



TZEDAKAH

A ONETABLE X AMPLIFIER SHABBAT DINNER GUIDE



While it may not seem intuitive to connect tzedakah and Shabbat, the idea of tzedakah —that the Jewish people are commanded to behave righteously — is intrinsically linked to the practice of Shabbat, stopping on the seventh day. At its core, tzedakah is more than charitable giving, although giving is a huge part of its meaning. Tzedakah is about the tension between privilege and action, the value of our money and our time, and the notion that we are in a very real way connected to the most vulnerable people in our society and in the world. There may be no better place than the Shabbat dinner table to consider the Other, to reflect on how and why we give, and to discuss the impact that our actions have in the world.

ואמר רב אסי: שקולה צדקה כנגד כל המצוות.

Rav Assi said: Tzedakah is as important as all the other commandments combined.

WHEN GIVING IS ALL WE HAVE

One river gives
Its journey to the next.

We give because someone gave to us.
We give because nobody gave to us.

We give because giving has changed us.
We give because giving could have changed us.

We have been better for it,
We have been wounded by it—

Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,
Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.

Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:

Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,
Mine to yours, yours to mine.

You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.
Together we are simple green. You gave me

What you did not have, and I gave you
What I had to give—together, we made
Something greater from the difference.

ALBERTO RÍOS
POETS.ORG

USING THIS RESOURCE

צֶדֶק צְדָק תִּרְדּוּ

Justice, justice shall you pursue.

— Deuteronomy 18:20

The root of the word *tzedakah* is *tzedek*, which, depending on its context, can mean justice, fairness, righteousness, and integrity. Conceptually, *tzedakah* usually refers to charitable giving, but in Jewish tradition it is so much more. It is a powerful way of living a deeply-rooted Jewish value in our modern life, of asking ourselves how our actions can make a clear statement about who we want to be as Jewish citizens of the world.

For each of the Shabbat rituals that follows, we have added a text to help you frame your experience this Friday night with thoughts and reflections on *tzedakah*. There are no requirements of course; each ritual is an opportunity for you and your guests.

We hope that this guide serves as an opportunity to consider or reconsider where and how you give — whether it's a starting point for your own dinner table conversation about *tzedakah* and what it means, or a turning point that results in action, or a shift in behavior.

Shabbat is beautiful by design, an elegant pause in our otherwise nonstop lives. But if it is only that, then we have failed to take into account its full potential. Because Shabbat is not only a pause, it is a day of rest that depends on the other six days of work. And we cannot work in the world without considering *tzedakah*, the manifestation of justice, fairness, righteousness, and integrity in our lives and in our society.

LIGHT

STRIKE A MATCH, CREATE LIGHT,
TAKE A BREATH AND ENJOY THE MOMENT

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are You, Infinite One, who makes us holy through our actions and honors us with the light of Shabbat.

or

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who commands us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

REFLECT

Rava said: It is obvious to me that there is a fixed list of priorities. If a person is poor and must choose between purchasing oil to kindle Shabbat lights for the home or purchasing wine for kiddush, Shabbat light takes precedence. That is due to peace in the home; without the light of that lamp, the family would be sitting and eating their meal in the dark.

— *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 23b (ca. 500 CE)*

Consider the amount of time that an average worker needed to labor during different ages in order to earn enough for the 100 watt bulb to glow for an hour. In 1750 BCE, people used oil lamps and had to work for 400 hours to produce the said amount of light. Around 1800, using talcum candles, 50 hours needed to be invested. Using a gas lamp in the late 19th century, 3 hours were due. Using an energy saving bulb today, you will have to work for the blink of an eye — a second.

— *Adapted from Guido Mingels, "Everything Used to be Worse," Der Spiegel, 2017*

It's easy to take light for granted. As we welcome Shabbat with light, recall that, for our ancestors, candlelight wasn't a given; it was an expense that required hours of work to obtain. Light was also a priority because it brings peace; light brings joy. Consider tzedakah — your ability to give — as light. The ability to give tzedakah comes from one's own labor and time, and it is prioritized because it brings peace in the community. Consider the power and potential of your flame, and consider who might need it most.

