



Yoni's Global Sukkah Placemat and Conversation Starter Oseh Tzedaka – Doing Tzedaka – by Leonie Lewis #YonisGlobalSukkah

Yoni Jesner
FOUNDATION

Inspiring young people to do more and care more

At the end of the week what will I have accomplished? Will I have watched T.V. or will I have watched my actions? Will I have changed my hairstyle or will I have changed someone's life? Will I have shared gossip or will I have shared knowledge? Will I have spent money on kids or will I have spent time with them?

Volunteering is all about change and empowerment and contribution– of time. We can all make a difference to someone or something but that's not all. The act of volunteering not only helps someone else but also changes the one doing the volunteering.

That's why the Hebrew word to volunteer, *Lehitnadev* is a reflexive verb...something you do to or for yourself and yet at the same time for others. Volunteering can be transformative and all round win win. It's a key rubric of Judaism and is most closely associated with *Hessed*, act of kindness, all requiring giving of one's time.

Yoni suggests spending time is more powerful than spending money. Time is therefore considered a precious resource, so it's important to find a way to use it that isn't "wasted." How we use our time to do good, to make a difference, should be built into the daily rhythm of our lives.

And we don't have to perform enormous great acts or accomplishments, as it's more often than not, the simple gesture, the offer of help with a smile, the willingness to give a speedy response done with a good heart, that makes all the difference.

Today it's often easier to give money rather than give time, of course the community needs both, but the act of giving time for the benefit of another person or charity we believe at JVN is perhaps more life changing and more powerful as it requires action that does eat into our personal space and lives.

I heard a lovely thought from Rabbi Douek, head of the Spanish & Portuguese communities about this idea. Particularly relevant to the time of year. We have in our liturgy a familiar refrain beginning with *Oseh Tzedakah, Do Tzedakah*. We would normally expect it to say *Noten Tzedakah, give Tzedakah*, but Rabbi Douek says it's not the giving but the action, the doing that's critical here. *Tzedakah* has at its root the word righteousness...its right to do charity to make something happen through action or volunteering, so when Yoni remarked *will I spend money on kids or spend time with them*, we call into question the value we put on giving time as opposed to giving money. And we know Yoni's preference.

Finally we at JVN believe that young volunteers, become old volunteers, progressing through a journey of giving time to others, Yoni always remains a young volunteer but an exemplar of *Oseh Tzedakah*.

Questions:

What's easier giving tzedaka or doing tzedaka?

When did you last 'do' tzedaka? How did it make you feel?



Leonie Lewis is Director of the Jewish Volunteering Network. She has a Masters in Sociology of Education & is an MBA UJIA Ashdown Fellow. Particularly interested in faith, young people and community development issues Leonie holds several voluntary positions including Trustee of the Faith Based Regeneration Network (FBRN), Co chair of the Faith Forum in London, Advisor to the Children's Aid Committee, Trustee of Remembering Srebrenica and Vice President of the United Synagogue. She is a doting grandma!!

Connection to Yoni: My son Adam knew Yoni. They were in Israel studying in Yeshiva at the same time. On the day Yoni passed away Adam was meeting him and some other boys. Adam is close friends with Yoni's cousin Rabbi Gideon Black.