

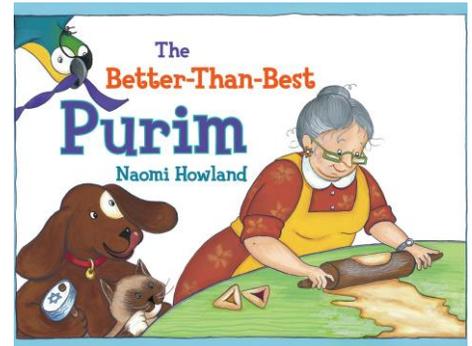
Read the PJ Library Book

The Better-Than-Best Purim (3's)

Written and Illustrated by Naomi Howland
Published by Amazon Children's Publishing

Synopsis

The beginning of this book borrows from the well-known folktale, *The Little Red Hen*. The little old lady solicits the help of her pets to bake a batch of better-than-best *hamentaschen*. (Hamentaschen are filled triangular cookies traditionally eaten on Purim, designed to look like hat of the Purim villain, Haman.) The little old lady's pets claim to be too busy to help her, so she rolls out the dough, fills, pinches, and bakes the pastries herself. The little old lady wonders if she should share the confections she worked so hard to prepare, but soon realizes her pet friends have also been working hard to create a special Purim surprise for her.



Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Industriousness - *Melacha* - מְלָאכָה

Community - *Kehilla* - קְהִילָה

Friendship - *Cha-ve-rut* - חֲבֵרוּת

Industriousness – Melacha. A strong work ethic is a respected *middah* (virtue) in Jewish tradition. In the story of creation the Torah teaches, “God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to till it and tend it.” (Genesis 2:15) Rabbis explain that humankind is on Earth to be active partners with God; we are responsible for the ongoing creation of the world. Human gifts of speech and creativity can be used to enhance all aspects life. Industriousness is seen as both work-related self-discipline and artistic expression. Man’s creativity merits high regard in rabbinic literature, while laziness is frowned upon. Yet we are cautioned to find the appropriate balance between work, study, and play (rest).

[For more about “Melacha” please read the *Sadie’s Sukkah Breakfast* Resource Guide.]

Friendship – Chaverut. There are several Hebrew words for friendship. Each word has a different three letter root, which colors its meaning. *Chaverut* has the root ח-ב-ר (*chaver*) which means both “friend” and “to attach,” implying friendship within a group or society. Another word from that Hebrew root is *chavruta* (study partner). Ancient rabbis felt true friends should be dedicated to one another’s spiritual well-being as well as physical health. The Biblical book of *Kohelet*, Ecclesiastes, says of friends: “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he has not another to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).



Community – kehilla. The word *kehilla*, community, comes from the word for “gathering.” According to the Talmud, a collection of ancient rabbinical writings on Jewish laws and customs, a community should have: “a *beit din* (court of law) that metes out punishments; a *tzedakah* fund that is collected by two people and distributed by three; a synagogue; a bath house; a bathroom; a doctor; a craftsman; a butcher; and a teacher of children.” (Sanhedrin 17b) In other words, a community is a gathering of all types of people contributing their gifts and talents towards the whole.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

**How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

In the Classroom / Centers

- ✧ **Industriousness:** In this book everyone is busy preparing for Purim. Plan some Purim festivities with your class, and see which tasks the children would like to do. Some children might prepare decorations in the **art center** while others **prepare food** for *mishloach manot* baskets or a Purim *Seudah* (feast.) Another choice might be making *graggers*, the noisemakers for blotting out Haman’s name while listening to the Purim story. As the children work, comment on their efforts and their contributions toward the classroom goal.
- ✧ **Friendship:** Play a Purim music CD and try Friendship Freeze Dancing for a **large motor skills** activity. Every time the music stops, ask the children to find a new dance partner.
- ✧ **Community:** Allow the fanciful illustrations on this book to inspire **dramatic play**. Fill a treasure box with beads, masks, streamers – and stuffed animals. Add sifters and sand or rolling pins and play dough to your sensory table to recreate the story.
- ✧ **Community:** Make a “classroom community trail mix” in the **kitchen**. (You might ask parents to send in contributions, alerting them to allergy constraints.) As each child adds their special ingredient, the concoction truly becomes a representation of your unique classroom.



Bridging Home and School

Purim Seudah (Feast)

A Purim Feast is the culmination of the Purim holiday. Recreate this feast as a lunch in your classroom. Invite families to join you and participate in the cooking. Plan the menu around food children can help to prepare, such as salads, popovers, or no-bake cookies, sandwich faces, and ants-on-a-log.

Jobs and Hobbies

Life today can be very hectic. In many families both parents are employed, manage a family and home, volunteer, and pursue outside interests. It's all about balance. Invite parents who are able to visit your classroom and share what keeps them busy. They might talk about their careers or hobbies such as sports, photography, or cooking.

Family Engagement at Home

Family Job Chart

It is often surprising what real contributions children can make to the smooth running of a household. Communicate with your families some of your students' capabilities such as watering plants or sorting silverware. These tasks are often more rewarding than an ambiguous "clean up your toys." Ask your families to let you know what jobs the children do at home, and find a way to incorporate them into your school job chart.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

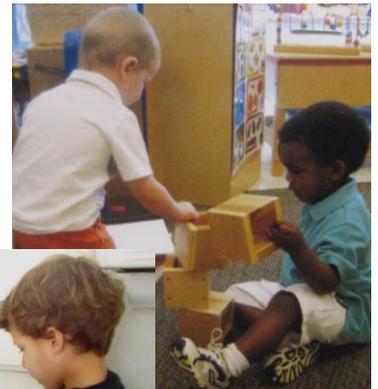
How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... of friendship

Keep your eyes open and cameras handy for moments when friendships begin to bloom – or when you might inspire a friendship. Include details in the story, such as whether the children played together before or this was part of an ongoing project. For example: *Tyler and Greg realized they are both fascinated with towers. We will continue to provide them with different building materials to see what develops.*

-or-

Last week I suggested Tali ask Kyle for help washing her hands. Now she seeks out Kyle whenever she needs help at the sink.



More resources and websites for inspiration

Purim supplies in bulk: <http://www.chocolategelt.com/catalog/>

All about Purim: <http://www.iewfaq.org/holiday9.htm>

Children and Friendships: <http://tinyurl.com/pediatrics-and-friends>

PJGtS Purim Pinterest page: <http://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/purim-books-and-activities/>