SANCTIFY

RAISE YOUR GLASS AND SANCTIFY FRIDAY NIGHT WITH
A BLESSING AND A TOAST. L'CHAIM!*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'gafen.
Baruch Atah Adonai m'kadesh ha'Shabbat.*

Blessed are You, Infinite One, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Infinite One,
Who sanctifies Shabbat.

or

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.
Blessed are You, Lord our God, Who sanctifies Shabbat.

REFLECT

There are eight levels of tzedakah, each one greater than the other. The greatest level, higher than all the rest, is to fortify a person with a gift, a loan, a partnership, or work until they are strong enough so that they do not need to ask others for support.

— Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Tzedakah 10:7

Why \$18?

L'chaim literally translates to to life. L'chaim is the common response when someone makes a toast or offers a blessing over wine during any Jewish celebration, including Shabbat. The 'chai' in 'l'chaim' has the numeric value of 18, so Jews often give monetary donations in multiples of 18.

N O U R I S H

MORE THAN SATISFYING HUNGER, CHALLAH
TRULY NOURISHES. SLOW DOWN AND SAVOR.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Blessed are You, Infinite One, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

or

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

REFLECT

We say HaMotzi to give thanks to the one who sustains us and puts food on our plate. When we're sustained, we're able to recognize the abundance in our lives, and we're better able to give.

While there is no established prayer for giving tzedakah, Rabbi Shefa Gold, a teacher of Jewish mysticism, wrote a blessing for the practice of giving. When we bless something, we're able to notice its abundance and divinity. She writes:

Blessed are you, YHVH, Source of Abundance,
for providing us with the financial and spiritual ability to give.

All humanity participates in the flow of riches that come in and go out. May we use our
resources well, and may this exchange be fair and equal.

Blessed are you, Provider of Manna, who enriches us all.

Both the prayer for bread and Rabbi Gold's blessing for giving allow us to imagine a more perfect and just world: one where bread is pulled forth from the earth and where resources are exchanged in a fair and equal way. In recognizing that potential, we are enacting the possibility that perhaps, one day, it could become real.

APPRECIATE

YOU MADE IT THROUGH ANOTHER WEEK — GIVE THANKS TO YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR FAMILY, AND YOUR CHOSEN FAMILY.

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא מַלְכָּא דְעֵלְמָא מְרִיבָה דְהַאי פִּיטָא.

Brich rachamana malka d'alma marei d'hai pita.

Translation Options

We are blessed with compassion by You, Infinite One, who sustains us with bread.

or

Blessed are You, Merciful One, Ruler of the universe, Who sustains life with bread.

or

You are the Source of life for all that is, and Your blessing flows through me.

REFLECT

Charity

The sun rises for the dogs who are blinded
by light. One day strides with its long legs
into the next. Charity works in the passing.

And the woman is grateful for her heart which
lets her down, thankful for foxglove blooming,
taller than her hopes, in the spotted light beyond

the wall. A brown toad pulses, a worm makes
good dirt — a woman takes her heart for a walk.
All light will rise like heat. Shadow falls nearer

the ground; poppies ground their purple cunning.
Such heart beats in her — good darkness, untold
blunders — a blind dog finding its long, late way.

— *Renee Ashley, Poetry Magazine, February 2000*



About Amplifier

Amplifier's mission is to grow the movement of intentional, collaborative giving by building and sustaining giving circles inspired by Jewish values. What is a giving circle? Well, simply put, a giving circle is a group of people who pool their donations and decide together where to give. But giving circles are much more than that. They're a tool for building values-based community, creating and strengthening friendships, and, perhaps most importantly democratizing the practice of philanthropy. We believe that everyone, regardless of their financial situation, should be able to invest in the causes about which they care most.



About OneTable

OneTable makes Shabbat dinner accessible to tens of thousands of people between the ages of 21-39ish, helping to build community and intention around the Friday night dinner table. We provide the tools to make Shabbat dinner a regular practice by lowering barriers to both hosting and "guesting," making ritual and community feel more authentic, sustainable, and valuable.