

Bone Button Borscht

By Aubrey Davis

Illustrated by Dusan Petricic

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 4-8
 Time frame: 45 minutes
 Central values: *Ma'akhil Re'evim* - Feeding the hungry



Synopsis

In this gentle retelling of the Stone Soup tale, an imaginative beggar teaches the miserly residents of a shtetl the spirit of community. Through the beggar's actions, the community learns the importance of sharing, welcoming others, and feeding the hungry. Because it raises the question of what is and is not magic and emphasizes the importance of looking beyond one's own needs, this story nicely compliments the developmental needs and interests of 5's. Yet the humor and actions of the beggar and the townspeople will captivate younger children as well.

Goals

1. Highlight and connect the major themes of this book to daily life.
2. Involve families in a project to continue the *mitzvot* at home, encouraging them to continue to "care and share"
3. Highlight the issues of hunger and what we can do about it
4. Instill a desire to share and help those less fortunate

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Plan in advance

Build a relationship with a Food Bank

This program's impact is increased if it can be held at a local food bank. Find a willing collaborative partner, keeping in mind that families will enjoy seeing how a food bank operates and learning how they can support the food bank on a regular basis.

Prepare Intro Activities

Card Decorating Activity Materials

- Blank Cards (card stock folded in half)
- Crayons and/or Magic Markers
- Stickers
- Glue sticks
- Collage materials such as feathers, jewels, googly eyes



Vegetable Coloring Activity Materials

- Multiple copies of pictures of soup ingredients (see attached)
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Scrap paper bin



Story Props

- Plastic bowls and cups
- Ladle
- Plastic knife
- Wooden spoon
- Pot

Prepare for Interactive Play (Optional)

Rather than just reading the story, consider sharing this story as an interactive play.

Play Script

See end of program for adapted *Bone Button Borscht* script.



Props

- Gold duct tape
- Torah (miniature or stuffed)
- Menorah
- Pot
- Large spoon
- Plastic knife
- Cutting board
- Garlic clove
- Carrots
- 2 heads of cabbage
- Coat (ideally a worn looking raincoat with one set of buttons attached with Velcro)
- Large gold buttons (cut from poster board- with Velcro on back to reattach to coat)
- Beard (for beggar),
- Kerchief (for Leah)
- Tri-fold poster boards with hand-drawn door knobs for village homes

Pre-Play Sharing Activity

- Brown paper bags (luncheon size)
- Vegetables: e.g. onions, garlic bulbs, mini carrots, broccoli flowerets, celery sticks
- Preparation:
 - Place several different vegetables inside some of the brown bags
 - Keep some brown bags empty
 - Fill some brown bags with just one vegetable

Prepare Post-Reading Sharing Bags

Materials

- Small blank canvas bags – large enough to hold a canned or small boxed grocery item (check craft stores, online, or local t-shirt printers for bulk orders)
- Cardboard cut to fit inside the bags – place it in beforehand to avoid color bleeding through the bag
- Fabric markers: Marvy Markers / Deco Fabric Markers etc.
- Scrap paper and pencils
- Dot paints for younger children
- Old t-shirts to use as smocks (optional)
- NOTE: Canvas bags will keep the value alive for a long time but if cost of canvas bags is prohibitive, craft shops have some sturdy gift-type paper bags for a reasonable price. If you choose this option, use water-based markers.



Introduce with an activity

Welcome Families

Welcome each child and parent. Invite them to leave the can of non-perishable food (which all flyers and announcements asked them to bring) in a large (ideally see-through) container. Have a place for families to sign in and make nametags.

Decorating Cards to Accompany Food Donations

Intro Words

Today, many of you brought food to give to people who do not have food. Before you give your food away, we thought that it might be nice to attach a card to your food donation. Right now we'd like you to design a card that will be taped to your donation. Think about what you'd like to write on the inside of your card. Do you want to send hopes for a great day or best wishes for an upcoming holiday, or a note that tells a little about yourself (I am—years old. I like to _____. I hope you enjoy this food.)?

Vegetable Coloring Sheets (for Reading Story option)

Directions

1. Invite each child to choose a picture or two from a variety of vegetable and other ingredients and cut and color item(s) out, with parent's or caregiver's help, as needed.
2. For larger groups, have multiples of each item at the ready. For younger children, have items already cut out, and for others, go over the cutting line with a thick marker so it is clear and easy to cut.



