



THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Author: Jerry Pinkney
Illustrator: Jerry Pinkney

Jewish Value:

Act with Loving Kindness—*G'milut Chasadim* גְּמִלוֹת חֶסֶדִים

Enduring Understandings

- Small acts of kindness can make a big difference.
- Each person has value and has the ability to “act with loving kindness.”

Book Summary

In this retelling of Aesop’s fable through pictures, a mouse inadvertently finds himself resting on a lion’s back. The lion decides not to eat him, and instead, lets him go. Later, the mouse pays the lion back for his kindness.

***Be Inspired:** Consider the ideas included as starting points, as you and your students explore, discover, and live the values. Be sure to elicit and encourage student and parent participation, consistently reinforcing the value being addressed. Allow lessons to authentically develop and change based on engagement and interests.*



For the Educator Jewish Thought, Text, and Traditions

(For more information on Jewish values, visit www.jewishlearningmatters.com.)

G'milut chasadim, literally meaning “the giving of loving kindness,” is an essential social value in the everyday lives of Jews. It is a *mitzvah* that an individual acts with *g'milut chasadim* without anticipating receiving something in return. There is no fixed measure for this *mitzvah*, which is one reason why rabbinic teachers articulate the importance of doing it all the time. *Pirke Avot* teaches that our lives should be centered on the study of the Torah, the worship of G-d, and acts of loving kindness. Tradition suggests that these three things allow us to enter the World to Come, but also are indicative of our living full, complete lives.

The sages of the Talmud teach that *g'milut chasadim* is more important than *tzedakah*, charity. While charity often is understood as acts of goodwill and is a sign of generosity, Jewish tradition understands *tzedakah* as a moral obligation to do what is right and just. Talmudic sages outline three distinct reasons for *g'milut chasadim* being the higher of the two values: (1) *Tzedakah* can only be carried out by giving money, whereas *g'milut chasadim* involves giving of one's person, for example by a kindly word or a pat on the shoulder, or by generally offering words of comfort and consolation. (2) *Tzedakah* is directed to the poor, whereas *g'milut chasadim* involves the expression of goodwill to all, rich or poor, healthy or sick, to the successful as well as to those who fall short of success. (3) *Tzedakah* is given to the living. *G'milut chasadim* can be extended to the dead by attending to the burial and going to the funeral. The sages, then, teach that our acts of *g'milut chasadim* are what helps us be righteous (*tzadik*, which derives from the same root as *tzedakah*). In other words, the giving of *tzedakah* may be a *mitzvah* within itself, but true righteousness does not come from *tzedakah*, but what we do to touch people's lives.

FROM OUR TEXTS

“The world stands on three things: Torah, (divine) work and acts of loving kindness.”
-*Pirke Avot* 1:2

“I owe myself respect for the divinity with which I am touched and for the singularity of my being. But my neighbor is exactly in my case. He too is a child of G-d and equally unique. Therefore, when I inquire as to my duties to my fellow I can accept only one answer: I may not withhold from him, or to permit others to withhold any of the reverence, solicitude, and freedom I claim for myself.” -Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism*, 1987

An excellent source of inspiration and activities is *The Kindness Curriculum*, by Judith Anne Rice, designed for parents and teachers to help children “develop their intrinsic abilities to be happy, productive, and caring individuals” (<http://judithannerice.com/>).



For the Educator

Jewish Thought, Text, and Traditions

continued

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are some regular acts of *g'milut chasadim* that you can incorporate in your everyday life?
2. Do you think *g'milut chasadim* is a “higher” value than tzedakah? Why or why not?
3. How do acts of *g'milut chasadim* allow us to be more righteous individuals?
4. How can you incorporate the value of *g'milut chasadim* in the classroom?



Jewish Every Day

Incorporate Jewish Values

Add a “Kindness Catcher” to the job chart in your classroom so that each day, one child is tasked with the job of finding kindness in the day’s activities, stories, and events.



Materials and Resources

MATERIALS

- Copy of *The Lion and the Mouse*
- Introducing the Story: a “discovery box” with lion and mouse stuffed animals, puppets, or toys; or photographs from books and magazines of lions and mice

TECHNOLOGY

- Author discussion of story: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iptWPwWbwgM>
- Kindness Coupons from Shalom Sesame: <http://tinyurl.com/ksa866m>



Sharing the Story

INTRODUCING THE STORY

For strategies for teaching vocabulary, see Appendix, Vocabulary Strategies.

Hide lion and mouse stuffed animals, puppets, or toys in your classroom discovery box. Tell students that you have two animals in the box. Explain that one of the animals is big, furry, ferocious, and roars. Ask, “What is it?” (Bring out the lion when someone guesses it.) Tell them that the other is little, furry, shy, and squeaks. Ask, “What is it?” (Bring out the mouse.)

Share the cover of *The Lion and the Mouse*. Do a picture walk of the first few pages of the story (see Appendix). Point out that the book has no words. Ask, “Can a book with no words tell a story? Why or Why not?” Readdress this question after reading the story.

Nurture their curiosity concerning the book by explaining that you will be reading a story about a lion and a mouse. Say “when the lion and mouse meet, something unusual happens!”

