



What are friends for?

Climb the Ladder (of Giving)

Maddi has a problem: She doesn't have enough to eat. Sofia has a problem, too: Maddi has asked her not to tell anyone. When Sofia sneaks Maddi some food, she demonstrates a core Jewish value: *ha'achalat re'evim*, Hebrew for "feeding the hungry." When she promises not to tell anyone, that's kind of in keeping with Jewish tradition, too. The medieval philosopher Maimonides wrote about a "ladder" of *zedakah* (Hebrew for "justice," often translated as charitable giving). Anonymous donations are high up on that ladder because they protect people's dignity. Still, when Sofia finally tells her mother, she's doing the right thing. Some things are even more important than keeping a promise.

HANDS ON!

Help Fight Hunger

Maddi's situation is not unusual. Millions of children don't have enough to eat. One way you and your family can take action is by donating to a local food bank.

1. Locate your nearest food bank. Give them a call and ask what items they need most.
2. The next time your family goes grocery shopping, pick up a few things to donate. (Keep an eye out for sales and buy-one-get-one promotions -- you might be able to give a little bit more.)
3. Just as Sofia figures out what is healthy and keeps well in a backpack, look for nutritious foods that have long shelf lives, like beans and dried fruit.
4. When you've filled up a bag with food, drop it at the pantry. While you're there, ask about other ways to help out.

Don't Judge a Kid by Her Fridge

Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Ancestors, a classic collection of rabbinic wisdom) says, "Do not look at the vessel, but at what it contains." It's another way of reminding us not to focus on appearances -- it's what's inside that counts. But in this case, Sofia is worried about what's inside Maddi's fridge. When Sofia learns that Maddi's family doesn't have enough food, it doesn't change her opinion of Maddi. Maddi's is embarrassed by her empty fridge, but what's important to Sofia is that Maddi is a great playmate, a talented climber, and a loyal friend. The things we have do not add up to how much we are worth. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/maddisfridge.

A Healthy Appetite

Sofia's mom points out that Cheesy Pizza Bombs are a treat, but foods like fish and eggs are good for you. Eating healthfully is part of the Jewish value of *shmirat haguf*, "protecting the body." The best food is not only delicious but also nutritious -- our bodies need good fuel for health and growth. According to Jewish thought, every human being is created *b'tselem Elohim*, "in the image of God." That means that when we take care of our bodies, we are also respecting the divine. So make healthy choices (with the occasional Cheesy Pizza Bomb), and then dig in and enjoy.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHY do you think Maddi doesn't want Sofia to tell anyone about her empty fridge? What is she worried about?

HOW does Sofia feel about keeping Maddi's secret? How would you feel?

HAVE you ever had to break a promise? What happened?