



# YAFFA AND FATIMA: SHALOM, SALAAM

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*Yaffa and Fatima are dear friends, despite coming from different backgrounds. When times get tough, how will they look after each other? This rendition of a classic Jewish folktale is an inspiring look at how friendship perseveres.*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

The world has always been an amazingly diverse place, but today it also seems to be a smaller world than it once was. Advanced technology allows people, even those from dramatically different backgrounds and cultures, to interact from opposite sides of the globe. It is also common now to find plentiful diversity within our own communities. Someone who may, in some ways, be very different may be as close as the next house, as is the case in *Yaffa and Fatima: Shalom, Salaam*.

Judaism teaches that every person is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. Although differences of culture, religion, custom, and appearance can be daunting, choosing to reach out in friendship enables one to more clearly see the divine spark in every human being. The unfamiliar can be unsettling, but all it takes to see how similar people really are is the willingness to listen to and learn about another person. Such understanding can inspire us to perform acts of *tzedakah*, or charity (literally "righteousness") when we see another person in need, as Yaffa and Fatima readily do for each other. We can help create a world in which thinking of other comes naturally!

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

If your family lives in an area in which a variety of cultures is represented, consider making a special effort to get to know a family with a different background from your own. Talk with your children about how to ask questions respectfully of their new friends if they see a practice they don't understand, and encourage them to share your own family's traditions. You can find children's books about different cultures at your local library, and an internet search will also bring up interesting information to share with your family.

Another wonderful concept to teach children at an early age is that of *tzedakah*. In Jewish tradition, there are several different levels of *tzedakah*; the highest of these is giving anonymously to someone in need. In that scenario, the focus is completely on the recipient, without any thought of reward for the giver (except the wonderful feeling that comes from helping another person!). As a family, thinking of creative ways to give to others. If you know people in your community who are in need of particular items, you might deliver those articles to their home while they are out. Children can also create and decorate *tzedakah* boxes (any box or container will do into which a slot for coins can be cut) in which to collect spare change for an individual or charity.