



EMMA'S POEM: THE VOICE OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

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Emma Lazarus was raised in a wealthy Jewish American family in 1880's New York City, where she was moved by the plight of immigrants. As a young woman, asked to write a poem to raise money for a pedestal for the proposed Statue of Liberty, she composed "The New Colossus" and so became the voice of the Statue of Liberty. This is the story of the difference she made in her world.

The life and spirit of Emma Lazarus exemplified the Jewish precept "Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh La Zeh," or "The Jewish people are responsible one for the other." Lazarus defied the mores of the time to work on behalf of Jewish immigrants. That she came from a well-to-do family where she had "plenty of everything" adds credence to her efforts.

Encourage your children to learn more about our nation's Jewish history. The author's note mentions Lazarus' involvement with HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) which remains very active today. At your local library or online, check out organizations such as HIAS or the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, founded by an extraordinary activist, Rebecca Gratz, whose life mirrored Emma Lazarus' in many ways.

Using the illustrations in Emma's Poem, encourage your children to notice differences in the established citizens of New York and its impoverished immigrants. Note disparities in clothing and facial expression. Point out that many immigrants, once established, gave *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness) to the incoming immigrant community as they had received themselves.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Emma Lazarus' example of social action can prompt us to look at community in new ways. Discussion leads to an

awareness of our blessings; mindfulness moves us to gratitude; thankfulness naturally extends to action. Encourage these attributes, basic to Jewish thought, in your children. Each of the following suggestions has the capacity to promote empathy and compassionate acts.

- Invite your children to write a note to Emma Lazarus; if she were still alive, what would they say to her? Or, they might write a letter welcoming someone to this country.
- Provide materials for your children to dress up as the Statue of Liberty. Playing the part of Lady Liberty, they can greet immigrants entering New York Harbor. Additionally, encourage your children to take on the role of immigrants who may not understand the language and customs and who are lonely or homesick.
- Point out to your children that being new in the neighborhood or at school can feel similar to being an immigrant. Discuss how they can be welcoming and kind to newcomers.
- Many communities have immigrant populations for whom collections of necessities are ongoing. With your children, explore local charities for supporting new citizens. Pj