



ONE CITY, TWO BROTHERS

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Based on a folktale told by both Jews and Arabs, this story is of two brothers quietly and lovingly caring for each other. The place where they meet is said by some to have been chosen as the site of Jerusalem.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Yerushalaym

Yerushalaym (Jerusalem) is known by several names. Called “City of Peace” and *Yerushalaym shel Zahav* (Jerusalem of Gold), Jerusalem stands alone as a holy place for Jews and holds great religious and historical significance for Muslims and Christians. One of the oldest cities in the world, this capital of Israel is located between the northern tip of the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, high in the Judean hills.

The Midrash

Some narratives in the Torah and other Jewish texts are scant on details and may leave one contemplating “the rest of the story.” With that in mind, the rabbis of old offered the *midrash* (from the Hebrew for “study” or “investigate”), a story that imaginatively explains a Jewish truth or elaborates a sketchily-told story. The *midrash* of *One City, Two Brothers* offers a heartwarming explanation for the location of the city of Jerusalem and, at the same time, tells a story of great brotherly love.

King Solomon

Ruler of the ancient united Kingdom of Israel and responsible for building the first Temple in Jerusalem, King Solomon was known for his wisdom. In perhaps the most famous story recounting his insight, the king settles an argument about which of two women is the true mother of a baby; he suggests that the baby be divided in two, whereupon one woman shows her maternal love by offering to give up the baby.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

While this is a story about sibling love and devotion, the book begins with two angry, arguing brothers. It is important for children to understand that even people who love each other – including siblings and parents --become cross at times and may say and do things they later regret. Equally important for youngsters is the realization that, just as the siblings in *One City, Two Brothers* reconcile at the conclusion of the story, so too can rifts in our relationships mend and heal. Let this book be a springboard for these important family conversations.

Whether taking action for siblings, young relatives, or friends, children can greatly benefit from performing acts of kindness for each other. Talk with your children about the helpful things they can do. Discuss young people in their lives for whom a kind act might be especially significant. Give them instances from your own experiences. Using the siblings in this book as an example, help your children devise a specific plan to do a *mitzvah* (good deed) for someone. Point out that even the smallest act counts.

Tzedakah (from the Hebrew word meaning “justice” or “fairness”) concerns acts done for the benefit of others, typically those in need. According to Jewish tradition, the highest form of giving takes place when neither the giver nor the recipient knows the other’s identity. Plan with your children something your family might do together that would come under this category of giving, making sure that the children can take an active role, and then -- just do it!