

## The Hardest Word

By Jacqueline Jules

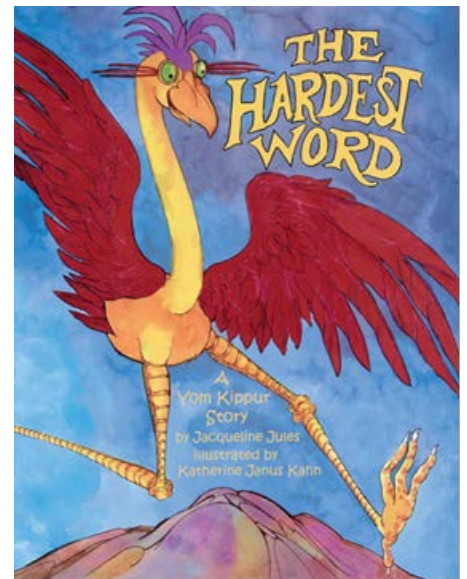
Illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn

### Program Focus

Age group: Ages 4-7  
 Time frame: 60-90 minutes  
 Central value: Teshuvah: The importance of apologizing and rectifying mistakes

### Synopsis

The Ziz, a clumsy but good-hearted bird of folklore, is always making mistakes. When he accidentally ruins a children's vegetable garden, he instantly feels badly for the children and asks God for advice. Though the hardest word for the Ziz to say is "sorry," he arrives to apologize for the garden damage with his own garden's bounty to share with the children. Addressing the complexities of saying sorry, the book presents a powerful lesson on forgiveness, and *teshuvah* – turning around one's behavior. The "turning" is naturally embedded in the apology. It's not called out, spelled out, or anything else-out. It's just the way it is.



### Goals

This program introduces families to the concept of "sorry", explores how to approach saying sorry with children, why it is difficult for children and adults to apologize, and the importance of rectifying mistakes. Families will:

- Identify and illustrate a time when the child was sorry
- Discuss what the Ziz could do to make up for his mistakes
- Identify what we can do to make up for our mistakes
- Make vegetables to repair the children's garden, and turn them into a mobile (for the Sukkah)

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# Plan in advance

## Set up location

### Advanced Preparations

- Set up welcome table with sign in, name tags, PJ Library brochures, and registration forms
- Set up art area with tables
- Set up special story telling area
- Make copies of “saying sorry” work sheet (see attached)
- Put together mini paper bags with herbs (to distribute to departing families)

## Vegetable Mobiles

### Materials

- Vegetable outlines (see attachment)
- Markers
- String
- Hole punch
- Sticks or plastic hangers
- Paper bags to carry mobile home (optional)

# Introduce with an activity

## “Saying Sorry” Drawing

### Materials

- “Saying Sorry” drawing sheet (see attachment)
- Markers
- Pens

### Directions

As families arrive, invite them to sit down to draw a picture with their child of a time when their child was sorry, including a caption about the picture drawn. There will be time later in the program to answer the question about making up for the mistake. When finished, families should hold onto their drawing and take it with them to the story area.

# Read the story

## Introduce the Story

The story we will be reading today is about a Ziz (a fictional creature from Jewish mythology) who is awkward and wants to do the right thing, but cannot. The Ziz tries to find a way to correct the mistake he unintentionally makes. Let's see what this Ziz is up to and begin our story.

## Encourage Participation

- On the page that says “Sizzle! Snap! Bang!” have the children repeat those sounds with you.
- On the page that says “Smash! Squash! Oops!” have the children repeat those sounds with you.

# Follow Up activities

## Follow Up Discussion

- What was the hardest word to say in this story that the Ziz discovered?
- Do you think it is hard to say sorry?
- Saying sorry is important. But it is also important to make up for your mistake and make it better. What else could the Ziz do to help the children in the story feel better about their ruined garden?
- Remember, before we sat down, you drew a picture about a time you felt sorry? Take a moment as a family to discuss and write down how you could make up for your mistake, and what you could do different next time.
- Who would like to show and explain their picture to the group?

*I liked the idea about repairing the children's vegetable garden. I think we can do that right now!*

## Vegetable Mobiles

### Transition / Intro Remarks

Explain to the children that we can help the children in the story feel better about their garden if we make some vegetables to repair the garden.

If timely, let families know that Sukkot is coming soon and they can hang their vegetable mobiles/gardens in their Sukkah or in a friend's Sukkah to remind them of *The Hardest Word* and how we can make up for our mistakes.

### Directions

- Have the children select and color pre-cut vegetable shapes
- Punch holes at top of vegetable and attach string
- Tie and balance vegetables to stick or hanger to make a vegetable mobile.



# Resources for parents, teachers, families

## Nurturing the Family

Thank everyone for coming and for learning about “The Hardest Word.” Briefly give a wrap up message to parents about how they can continue to guide their children in the value of *teshuvah*. Encourage them to not only say sorry, but to think about what they can do to make up for their mistakes.

Pass out small paper bags with herbs inside as families leave. Encourage families to find a spot around their home or in their own garden to plant the seeds with their child and continue their discussion of *The Hardest Word*.

Before families leave, let them know you will email them with the PJ Library Facebook Page link so they can learn about upcoming PJ Library events.

Provide families with a few interesting links to learn more about the holiday. Here are some potential links:

### High Holiday Activities and Resources

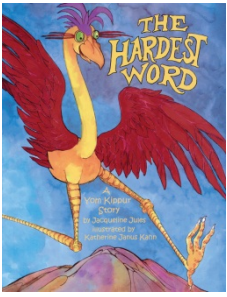
<http://pjlibrary.org/parents-and-families/reading-tips-and-resources/jewish-holidays/rosh-hashanah.aspx>

### PJ Library Books for the High Holidays

<http://pjlibrary.org/Parents-and-Families/Reading-Tips-and-Resources/Jewish-Holidays/Rosh-Hashanah/Rosh-Hashanah-and-Yom-Kippur-Books-.aspx>

### Beyond the Words “I’m Sorry” Blog Post

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/1641/beyond-the-word-sorry/>



**Draw a picture of a time when you were sorry:**

**CAPTION:**

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**What can you do to make up for your mistake? What will you do different next time?**

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