



ARE WE STILL FRIENDS?

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Beatrice and Abel are the finest of friends – until a misunderstanding gets in the way. How will they reconcile in time for a fresh start in the new year? Every young child (and many grownups!) will relate to this dilemma.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

It is a tiny, two-word phrase, but it can be one of the hardest things to say: “I’m sorry.” Abel and Beatrice in *Are We Still Friends?* know that things can be especially complicated if there has been a misunderstanding in a relationship. It can be difficult to address the uncomfortable feelings of hurt and resentment. We might not always make the effort to think deeply about relationships that we need to rectify, both with God and the people around us.

The Jewish calendar devotes an important part of the yearly cycle to this very thing: *teshuvah*, which means “to return” in Hebrew. The fall High Holiday season begins with *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year. The period between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) is called the *aseret yemei teshuva* – the ten days of repentance. This time is an opportunity to take stock of our lives and relationships and ask for forgiveness from those we have wronged. Once we have made things right wherever we can, we are ready for *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the year. The hard work of making amends enables us to enter the new year with a clean slate, and to carry forward the changes we have made.

Pride is not very good company, as Abel and Beatrice discover. Letting it go opens the way for relationships to be renewed and for the “finest of friends” to be together again. Life is too short to stay mad for long!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Our children’s early years are the perfect time to start teaching them about the importance of apologizing when they’ve done something wrong and doing what they can to make things right. As with most of the guidance we give our kids, we may have to repeat ourselves many times. But we also can’t underestimate the impact of modeling the behavior we’d like to see in our children. As parents, we can help to create a culture of humility and respect at home by apologizing when we say or do something we shouldn’t have. Take a moment to model an apology: “I’m sorry. I got upset because...but I shouldn’t have yelled at you just now. I will try my best not to do it again. Will you please forgive me?” It isn’t always easy, but leading the way in being quick to apologize will help your children learn to do the same, both at home and in their other relationships in the world.

Find ways to make *teshuvah* hands-on with your kids. If there is someone they need to apologize to, encourage them to make a card or other special piece of artwork to give to the person when they say they’re sorry. Creating a process around *teshuvah*, rather than allowing them to just dash off a quick apology, can make more of a lasting impression on your children and help them make a habit of respect and empathy for others.