



HINDA
INSTITUTE
Everybody Deserves a Second Chance

ב"ה

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**ARE WE CRIMINALIZING POVERTY?
TZEDAKAH MEANS JUSTICE
– A Rosh Hashanah Appeal for Hope –**

As we prepare for Rosh Hashanah, we take time to reflect on the year that has passed and pray for a year of life, health, and blessing. During these Days of Awe, our tradition teaches that three things have the power to change a person's destiny: teshuvah (repentance), tefillah (prayer), and tzedakah (charity). The Hebrew word tzedakah does not simply mean charity. It means justice or righteousness. Giving to someone in need is not viewed in Judaism as an act of generosity alone; it is an act of justice. Everything we possess ultimately belongs to G-d, Who entrusts us with the responsibility of caring for one another. When we give, we are fulfilling one of the Torah's greatest commandments. Our sages teach that "Tzedakah and acts of kindness are equivalent to all the mitzvot of the Torah" (Jerusalem Talmud, Pe'ah 1:1). They also tell us that the world itself continues to exist because of tzedakah. Every gift, no matter its size, affirms that we are responsible for one another.

The familiar pushkah (charity box) has long been a hallmark of the Jewish home. It reminds us that before we think only of ourselves, we think of those who are struggling. Even someone with very little is encouraged to perform acts of kindness, whether through a donation, a meal, a visit to someone who is ill, or simply offering encouragement. Every person has something to give.

This year, however, the need has become greater than many of us have ever witnessed. At the Hinda Institute, we are watching more individuals and families fall into poverty, despite their determination to build stable, productive lives.

- Many of the people we serve desperately want to work. They have skills, experience, and often degrees. Yet, significant **barriers to employment and stigma** prevent them from obtaining jobs that provide a living wage and long-term stability. The numbers tell a sobering story. Today, 28% of our clients have no income at all, while 41% survive on less than \$30,000 a year. Nearly 45% are unemployed. Among the families we serve, 22% are unemployed, while another 30% are retired, often trying to stretch fixed incomes, while helping children or grandchildren through periods of crisis. Employment remains the greatest need we hear about every day.
- Without work there is no income. Without income there is no housing. Even those who do find employment often discover that rents have increased beyond what they can afford.

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**WISHING
YOU A
VERY
HAPPY
AND
HEALTHY
ROSH
HASHANAH
AND A
SWEET
NEW
YEAR**



Housing shortages and rising costs leave many people one unexpected expense away from homelessness. Across the country, communities are now struggling with rising homelessness. Too often, the response has been to increase enforcement through fines and arrests instead of addressing the underlying causes of poverty. Researchers and policy experts have repeatedly shown that punishing people for being homeless does not reduce homelessness. Instead, it creates additional barriers to employment, housing, and stability.

- **Changes in public benefits** have added new layers of complexity. New work requirements and repeated eligibility reviews for Medicaid and SNAP demand a level of organization and executive functioning that can be difficult for anyone, especially for someone managing trauma or mental health challenges. Missing paperwork or a deadline could mean losing healthcare, medications, food assistance or other essential support. At the same time, the government is tightening standards on definitions and documentation of mental health.



As behavioral health systems become increasingly strained and Medicaid funding faces continued pressure, community organizations like the Hinda Institute have become more important than ever. We provide free trauma-informed support, peer counseling, case management, employment assistance, family support and compassionate guidance for people who often have nowhere else to turn.

Poverty itself should never become a crime. Ensuring that our most vulnerable have a place to live, food, employment, medication and therapy is the real key to public safety.

Our tradition has always understood this truth. The Torah repeatedly commands us to strengthen the hand of our brother before he falls. Judaism teaches prevention rather than punishment, compassion rather than judgment, and opportunity rather than despair.

Every day at Hinda we see what happens when someone receives timely support. A parent finds employment. A family avoids eviction. Someone enters treatment instead of returning to crisis. A lonely individual discovers a supportive community. These moments are only possible because someone cared enough to give.

Giving tzedakah transforms both the recipient and the giver. When we donate money that we worked hard to earn, we dedicate not only our possessions, but our time, effort, and lives to a higher purpose. As Rosh Hashanah approaches, each of us will stand before G-d asking for life, health, peace, and blessing in the coming year. This is also the moment to ask ourselves: Whose life can I help change? Whose burden can I lighten?

The Talmud teaches that "**tzedakah tatzil mimavet**"—"charity saves from death." This timeless teaching reminds us that acts of compassion have the power to preserve life, renew hope, and bring blessing to both the person who gives and the one who receives. This Rosh Hashanah, as you prepare your list of prayers and merits for the coming year, please make tzedakah part of that list. Together we can ensure that poverty is met not with indifference, but with justice; not with punishment, but with compassion; not with despair, but with hope. Consider a gift to the Hinda Institute and provide employment assistance, mental health support, peer counseling, case management, emergency assistance, and compassionate guidance to individuals and families facing some of life's greatest challenges. More importantly, partner with us to restore dignity and hope.

May G-d inscribe you and your family for a year filled with health, peace, prosperity, and blessing from the Hinda institute . **Please contact us for a place for the holidays.**

CASEWORK: HELPING PEOPLE IN URGENT NEED

When individuals and families face crisis, the Hinda Institute responds with intensive, hands-on casework that addresses immediate needs while building a path toward long term stability. The stories below describe how our individualized casework helps clients navigate Illinois' ongoing housing crisis , secure employment, access public benefits, connect with community resources and overcome barriers to successful reintegration.



