critical mass in Israel, and its spread around the world may well be a modern illustration of Isaiah’s words, that Israel (the land and its people) can be a “light to the nations.” All too often, when Israel is on the news, it has to do with war. There is another side to Israel, both of her people and the government of the State. Good Deeds Day is just the latest and perhaps most accessible humanitarian export from Israel. It is a day on which we can look to Israel with pride as a light to nations, good global citizen and participate in widening the circle of goodness in the world.



Good Deeds Day is made possible by
Drs. Ellen & Stuart Lessans, in loving
memory of Sara & Samuel J. Lessans.

REFLECTION

1

Your Personal Contributions

- What are your “gifts” that you could share with others on Good Deeds Day? What needs in the community could you help with?
- You can always continue to do mitzvot and good deeds on your own at any time. What is special or important about having a day when thousands locally and hundreds of thousands in Israel and around the world are doing the same type of activity?

REFLECTION

2

The Invisibility Complex—the Power of Saying “Hello”

A man who worked in a laboratory got stuck late one evening in a lab refrigerator. After shouting and shouting, he realized that everyone had gone and was convinced that his body would freeze overnight. Suddenly, the building guard appeared and opened the door from the outside.

The man asked, “How did you know I was here?”

The guard said, “I did not know you were here. I looked for you.”

“You searched for me?!” The man replied in astonishment.

The guard replied “You are the only one who says hello to me each morning and goodbye each evening. When I didn’t see you leave, I decided to see what happened to you. I came to the lab, I heard you yelling, and I opened the door.”

- Who are the invisible people in our lives? Who could you be passing by each day? Is there a person who you see regularly and never speak to each other? What is his/her name? Where does he/she live?

REFLECTION

3

The Poor of Your City Take Precedence

This Jewish theory establishes a hierarchy of priorities in favor of local needs: “If you lend money ... to the poor or the rich, the poor take precedence; your poor and the [general] poor of your town, your poor come first; the poor of your city and the poor of another city, the poor of your city have priority.”

Today, the lines between local and global are blurred. We live in a “flat” world in which the clothing we wear and food we eat were produced by labor in far-off countries while the Internet enables us to see the suffering of people thousands of miles away.

- Who are the poor of your city who take precedence? Can this be inside your own family?
- Do we really need to establish a hierarchy of priorities in giving?

Aniyay Ircha Kod'mim—Look in Your Own Backyard First; It's in the Way That You Give

- Action Items
 - Make your interactions meaningful – smile, ask a question
 - Give anonymously
- Discussion: 8 levels of giving (Visit shalomdc.org/gddisrael for a description of the 8 levels of giving)

Looking to get involved with Israel Action? Visit shalomdc.org/gddisrael for more information.

For more information please contact:

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