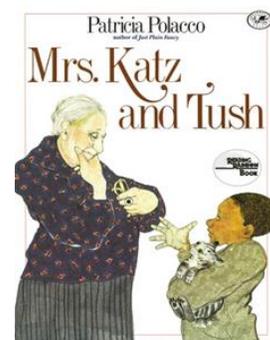


## Mrs. Katz and Tush

By Patricia Polacco

Illustrated by Patricia Polacco

Published by Doubleday Books



**On one foot:** A lifelong friendship blossoms when a young boy encourages his neighbor to adopt an abandoned kitten. As their relationship grows these two friends become like family. Mrs. Katz's late husband Morris feels like an active character in the book, brought to life through Mrs. Katz's memories.

### Highlighted Jewish Values

#### Remembrance

זְכוֹרוֹן  
zi-ka-ron

#### Loving others

וְאֶהְבֵּתָה לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ  
Ve-a-hav-ta le-rei-a-cha ka-mo-cha

#### Connection to families (theme)

Friends and pets with whom we build strong relationships become members of our chosen family.

#### Optional preparation for reading the story

Find a cuddly cat plush toy or kitten puppet to keep on your lap as you tell the story.  
Gather Legos or blocks.

## Before You Read

### Jewish values and background information

#### Zikaron – Remembrance

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Jewish practice focuses on the positive aspects of memory
- Remembering can have action in addition to thought
- There are personal memories of people and places as well as collective memory of historical figures and events

Remembering is such an important value in Judaism that its Hebrew word, *zachor*, appears 169 times in the Torah. In Jewish practice, personal and communal memories are equally cherished. The charge to remember the Exodus from Egypt is said three times each day as part of the Shema prayer. More than remembering, there is an obligation to relive the Exodus and the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai as a way to safeguard Jewish history. Judaism employs different techniques for sustaining memory. *Mitzvot* (commandments) and holiday rituals, such as taking part in a Passover seder, sitting in a *sukkah*, or lighting a menorah are designed to help individuals reconnect with past historic events. The *Yizkor* service on major Jewish holidays and lighting *yahrzeit* candles in memory of loved ones are tools for keeping personal memories alive.

## V'ahavta lerei-acha kamocho – Loving others

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Love is giving of oneself: time, energy, and emotion
- Components of love include admiration, empathy, and respect
- Loving others begins with your own self-worth



The Jewish concept of love has three components: loving oneself, loving others, and loving God. The Torah instructs the Jewish people to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) and “love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). These directives set up the idea that you first should love yourself before you engage in meaningful relationships with others. Jewish scholars add that God is present in loving relationships. When relationships are truly grounded in the Jewish value of *b'tzelem elohim*, the idea that all people are created in the image of God, holiness is imbued in how we treat one another. When that occurs, we are elevating all of our relationships to a higher level.

## When You Read

### Introducing the story and engaging the children

#### Set the stage with questions



#### Choose a storytelling technique (optional)

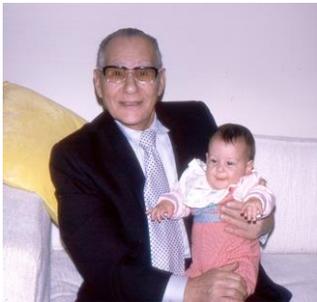
1. Keep track of how many times Mrs. Katz recounts a memory. Add blocks to a stack each time Mrs. Katz refers to Morris or a remembered event.
2. Read the book with the aid of a cat puppet. The cat can help retell the story by asking questions, or it might act as a “talking stick” as you allow each child to tell a piece of the story or share a memory.

## After You Read

### Making connections and making it personal

| Zikaron/remembrance   | V'ahavta lerei-acha kamocho/loving others   |
|---|---|
| <b>Discuss</b>  | <b>Discuss</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mrs. Katz shares many memories of her husband, Morris, with Larnel. What details about Morris's and Mrs. Katz's life did you learn from the story?</li> <li>• Do you have any memories or know any details about relatives from your family's history?</li> <li>• What memories and family stories does your family like to discuss?</li> <li>• Why do you think it's important to share memories and remember details from your family's past?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some ways that Mrs. Katz showed Larnel love? How did Larnel show love to Mrs. Katz?</li> <li>• Who are the people Mrs. Katz refers to by saying “such a person”? What do they have in common?</li> <li>• What does it mean to do something “with love”? How is that different from doing something “without love”?</li> <li>• How do you show members of your family that you love them?</li> </ul> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Zikaron/remembrance</b>   | <b>V'ahavta lerei-acha kamocha/loving others</b>  |
| <p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I'm going to Mrs. Katz's house:</b> Play the traditional add-on memory game of "I'm going on a picnic..." but frame it as "I'm going to Mrs. Katz's house and I'm bringing..." Start with the letter A and try to make it all the way through the alphabet.</li> <li>• <b>What's missing:</b> Display a set of Jewish ritual objects and then, while the children turn away or close their eyes, remove one of them. Who can guess what's missing? Play a few rounds, removing one item or a few at a time.</li> <li>• <b>Memory stones:</b> Have the children decorate smooth dark stones (found at most craft stores) to show a favorite memory. They can make a picture or write words that remind them of a treasured experience.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Love charades:</b> Brainstorm and act out acts of love and kindness. Write these ideas on the leaves provided in your tree decal kit and display them on your classroom window or whiteboard. These might include giving hugs, writing a card, blowing kisses, or making a friendship bracelet.</li> <li>• <b>First, love yourself:</b> Before we can love others, we need to first love ourselves. Have each student share with a partner something they love about themselves and something they admire or respect about their partner. Over the course of a few weeks, have the children change partners and continue to share. The way we feel about ourselves and treat others is intertwined, and can improve with practice.</li> <li>• <b>How we love:</b> Each of us shows love and feels love in specific ways. Consider reading about the <a href="#">five love languages</a> by Gary Chapman: acts of service, gifts, quality time, physical touch, and words of affirmation. Poll the class with simple questions, such as, "After a job well done, would you rather get a high five or a sticker?"</li> </ul> |
| <b>Engaging families – Zikaron/remembrance</b>   | <b>Engaging families – V'ahavta lerei-acha kamocha/loving others</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jewish traditions suggests we honor someone's memory by either learning or doing <i>gemilut chasidim</i>, acts of loving kindness in their name. Invite families to a read-a-thon or mitzvah day in memory or honor of a loved one. Ask each family to share something about their honoree.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a "Love Bingo" game night at your school. Invite families to come and purchase Bingo boards, where the proceeds will go towards your class tzedakah. Instead of the traditional letters and numbers, create your own bingo cards with students that reflect acts of love and kindness. Here is an example of a free <a href="#">bingo card creator</a>.</li> </ul>   |