HINDA HEROES: EVERYONE CAN BE PRODUCTIVE IF GIVEN THE CHANCE

For many young adults living with developmental disabilities, autism, or mental health challenges, finding employment can be difficult. For those carrying the added burden of a criminal record, often stemming from non-violent misunderstandings related to communication (such as calling or texting) the path can seem nearly impossible. When Sam was ready to rebuild his life, he faced not only a competitive job market, but also the stigma of past mistakes. Hinda refused to let those barriers define his future.

A collaborative team was assembled, bringing together Hinda staff, an employment specialist, caseworkers, family members, and a partner organization. Together they worked on resumes, job searches, interview preparation and practical advice. But, the turning point came through the dedication of our devoted Hinda caseworker Beth.

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Week after week, our caseworker met with Sam, building trust and confidence. She drove him to interviews, coached him through setbacks and taught him one of the most important employment skills of all: persistence. Apply again. Follow up. Keep trying. The journey was not easy, but they finally were successful. Today, Sam is happily employed. His story is a powerful reminder that everyone deserves the opportunity to contribute, rebuild and succeed. At Hinda, we believe everyone can be productive if given the chance.



HINDA HERO: FIGHTING HOMELESSNESS

Illinois is facing a housing crisis. Affordable apartments are disappearing; rents continue to rise and critical supports such as housing subsidies are under pressure. For individuals with criminal records, the barriers are even greater. Without income, transportation, or a stable place to live, rebuilding a life can feel impossible.

When Dovid was released, he arrived with little more than a one-way ticket from prison and clothes that did not fit. Hundreds of miles away, his elderly mother called daily, terrified for her son's future.

Hinda responded immediately. Hinda caseworkers assembled a crisis team, coordinating with his family and preparing for arrival. We picked him up directly from the airport, secured a motel room, provided food and clothing and ensured he reported to his parole officer as required so he would not face a violation. Every day, our team stays connected, offering guidance, support, and practical assistance.

In a market where affordable units are scarce and landlords often reject applicants with records, Hinda worked tirelessly to locate a safe, affordable room. Today, Dovid is working hard to find employment and rebuild his life. His story reminds us that homelessness and poverty are not crimes. Stable housing is the foundation for public safety, successful reintegration, and human dignity. Hinda is proud to be part of the solution. But as the housing crisis deepens, we recognize much more must be done.

UPCOMING COURSES

Our free zoom courses are held on Wednesdays from 7:00 to 8:30 PM

Check out [Hindahelps.com/courses](https://hindahelps.com/courses) for more details.

SEPTEMBER

In Partnership with: **JCFS**
CHICAGO

Coping with Curveballs:

Build resilience with practical strategies to navigate life's challenges and enhance well-being.

Presented by Hinda:

SEPTEMBER

Judaism, Repentance, and The Law: Explore how Jewish teachings on repentance and justice offer guidance, accountability, and hope for personal transformation.

OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

From Reaction To Response: A two month series on Understanding Thoughts, Conflict, and Decision Making.

In the News

- ★ **Shared Horizons Peer Support Training Program** is now certified! Our 25 participants have completed 900 hours of community service supporting 72 clients. Thank you to **JUF, United Way, Kalchman-Pass, and the Walder Foundation** for making this possible.
- ★ Hinda now services the **Elgin Mental Health Center**.
- ★ **Thank you to our volunteers** who packaged and delivered packages for Rosh Hashanah.
- ★ We are happy to help develop a new peer support program for **NO SHAME ON U**.
- ★ **Thank you to Jonathan** for volunteering to write and organize correspondence to inmates.
- ★ **Thank you to the volunteers** who helped blow Shofars in the prisons.
- ★ **Rabbi Binyomin Scheiman** starred in a heartfelt National Podcast with Chana Wiesberg. (Speaking engagements followed).
- ★ **Thank you to Jaya** for initiating our new student board. Your energy is contagious.



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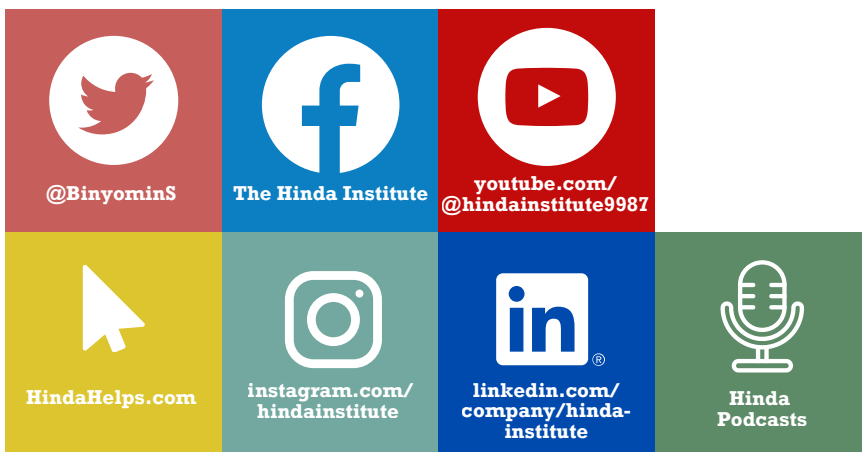


TOGETHER for GOOD



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The Hinda Institute
9401 N Margail
Des Plaines, IL 60016



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Please accept my tax-deductible contribution to help Rabbi Scheiman continue his service to the isolated Jews in prison!

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