



YOU NEVER HEARD OF SANDY KOUFAX?!

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This book opens a window into the life of the major league baseball player many called the greatest lefty who ever pitched.

Young or advanced in years, wealthy or of modest means, female or male, world-famous or known only to a few—heroes come to us. What constitutes a hero? It is said that a hero is an ordinary person who does extraordinary things. We know that heroes possess character traits that we admire: courage, passion, willingness to act for the greater good, the ability to put others before self. Children can learn that we each have the power within to be a hero, and they can take a step in that direction by learning about the following heroes—a tiny sampling of Jewish people whom, in addition to Sandy Koufax, set an example of making the world a different and better place.

JEWISH HEROS

Consider Joseph, favorite son of our Biblical ancestor, Jacob, whose jealous brothers sold him into slavery. Years later, having worked his way to the position of Pharaoh's viceroy, Joseph encounters his brothers, now in the position of asking for help from the brother they don't recognize. Not only does Joseph assist his siblings, he forgives them for their unspeakable cruelty toward him years earlier.

Esther, Queen of Persia, had a choice: to remain safely quiet about her Jewish heritage or risk her life to save the Jewish people from certain death at the hands of the King's advisor, Haman. With tremendous faith, Esther summoned the courage to speak up, averting disaster for the Jews—and giving us Purim!

Lillian Wald, a mid-nineteenth century nurse, social worker, and author, is considered the founder of visiting nursing in the United States. After working in an orphanage, Wald founded the Henry Street Settlement on the Lower East Side of New York City 1893. She made it her life's work to care for Russian Jewish immigrants, making their lives a bit easier.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to march for civil rights in Selma, Alabama. Never one to shrink from the difficult issues of his time, Heschel acted to help ensure the rights of all Americans.

Ilan Ramon, a colonel in the Israeli Air Force, was the first from his nation to travel in space. He and seven other astronauts died on January 16, 2003 when the Space Shuttle *Columbia* broke apart as it attempted its return to Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Recognizing the symbolic nature of his space travel, Ramon said: "There is no better place to emphasize the unity of people than flying in space."

Explain to your children that heroic acts take place every day. The Jewish people mentioned above are different from each other in many significant ways; what they share is a gift for performing acts of *tikkun olam*—repairing the world. Help your children understand that there is no minimum age limit on heroism. They, too, can change the world through their actions. Sandy Koufax proved that truth not only on the mound but also through his life off the field. Pj