



D'var Torah: The introduction of the Reform Jewish Values Fund

by Rabbi Howard Shapiro



This feels to me as a “Shehecheyanu moment.” The new Reform Jewish Values Fund that your RPB is rolling out this month is a long time in coming. Yet, as you will hear, it is the culmination of steady and incremental progression of call and responses. The call: our Torah’s insistence that we pursue justice. The response: the history of decisions to expand RPB’s mission into what I will call investing with a conscience.

The ethical imperative that drives us in this enterprise are the words we are all familiar with from Devarim (Deuteronomy): Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof. (“Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue.”) The duplication of the word Tzedek offers us a world of interpretations.

For our work today, let me remind us all of just one. We are called upon to seek to be righteous in a variety of ways: With our deeds, with our charitable giving, in our relationships, in our work environment, and with our money (resources). The Reform Jewish Values Fund offers us that opportunity. To go above what is expected of us; to go beyond the letter of the law; to find ways to translate our values into action and to do it in a financial setting rooted in the teachings of our tradition and vetted by RPB. I know that this might be viewed as an overreach, but for me this fund is a “klei kodesh”—it is a vessel or an instrument we can call holy. It gives us a tool to invest our values.

So I invite you to listen, to learn: how the fund came into being, what are its parameters, how is it populated? And I encourage you most of all to be asking yourself (as I am asking myself), your conscience, your sense of what our tradition demands of us: how can I respond to the call of Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof. Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue.

Rabbi Howard Shapiro is Vice Chair, RPB Board of Trustees; Chair, RJV Fund Values Task Force; and Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Israel, West Palm Beach, Florida. He delivered this d'var Torah at RPB's quarterly webinar, February 2018.

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