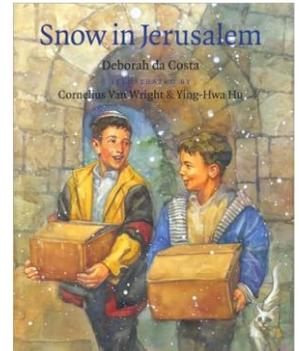


## Snow in Jerusalem

By Deborah da Costa

Illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright & Ying-Hwa Hu

Published by Albert Whitman & Company



**On one foot:** This story centers on two boys from different backgrounds who overcome biases in order to solve a shared problem. Appropriately the book is illustrated by a husband and wife team who literally had to learn the art of compromise. Mr. Van Wright and Ms. Hu say that collaborating through art has heightened their awareness and interest in different cultures.

### Highlighted Jewish Values:

#### Friendship

יְדִידוּת

*Yedidut*

#### Judging everyone favorably

דָּן לְכָף זְכוּת

*Dan le-chaf z'chut*

### Connection to *shmita* (theme)

One of the concepts of *shmita* (the Sabbatical year) is reimagining our societal relationships. In this story two boys had to set aside their preconceptions about each other and work together to solve a problem: how to share their precious cat.

### Optional preparation for reading the story:

Provide your students with some [information](#) and a [map](#) of the Old City of Jerusalem. Bring an embroidered *kippah* and *taqiyeh* (Arab skullcap) to class.

## Before You Read

### Jewish Values and Background Information

#### Friendship

Three aspects of this value to consider:

- There is a level of trust needed to form and maintain a friendship
- Friendship entails compromise – work together to solve problems
- Find common interests

**Friendship – *Yedidut*.** Friendship is an important value in Judaism. Jewish sages teach, “*K’neh lecha chaver* (acquire for yourself a friend)” [Pirkei Avot 1:6]. The Hebrew word *k’neh* (acquire) literally means “to buy.” This teaching highlights the fact that friendship must be earned. Rabbi Yosef Yavetz, a mid-15<sup>th</sup>-century scholar expelled from Spain, felt the price of friendship requires friends to hone their abilities to compromise and to respond empathetically to one another’s needs. According to rabbinic sources there are numerous benefits to friendship. Friends not only help each other when one falls down [Ecclesiastes 4:9], but they assist one other with learning Torah and valuable life lessons [BT Ta’anit 7a].

## Judge everyone favorably – *Dan le'chaf z'chut*

Three aspects of this value to consider:

- Be open to getting to know people who are different from you
- Don't jump to conclusions – investigate first
- Try to put yourself in someone's shoes – develop empathy

In an ancient book of ethical teachings, Reb Yehoshua ben Perachya states that we should “judge the whole person favorably” [Pirkei Avot 1:6]. The Hebrew term *dan l'chaf z'chut* is frequently interpreted as “giving the benefit of the doubt” but literally means “judge on the positive scales of merit.” There are a number of ways to carry out Rabbi Yehoshua's instructions. We can be cautious in our judgments and never assume that we know the whole story, and we should habitually look for the best in others and seek out the most positive explanations for another's behavior. Hillel encourages us not to judge our friends until we have “reached that person's place” [Pirkei Avot 2:5]. In other words, we cannot fully understand another's actions unless we have experienced the exact same situation.

## When You Read

### Introducing the story and engaging the children

#### Set the stage with questions

What do you know about Jerusalem?

Have you ever become friends with someone after you have given them a second chance?

#### Choose a storytelling technique (optional)

1. **Sensory input.** Try to create the atmosphere of Jerusalem by engaging the senses. Play Israeli music in the background or fill the room with middle-eastern spices.
2. **Imaginary hats.** This story has two strong main characters. You might show two types of headgear, such as a *kippah* or *taqiyeh* (Arab skullcap), and ask the children to put on their imaginary hat as you read about one boy or the other. Encourage your students to imagine what the characters are feeling.

## After You Read

### Making connections and making it personal

Friendship	Judging everyone favorably
<b>Discuss</b>	<b>Discuss</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think these two boys should remain friends? Why or why not?</li> <li>• Why is it important to have friends?</li> <li>• If you have an argument with a friend, why should you try to make up?</li> <li>• One of the beauties of friendship is that while we have things in common, we can learn from our differences. Think about some of your friends and the ways in which they are similar and different from you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think the boys immediately distrusted and disliked one another?</li> <li>• What made them change their minds?</li> <li>• You may have heard the phrase “giving the benefit of the doubt.” What does that mean?</li> <li>• If you could change the story so the boys gave each other the benefit of the doubt when they first met, what would they have said?</li> </ul>



<b>Friendship</b>	<b>Judging everyone favorably</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<p><b>That's me!:</b> Stand or sit in circle. One student starts by making a statement about himself/herself, such as "I have a sister" or "I like spaghetti." If that statement is true for anyone else in the class, they jump up and say, "That's me!" Continue until everyone has had a turn making a statement.</p> <p><b>Compromise game:</b> Hold a three-legged race or other relay race in which two people must work together to accomplish their task.</p>  <p><b>Save the egg:</b> In this book the boys worked together to help their cat. This game requires two students to work together to protect an egg (hardboiled) from cracking as it is dropped from a table.</p> <p><b>Matchmaker:</b> Choose children randomly for a project. Give out large puzzle pieces and ask students to find the one that fits; use matching photos or draw color-coded straws. Together they can: save the egg, learn a Hebrew word, or any other assignment.</p>	<p><b>Different perspectives:</b> The Israeli artist Yaacov Agam specializes in artwork that looks different depending upon the way you look at the picture. Create some Agam-style artwork. Look in the <a href="#">PJGtS Israel Pinterest board</a> for ideas.</p> <p><b>Guess the picture:</b> When you only see a small piece of something, your understanding of the big picture is limited. Try guessing these objects: <a href="http://floorsix.blogspot.com/">http://floorsix.blogspot.com/</a></p> <p><b>Scales of merit:</b> Judge your fellow on the positive scales of merit. [Pirkei Avot 1:6] Small changes of attitude or perception can tip the scales in one direction or another. Make a scale and then find the smallest thing that will tip your scale. Here is a simple scale made from a hanger. <a href="http://learningtogrowhawaii.org/activity/hanger-scale/">http://learningtogrowhawaii.org/activity/hanger-scale/</a> or <a href="http://www.filthwizardry.com/2009/09/homemade-weighing-scales.html">http://www.filthwizardry.com/2009/09/homemade-weighing-scales.html</a></p> 
<b>Taking it home – friendship</b>	<b>Taking it home – judging everyone favorably</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask families to talk about aspects of friendship such as making and keeping friends. Tell stories about special friendships and experiences.</li> <li>• Compromise is part of everyday life. Plan a family outing or evening together to practice the art of compromise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest your families look at a series of optical illusions and talk about what each person sees. Here is an example of a downloadable poster <a href="https://www.waldereducation.org/kiddush-cup-or-faces-optical-illusion/psjth13-jr184/">https://www.waldereducation.org/kiddush-cup-or-faces-optical-illusion/psjth13-jr184/</a></li> </ul>

