



SIMON AND THE BEAR

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Simon's on a boat to America – but his ship sinks! Stuck on an ice floe, Simon lights his menorah. A nearby polar bear notices...and what happens next is the stuff of miracles.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Simon's kind nature shines, even when he is shipwrecked on his way to America. He gives a man his lifeboat seat and befriends a polar bear while marooned on an iceberg. Man and beast respond with kindness in turn, demonstrating an age-old Jewish saying that one good deed leads to another.

Simon demonstrates again and again the core Jewish value of *gemilut chasadim*, “acts of loving kindness.” The Talmud teaches that kindness is more important even than charity, for it can be bestowed on anyone, rich or poor, young or old. The concept of kindness is mentioned in the Torah more than 190 times, leading some to suggest that it is the most important ethical concept within Judaism.

Why is Simon so kind? His empathy for others helps him understand their feelings. This universal idea of empathy was summed up by first century rabbi Hillel, who said “that which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow.” This tenet also highlights that kindness is a social act that benefits everyone. Being kind feels great, makes others feel great, and inspires us all to be our best selves.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

- *Gemilut chasadim* traditionally include acts of loving kindness such as visiting the sick, comforting mourners, offering hospitality, taking care of the poor, showing respect to parents, and donating to charity. As a family, reflect on the times you've done these or other kindnesses.
- Watch for examples of kindness in the books you read and movies or shows you watch - point them out and talk about them together. Imagine how the characters felt when they gave or received kindness.
- Make a kindness jar and fill it with ideas for kind deeds written on slips of paper. Make a practice of choosing and performing a deed every week together as a family.
- Form a habit of complimenting family members when you notice them being kind, and perhaps rewarding them with a hug or kiss.
- Search online for Pay It Forward Day or the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation for suggestions and events celebrating kindness.