

Seeking balance in your life? Old wisdom in coins may help

When you hear the words "Jewish coins," what comes to mind? Perhaps the shekel coins sitting in your drawer from your last trip to Israel. Or maybe the Bar Kochba coins you saw in a museum that were stamped out of Roman coins during the Jewish uprising against Rome.

An Austin entrepreneur is seeking to redirect your thoughts entirely.

Alan Goldberg, whose newly founded SoulCoin Co. is marketing its first coins, the Humility and Joy Coin Set, as "Coins of the Spiritual Realm," recalled how it all began.

"It was during the month before the Jewish High Holidays, when we think a lot about the larger topics of life," Goldberg said. "The idea just hit me. I went into a kind of trance, and when I came out of it, I had the idea for the coins and the initial design all worked out."

The Humility and Joy Coin Set is based on a familiar parable of Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, a leader of Polish Jewry who died in 1827. He suggested that everyone have a slip of paper in each pocket — in one, the words "bishvili nivrah ha'olam" (the world was created for my sake) and in the other, "anokhi afar vacifer" (I am but dust and ashes).

"My idea was to enable people to actually put this parable of wisdom into practice, but paper is not permanent enough to make it practical," Goldberg explained. "That's where the coins come in."

The set has two 1.5-inch bronze coins.

One, the Coin of Humility, displays the phrase "I am but dust and ashes" on the front in both Hebrew and English, while the back of the coin has the phrase "Know

from whence you came" in both languages. Other symbols on the coin, such as a large Hebrew letter Dalet, relate to the theme of humility. This coin, Goldberg said, goes in your left pocket to carry around as a reminder to be humble.

The other part of the set, the Coin of Joy, carries the phrase "For my sake was the world created" on the front, in both Hebrew and English, while its back reads,

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— Alan Goldberg

"And you shall rejoice." Other symbols on this coin reinforce the idea that you have a purpose in the world and should grasp and carry it out to be truly happy. You put this coin in your right pocket, Goldberg said, and when you're feeling down and a bit lost, it can remind you of where your happiness lies.

"I wanted the coins to strike a Jewish chord, but to be inclusive enough that anyone would accept the wisdom they represent, and so spread Jewish wisdom to others," he said. "For example, the Lord's name is not on the coins, so they don't require special treatment."

The coin set comes with a brochure explaining the wisdom and all the symbols on the coins.

"I wanted to make the point that these are not charms or amulets, as you see claimed in some Kabbalah products," Goldberg said. "Their power comes from a person's actively using them to help balance his or her approach to life."

The coin sets sell for \$14.95, with discounts for quantity purchases, and Goldberg said 10 percent of all sales go to charity, though he didn't specify which. Visit the Web site www.soulcoin.com for more information.

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