

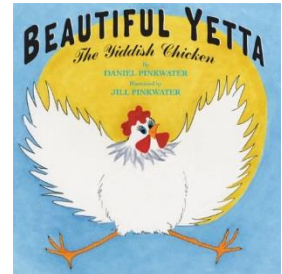


Read the PJ Library Book

Beautiful Yetta: The Yiddish Chicken (4s)

Written by Daniel Pinkwater

Illustrated by Jill Pinkwater



Synopsis

Yetta, a beautiful Yiddish-speaking chicken, does not want to become chicken soup! A daring escape from the market-bound truck leads Yetta to Brooklyn. She is overwhelmed by the crowded streets, rude rats, dangerous buses, and unwelcoming pigeons. Then Yetta rescues a parrot from the claws of a cat, and she finds herself befriended by a community of Spanish-speaking parrots who eagerly help her adjust to life in the big city.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another.

Friendship – *Cha-vei-rut* – תְּבָרוּת

Celebrating diversity (do not be scornful) – *Al te-hi vaz* – אַל תְּהִי בָז

Introducing the value of intercultural friendship and welcoming others *Chaveirut*

From Jewish teachings

Friendship is so important in Judaism, that ancient sages taught, “*K’nei lecha chaver,*” or acquire for yourself a friend (*Pirkei Avot, Ethics of Our Ancestors 1:6*). The word “*k’nei*” literally means to buy; it seems like a strange word to pair with friendship. Rabbi Yosef Yavetz, a 15th-century Spanish scholar, explains that friendship is a precious commodity that can only be acquired through hard work and effort. Friends must learn to anticipate one another’s needs, to listen empathetically, and to hone their abilities to compromise.

For the teacher

- What qualities do you look for in a friend?
- What do you find are the most rewarding aspects of friendship?
- What are some of the challenges in making and maintaining friendships?
- What are the friendship-making strengths and weaknesses that you observe in your classroom?

Questions for children

- What does the word “friend” mean to you?
- Why is it important to have friends?
- What do you need to do in order to be a good friend?
- Think of one or two of your friends. How are you and your friend alike? How are you different?



Introducing the value of celebrating diversity
Al tehi vaz

From Jewish teachings

Jewish tradition teaches we all have a bit of the Divine in us, and we should celebrate the diversity in all of God’s creations. Rabbinic sages understood that people often fear or dislike what is new or different. One teaching states, “Do not be scornful of any person . . . for you have no person without his hour . . .” (*Pirkei Avot, Ethics of Our Ancestors 4:3*). The Talmud, a compilation of Jewish law, goes so far as to suggest we recite a blessing when we encounter someone very different from us, marveling at the variety of creation.

For the teacher

- What are some of the ways you and your colleagues model celebrating diversity in your school community?
- What has been your experience dealing with bias or exclusion in the school or in other communities?



Questions for children

- In our story, why do you think some of the animals were unkind to Yetta?
- Why do you think it’s important to treat people and animals with kindness?
- All people and animals are created to be different. What makes you curious when you meet someone who is very different from you?

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

**How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

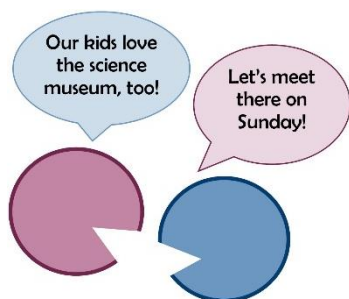
In the Classroom/Centers

- ✧ **Chaveirut/friendship:** Help children to be open-minded and observant when they look at one another. Introduce mirroring games where children can alternate between being the leader and the mirror. Try the game with facial expressions, then take it **outside** for **gross motor** mirroring. Hint: slow movements are more easily mirrored.
- ✧ **Chaveirut/friendship:** How are you creating spaces in your classroom that foster friendships? Research shows that relationships are best cemented in one-on-one or small-group interactions. Designate **centers** as small-group areas. Use numbers and images to represent the number of children per activity.
- ✧ **Al tehi vaz/celebrating diversity:** The things that make us different are the things that make us special. Make sure that the dolls, toys, and costumes in your classroom are representative of all types of ethnic, cultural, and physical differences. Note how the children incorporate these objects into their play.
- ✧ **Al tehi vaz/celebrating diversity:** Conduct an audit of your classroom with your students, providing scenarios of children with different abilities and interests. For example: if a child were on crutches, would they be able to access all of the materials? If a child has an interest in gardening, where will they find tools and resources? What adjustments do the children recommend? Have the children make a map of the classroom, and mark the areas that need change.



Bridging Home and School

Family question of the week



Help the families in your class make connections by seeing what they have in common. Post a question-of-the-week on your family portrait board or other area. Provide answer cards at drop-off and pick-up times. Questions might include: “Name two restaurants where your family likes to dine,” or “Where do you like to go for a fun family outing?” Add the responses to your board. As you see similar answers, make connections between them with yarn. Soon you’ll be able to see a web growing amongst your families—and maybe they will start planning family fun together.

Family Engagement at Home

Got cards?

What do you do with post-season greeting cards? Holiday cards are great prompts for conversation. Talk about who sent the cards, where the people live, and where you first met. Families might use the cards to create a “friend tree,” similar to a family tree. This can be done without holiday cards as well. Talk about the pictures stored on your phone or computer. This type of activity celebrates friendships and the diverse communities our families are part of.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story about . . . developing friendships.

Did you know there are several words for friendship in Hebrew? Two frequently used terms are *yedidut* and *chaveirut*. *Yedidut* connotes a beginning friendship, while *chaveirut* points to a deeper relationship. How are you telling the story of deepening friendships in the classroom? Write down the moments when two children first notice something they have in common, perhaps over snack or a sparked discussion in morning meeting. Watch and photograph as they begin to play more often with one another. Let families know about growing friendships. Hopefully the families will become friends, too.



Future rock band

More resources and websites for inspiration

Hear the author read *Beautiful Yetta*: <http://tinyurl.com/beautifulyetta>

Learning environments with diversity: www.pjfor.me/diversity

Friendships are critical for children and adults: www.pjfor.me/critical-friendships