Intro Words

Today we'll be reading a story that tells how one man, a beggar, teaches an entire town how to share. In our story, the beggar convinces all the townspeople to share their vegetable in order to make a delicious soup. In a few minutes when we read our story, I'm going to ask you to act just like the townspeople and bring vegetables to help make a soup. Right now, I'd like you to choose a vegetable or two that you would like to color. When I read our story, I'll ask you to bring up your colored vegetable and place it in our pot.

Read the story

Intro Words

Invite all of the children and adults to the designated “reading spot,” reminding them to bring the items they colored and cut out.

This book is called Bone Button Soup. Hmmm... I wonder what buttons have to do with soup. Let's start our story and find out! Don't forget to bring your vegetables with you!



Encourage Participation

- As you read story, pull out appropriate props (i.e. buttons, pot, spoon, etc.) At appropriate times invite the children to come and add their vegetables to the pot while you mime “chopping and stirring, etc.”
- Use movement to help engage the listeners. If children appear restless, invite them to “chop and stir,” as well. Or, have them mimic the running by drumming their hands on their knees, slurp their soup, - i.e. find a way to let them wiggle while staying engaged in the story.

Act Out the story

Pre- Play Audience Preparation

- As children take their seats to watch the play, hand each child a brown paper bag - some of these bags are empty, some contain several vegetables, and some contain only one vegetable.
- In addition, pass out play props to several older children (a pot, soup ladle, pitcher of water, 2 cabbages, etc.) Ask these older children if they will be willing to help later on in the play. Assure them that you'll tell them exactly what needs to be done.



Intro Words

In a few minutes we're going to share a story called Bone Button Borscht. This book tells the story of some people who, at first, were not very nice and refused to share or help others. Fortunately a poor man, a beggar, comes to town and teaches these selfish townspeople how to share.

Today instead of reading the story from a book, we're going to put on a play. We're going to need you to help us with our play. Listen carefully because at one point in our play, we're going to ask you for food. Everyone should have a bag in front of them. In that bag are some vegetables that the beggar in our story is going to use to make soup. Does everyone have some vegetables in their bag? Check it out. Uh, oh, some people have food and some don't. What can we do? How can we make sure that everyone has food?

Wow, you guys are not at all like the people in our story. You're very kind. You know how to share. I hope that the actors in our play will be able to learn from your example.

Now that everyone has vegetables, thanks to your sharing and generosity, we're ready to begin. Let's see how the poor man teaches the selfish townspeople to share. One important lesson of our story is that sharing is the perfect way to make sure that no one is ever hungry

Act Out Play

See attached script

Post Reading Discussion Questions

- Does anyone know the word **for hungry** in Hebrew? (**Re'ev**). If there are a lot of people who are hungry—we call them re-evim. Does anyone know the word **for food** in Hebrew? (ochal)
- According to Judaism, we have an obligation to feed and take care of the poor and the hungry. How many people brought food with them today? Who is the food for? Today, you are all participating in the mitzvah of feeding the hungry. In Hebrew the mitzvah is called- ha'achlat re'evim (or maachil re'evim)
- According to the Torah, farmers are not allowed to pick all of the grapes from their vines, nor can they pick the wheat that grows in the corners of their field, nor can they pick up any fruit which falls to the ground. Farmers need to leave these foods for the poor. Long ago, if there were people who had no food in their house and had no money to buy food, they could go to the farmers' fields and gather up all the food that the farmers left for them.
- Today, even though most of us are not farmers, we can still give food to the hungry. We can take the food that we have and share it with those who are in need. That's what you did this morning. You brought food to share with those who need it.

Book Based Questions

- Why at first, did the people not want to share with the beggar?
- Why did the people eventually share their food? What happened when they shared? Did they end up having less food or more food?
- Was it really the buttons that made the soup?
- Why did the beggar say that he needed buttons to make the soup?
- What lessons can we learn from this story?

Follow Up activities and resources

Making a Sharing Bag

Introduction

While still sitting in the reading area, remind families of the packaged food they brought in. Take them over to the pot or bowl that contains it all (or bring the pot to them) and comment about how they, like the villagers in *Bone Button Borscht*, will help those who are hungry. Point out that the villagers in the story continued to share their food with others.

Today we have a special bag for you to decorate that we hope you'll bring with you each time you go shopping. We hope that whenever you are at a grocery store, you'll choose a few items to put inside this bag to give to those who are in need. What kinds of food might be good to put in your bag? What kinds of food might someone who is hungry really need? Once you've chosen your food and paid for it at the grocery store, how will you get it to those who need it? (You and your parents can bring it to this food pantry.) We hope you'll enjoy using this sharing bag and that you'll enjoy helping those who are in need.



