

Hanukkah Cookies with Sprinkles

By David A. Adler

Illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler

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On one foot: At the heart of this book is a little girl who recognizes that something is not quite right when a neighbor must dig through the trash to find fresh fruit to eat. This girl's innate sense of right and wrong spurs her on to become the hero of the story.

Highlighted Jewish Values:

Tzedakah (righteous giving)

צְדָקָה
Tz'da-kah

Rachamim (compassion)

רַחֲמִים
Ra-cha-mim

Connection to heroes (theme)

Everyone has the potential to be a hero. Small gestures – and small people – can have huge effects on the community.

Optional preparation for reading the story:

Gather brown paper bags with varying amounts of pennies or small candies, from one to several.



Lean a small ladder against the wall in your classroom, or draw one on vertical mural paper.

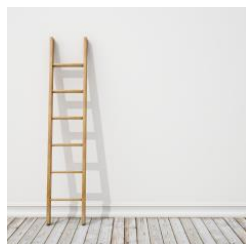
Before You Read

Jewish Values and Background Information

Tzedakah – righteous giving

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Levels of tzedakah range from giving begrudgingly, to helping others provide for themselves
- Tzedakah can include monetary gifts, as well as gifts of time, food, or other necessities
- Tzedakah is not charity to give when you want to, but an obligation; the right thing to do



Derived from the Hebrew word *tzedek*, meaning justice, tzedakah involves giving money, food, clothing or other essential items to those in need. The goal of tzedakah is to create a more just world – a world in which every person's needs are met and resources are more evenly distributed. Moses Maimonides, a 12th century Jewish scholar, identified and ranked eight ways of giving, often referred to as a “Ladder of Tzedakah.” [Click here](#) to see all eight levels of charitable giving.

Rachamim – compassion

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Learning compassion starts with an understanding of others’ needs and feelings
- Not being judgmental of another’s actions or circumstance
- Identifying best/safe ways to help others

Sharing roots with the Hebrew word *rechem* or womb, the Jewish value of *rachamim* involves treating others with the same love, concern, and sense of responsibility that most parents shower upon their children. In the Torah, God repeatedly demonstrates *rachamim* by nurturing and educating early Jewish leaders, and by guiding the Jewish people through the desert. Moses notes that just as God behaves compassionately towards humankind, judging people favorably and forgiving mistakes, so too should people act towards their fellow humans (Exodus Rabbah 46:4).

When You Read

Introducing the story and engaging the children

Set the stage with questions

Choose a storytelling technique (optional)

1: Give each child a closed paper bag with varying numbers of pennies or candies. At the end of the story, ask the children to compare the contents of their bags. Is the distribution fair? What should happen next?

2: Read the book with a ladder in plain view, but don’t say anything about its relationship to the story. When the children ask why there is a ladder in the classroom, explain Maimonides’ ladder and see if the children can connect the ladder to the story.





After You Read

Making connections and making it personal

Tzedakah/righteous giving	Rachamim/compassion
<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the ways in which Sara helps Mr. Berger? How does she decide what to do? • How does Mr. Berger show his appreciation to Sara and her family? • A great Jewish teacher named Moses Maimonides identified eight steps describing how people give tzedakah. Let’s look at Maimonides’ ladder of tzedakah and decide which levels have taken place in the story. • What kinds of giving have you done, and where do they fall on the ladder? 	<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaving with <i>rachamim</i> often involves being careful not to judge others too quickly. What was Sara’s first reaction when she saw Mr. Berger taking an apple from the trash? In what ways did her opinion change over time? • Study Sara’s expressions as you go through the book. What do you think she is feeling? Now do the same for Mr. Berger. • What steps did Sara and her family take before inviting Mr. Berger, a man who they didn’t know, into their house? • How have you helped someone in need? How did you decide what actions to take?



<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Menscharades: Take out your deck of PJ kindness cards, and follow the instructions. • Show me the money: To help children better understand why some people need tzedakah, play a finance simulation game. Distribute \$50 in play money to family groups. Display an image of a My Plate meal planner and ask children to plan three healthy meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). Ask children to pay \$3 for every food in the protein or dairy category, \$2 for fruits and veggies, and \$1 for grains. Play the game again after identifying and paying for additional expenses, such as clothing, heat, and transportation. • Build Maimonides' ladder: Supply children with a variety of construction materials (rope, poster board, boxes, blocks, etc.) and ask them to create a tzedakah ladder for the classroom. Decorate the ladder with photos or drawings of people acting out Maimonides' ladder of giving. 	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings coat: Fill the pockets of a garment with pieces of paper describing emotions, such as sad, happy, angry or worried. Use both words and pictures to depict emotions. As children take turns wearing the coat, have them act out the emotion they've picked. See how quickly classmates can identify the emotion. • Reaction remix: Describe typical "hot-button" situations, such as a friend not coming to their birthday party, or ignoring them when they enter the classroom. Challenge the class to find positive explanations in each scenario for their friends' behaviors. • Compassion Day: Prior to the festivities, ask children to generate a list of ways of behaving compassionately towards classmates. On Compassion Day, pair children with a partner and ask them to see how many acts of rachamim they can lavish on their buddy. 
<p>Engaging families – tzedakah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite a guest from a local food pantry or homeless shelter to discuss their needs with your families. Perhaps you will plan to visit or work there as a community. • Compare and contrast family tzedakah boxes – Have the children come to class with physical boxes or photos; play "guess the amount" based on the weight of the coins. Decide with your families how to spend this money. 	<p>Engaging families – rachamim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning coffee talk – ask your clergy or other community leader to facilitate a conversation with parents about the topic of homelessness/strangers and what you might cover in the classroom. Discuss important safety issues. • Take the next step – have families pack easy give-away bags that can be distributed on the street or to homeless shelters. 