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**Daniel Greenberg CB**

**Script for BBC Thought for the Day**

**22 June 2023**

**It Ain’t What You Do**

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Good morning.

Graeme Souness swimming the English Channel at the age of 70, to raise more than £1 million for a skin disease charity, is an impressive example of the many ways in which people give selflessly. I saw a less dramatic but equally inspiring example recently. A woman walking past a man with a collecting plate on the pavement handed a coin to her child which he dropped on the plate. She spoke to the child and handed him another coin: this time he spoke to the man, put the coin carefully on the plate, gave a cheerful little wave, and then he and his mother walked away.

This recalled the Yiddish folktale about Yankel the Miser, who lived in a Polish village and spent his wealth only on himself. Charity collectors had long ago given up knocking on his door. One day he was in the market buying meat and turning around with the change in his hand was confronted by a labourer whose shoes were full of holes: the man simply pointed to his shoes and then to the change in Yankel’s hand. Perhaps shamed for once into giving way, Yankel threw the coins irritably on to the ground and walked away.

Years later Yankel died and reached the Heavenly court to find one side packed to the rafters with accusing angels. The other side of the court was empty. The clerk of the court called out “Are there no defending angels here for Yankel the Miser?” As Yankel sat, dismayed and alone, he heard a shuffling from the back of the court and turned to see a solitary angel, limping heavily. As he struggled past Yankel he said “When you bought the labourer new shoes, you created me; but when you threw the coins on the ground, you broke my leg”.

We give to charity in different ways and for different reasons, including the good feelings that we get from trying to help people. Yankel’s story is meant to remind us that whatever our motivation in giving, in the words of the famous song, “it ain't what you do, it’s the way that you do it”.