Directions

1. Parents and children will, together, use the markers to decorate their bags.
2. First, they can decide on a saying to write (parents can write it on scrap paper for children to write on bag) such as "Our Sharing Bag," "Food for Others," "To Help the Hungry," etc.
3. Then they can add art – pictures or designs. You can suggest they add a picture of buttons so they will always remember the story.



Touring the Food Pantry

If program takes place in a food pantry, offer families a tour of the facility. If possible allow children to sort the foods that they have brought with them and place their cans and boxed items in the proper locations.

Be sure to distribute information on how each family can continue to help the Food Pantry



Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Thank everyone for coming and for helping you to make this place a very special community.

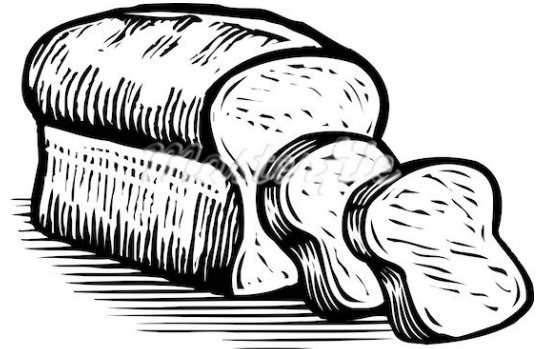
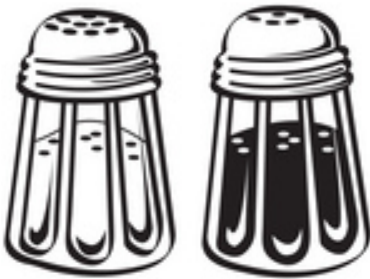
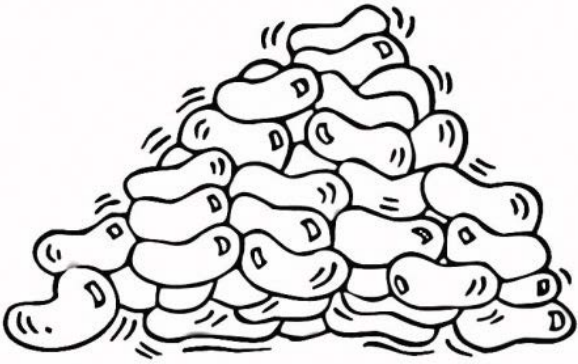
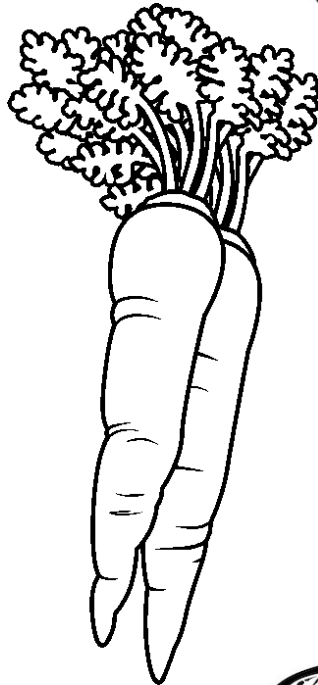
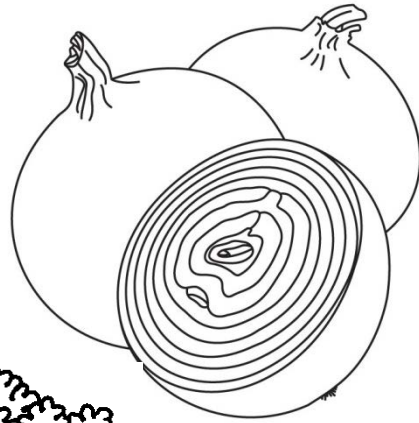
Give a wrap up message to parents about helping to build the value of “Feeding the Hungry:”

- By using the sharing bags with their child(ren) in the grocery store and picking something their child can carry in the bag they just made.
- By making donation to the food bank each week/month.

Create and send a list of local food collection sites to parents.



Sample Pictures for Food Coloring Activity



BONE BUTTON BORSCHT

Adapted from the book by Aubrey Davis, illustrated by Dusan Petricic

Cast: Beggar
Narrator
Shamas (synagogue caretaker)
Mendel
Mr. Schwartz
Leah
Leah's 3 children (can be children from audience)
Additional Townspeople (can be parents/ families from audience)

Set up:

Tri-fold poster boards-perhaps with doorknobs drawn on them stand erect, scattered across stage area. A line of gold yarn/duct tape leads from one door to a small table, set off on the side. The table contains a Torah and menorah(This will be the synagogue)

Beggar: Oy, it's so cold and snowy out. I can't wait to get to the next town. I wonder who will invite me to their house for something to eat? There is nothing like being a beggar. Such good it brings out in people. They see poor little old me, hobbling down the street, and they rush to help me. They share. They give. And me? I get a little something too. It's perfect. Tonight, I hope I'll be invited into a home with a blazing fireplace and a table laden with bowls of beautiful red borscht. Do you know what Borscht is? It's a delicious beet soup, It tastes so yummy, so heavenly, especially when noodle pudding, roast chicken, and fruit and nuts accompany it....

Ah, hah, here's the town. But why are these houses all so dark? Where are the people. Let me just knock on a door and see who's here. (He knocks) Please, a little food for a poor starving beggar? HMM..no answer? Ok , I'll try another house.

(knocks on tri-fold poster board) Please help me. I'm hungry and cold.

Mr. Schwartz: *(calls from behind the board)* Go away

Beggar: Just let me in for a few minutes ,even.

Mr. Schwartz: No go away

Beggar: *(Knocks again at a different door/ tri-fold poster-A head peeks out for a second and then disappears)*

Hmm I think there's someone in there, but they're pretending they're not home.

What is wrong with these people?

Ah,ha, here's a trail of light. Let me follow it and see where it goes. Oh my, it's a synagogue. Thank God for synagogues. And look there's the shamas, the good fellow who takes care of the synagogue

(Shamas stands with a broom, sweeping)

Shalom Aleichem, peace be with you!

(Shamas frowns and sweeps more vigorously)

Hmm. You don't talk either –What's with this place?

Wait, I have an idea. (He pulls off the buttons on his coat). That's one button, 2 buttons, 3 buttons, 4...

Oy, if only I had one more button.

(repeats a little louder) OY, IF ONLY I HAD ONE MORE BUTTON!

Shamas: Look mister, I won't give you a button. Nobody in this town will give you a button.

Beggar: Why not?

Shamas: Because we're poo, Mr. Beggar. We don't give to each other any more, and we certainly wouldn't give to a beggar. We don't even know you. Why do you need a button anyways?

Beggar: Why? Because with one more button I could make us a soup. I could make a nice hot borscht.

Shamas: That's ridiculous! Impossible! Nobody makes soup from buttons.

Beggar: Mr. Shamas, I'm shocked. Haven't you ever heard of Bon Button Borscht?

Shamas: Bone Button Borscht?

Beggar: Let me explain. These buttons in my hand are very special. With just one more button from you, I can make Bone Button Borscht for the whole town. I can make you a miracle Mr. Shamas

Shamas: This I have to see. All right! I'll get the button.

Beggar: Wait, I'll need bowls and cups, and a knife and a ladle and a spoon. Oh and a pot maybe?

Shamas: (*knocks on a door*) Mendel, Mendel, give me a bone button!

Mendel: No! Go away!

Shamas: No, Mendel, you don't understand. The button isn't for me. It's for the poor beggar in the synagogue. He's going to make a miracle.

Mendel: With my bone button? What's he going to do. Teach it to sing, maybe?

Shamas: No, Mendel. He needs it for borscht. He's going to make beet soup from buttons.

Mendel: That's impossible. You can't make soup from buttons.

Shamas: Listen, Mendel. Give me the button. What's it going to hurt? Maybe we'll have a miracle.

Mendel: All right. I'll give you the button. But I want to come too. I want to see this miracle.

(Mendel picks up a button and they run to the next door)

Mendel and Shames: Leah, Leah, give us a wooden spoon

Leah: No. Go away!

Mendel: Leah it's not for us. It's for the little beggar in the synagogue. He's going to make a miracle.

Leah: With my spoon? What's he going to do? Teach it to dance?

Mendel: No Leah. He needs it for the borscht. He's going to make beet soup from buttons.

Leah: That's impossible

Shames: Look, Leah. Give us the spoon. What's it going to hurt? Maybe we'll have a miracle.

Leah: All right but I want to come. I'm bringing my family too. I want them to see this miracle.

Shames: So bring them.

Narrator: So Leah, her family(3 children), Mendel, and the shamas marched down the street. They banged on doors. They begged and they borrowed cups and bowls, a ladle, a knife, and a huge soup pot. Along with all these things the crowd grew.

(Each towns person carries an item and follows behind, Leah, Mendel, and the Shamas)

By the time the shamas reached the synagogue the whole town was with him.

Beggar: “Shalom Aleichem! Peace be with you

Narrator: There was a long silence.

Mr. Schwartz: So, Mr. Miracle Man! Make us a miracle!

Beggar: You want a miracle? I'll give you a miracle.

Pot! *(towns person brings forth a pot)*

Water! *(Townsperson pours water in)*

Button! *(The beggar drops in all the buttons, saying Plunk! Plunk! Plunk as they land in the pot)*

Beggar stirs and tastes.)

Beggar: Not bad. But it could be better.

Leah : What could make it better?

Beggar: A little sugar, a little salt, a little pepper. That could make it better.

Narrator: So a few people ran home and returned with what the beggar asked for.

(They drop items into the pot)

Beggar: *(Tastes soup)* Not bad? But it could be better

Shamas: You've got problems, Mr. Beggar. Wait, *(fishes out a garlic bulb from his pocket)* Would this help?

Beggar: Why not?

Mendel: Mr. Beggar. I've got some carrots

Leah: I've got onions.

Mr. Schwartz: I've got beans.

Narrator: So the people ran off and returned with their arms full of vegetables. *(Cast of townspeople run into audience collecting vegetables and bringing them back to the beggar.)*

The beggar sliced each vegetable. He diced. He chopped. He shredded. Then he dumped them into the bubbling pot.

Beggar: *(pretends to slice and chop, then stirs pot and takes a sip)*

Do you know what we have here? We have a beautiful soup, that's what we have. A very tasty borscht. Now some people say a little bit of cabbage really brings out the flavor. But I say keep it simple. Who needs cabbage for borscht?

Leah: Mr. Beggar, You want cabbage? I've got cabbage, Mr. Beggar.

(She hands him 2 cabbages.)

Narrator: The people watched the steam rise from the pot. They listened to the bubbling borscht. They smelled the rich sweet and sour aroma as it filled the synagogue. Bellies rumbled. Mouths watered. And everyone pressed in closer. Then, finally, the beggar ladled some borscht into a cup. It was deep red and thick with vegetables. He blew on it. He blessed it. Then he dipped in his spoon and he tasted it

Beggar: *(putting spoon in his mouth)* Slurp, slurp

Shamas: So, Mr. Beggar? How does it taste?

Beggar: *(smiles)* Not bad. Who wants to try some?

(Townspeople crowd around beggar. They pick up and pass around bowls, and begin chanting)

Borscht, Borscht, Borscht.

(Townspeople eat)

Leah: Delicious!

Shamas: Perfectly delicious

Mendel: This is the best borscht we have ever tasted. The little Beggar did it! He made Borscht out of buttons. It's a miracle!

Narrator: Then, like magic, bread appeared and boiled potatoes and roast chicken and wine. The people ate and they laughed. They laughed and they ate. They brought out accordions and violins, and they sang and they danced for hour after delightful hour. (*Townspeople gather in a circle and dance*) And when the last slurp of borscht was slurped, the last dance danced, and the last song sung, the shamas invited the beggar to spend the night at his house.

Shamas: Come, Mr. Beggar, come to my house for the night.

Beggar: No, no, I don't want to bother you. I'll just sleep right here on the synagogue floor.

Shamas: Nonsense, Come to my house, I'll give you a nice soft, warm bed. Come it will be my pleasure.

(*Shamas drapes his arm around the beggar and they walk off together.*)

Narrator: The next night another family took the beggar in. Then another and another. The beggar always had a warm, comfy home to sleep in. One day the beggar gathered the townsfolk together to say good-bye.

Leah: Please don't go.

Beggar: I must.

Mendel: But your buttons! How can we make borscht without your magic bone buttons?

Beggar: How can I keep warm without buttons?

Shamas: Let's trade. We'll give you brass buttons for bone buttons.

(Fastens on gold buttons to the beggar's coat)

Beggar: Thank You and Good-bye. *(Shakes hands/and or hugs townspeople. Waves as he exits)*

Narrator: The years passed. One by one the beggar's bone buttons were lost. But it is a strange thing, a wonder, perhaps. The townsfolk learned they didn't really need the buttons. They learned to make borscht without them. And they learned to help one another without borscht

(Mendel falls down, and the Shamas rushes to help him up. Someone stands as if shivering in the cold and Leah comes and wraps a blanket around him and hands him a bowl of soup)

They helped one another even in hard times. That was the real miracle the beggar left behind.

(All townspeople put their arms around one another and sing Hiney Ma Tov U'manayim Shevat)