READING THE STORY

*Read the story aloud, stopping when appropriate to explore illustrations, address comments, clarify, predict, and guide students’ understanding of the story and the value to **act with loving kindness—g’milut chasadim.***

Throughout the reading, give students an opportunity to “roar” and “squeak” when appropriate to the story!

Ask the following questions:

- Show the picture of the lion growling. Ask, “How do you think the lion felt when he first discovered a mouse on his back?” (Responses may include: “He was angry.” Or “Maybe he wanted to eat the mouse.”)
- Turn the page, and show the picture of the lion holding the mouse. Ask, “What do you think the lion is thinking here?” (Responses may include: “The lion feels sorry for the mouse.” Or “He’s thinking, ‘What do I do with it?’”)
- Turn the page and show the lion releasing the mouse. Ask students why they think the lion may have decided to let the mouse go. (He showed him kindness—*chesed*.) Ask, “What did the mouse do later to help the lion?” (Responses may include: “He freed him from the net.” Or “He showed him kindness, too!”)
- Look at the last few pages of the book. Have students describe what they see. (Responses may include: “The families of the mouse and lion are together.”)



Sharing the Story

continued

AFTER THE STORY

Discuss the following to reinforce students' understanding of kindness—*chesed*. Emphasize the fact that even though they are little, they can do acts of great kindness, just as the little mouse did for the mighty lion.

- Ask students, “Do you remember a time when you helped someone?” Every time a child responds, say, “Yes, that was an act of kindness, or *chesed*!” Then ask, “How did that make you feel?” “How do you think your act of kindness made the other person feel?”
- Then ask students, “Do you remember a time when someone helped you?” Every time a child responds, say, “Yes, that was an act of kindness, or *chesed*!” Then ask, “How did that make you feel?”

Readdress the question posed in Introducing the Story, “Can a book with no words tell a story? Why or Why not?” Also ask, “Do you think the book needs more words?” Play portions of the YouTube video of an interview with Jerry Pinkney to introduce students to this award-winning illustrator. Let them hear what he says about why this book has so few words: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iptWPwWbwgM>.

Reread the story, having students “tell the story” through the pictures.



Explore, Discover and More

Extension and Reinforcement Activities

NICE NEWS

BULLETIN BOARD, DOCUMENTATION, ART

Create a bulletin board that recognizes and includes snapshots that reflect how students act with loving kindness. Variations on creating a bulletin board include:

- Nice News: Post a large blank piece of paper entitled “Nice News.” Whenever you or another student witnesses a child doing something nice, write it down, capture an image, or draw a picture. Read the “News” at the end of the day. (To lessen reports of “Look what I did,” make a rule that a child can only report someone else’s act of kindness.)
- Gumball Machine: Draw a gumball machine. When you see a child being kind, let him or her put a round sticker inside the “machine.” When the “machine” is full, celebrate!

WEB OF KINDNESS

MOTOR SKILLS, COMMUNITY BUILDING

Through their kind words, students can create a “Web of Kindness.”

- Have students sit in a circle. Discuss how we all are connected and how important it is to show kindness—*chesed* in what we say and how we act.
- Begin this activity by saying something nice to a student. Then give the student the end of the yarn from a ball of yarn. The student should say something nice to another student within the circle and then roll the ball of yarn to that student, holding onto the string of yarn. The student that receives the ball of yarn will say something nice to another student in the circle, hold onto the string of yarn and then roll the ball to another.
- This continues in the same manner from student to student. (Be sure to remind students to hold onto their string of yarn before rolling the ball.) Ultimately, the students will have created an interesting and intricate Web of Kindness.

KINDNESS COUPONS

ART, LITERACY, COMMUNITY BUILDING

Involve students in creating Kindness Coupons. Each coupon in the student’s book is something he or she can do for a selected family member (for example, feed the family pet, play a sibling’s favorite game, etc.). Design your own or use the “Kindness Coupons” offered by Shalom Sesame: <http://www.shalomsesame.org/documents/shalom/Sesame%20Printables/W12-Kindness%20Coupons/W12-Kindness%20Coupons.pdf/Original/W12-Kindness%20Coupons.pdf>.

- The recipient simply turns in a coupon when he or she wishes to use it.
- Have students use various craft items to decorate their Kindness Coupons.



Music

(Access all songs at www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music.)

“Three Things” by “Miss” Emily Aronoff Teck Track # 2 from *Good Choices, Volume 2*

INSPIRATION TEXT

“Upon three things the world stands: On Torah, on (Divine) Work, and on Deeds of Loving Kindness.” -*Pirke Avot* 1:2

“THREE THINGS” ACTIVITY

Share with students that a wise, famous rabbi once said that there were three things that held the world together. Let students brainstorm and guess what they think the three things are that make our world stand. Document and display their ideas.

Teach students that the rabbi who was named Simon the Just said the world depended on learning the Torah, good work, and acts of loving kindness. Ask students if they participate in these activities, and affirm and praise them when they do these things. Encourage students to show their fingers while they count to three in the song.

LYRICS

CHORUS

The whole world, the whole wide world
Depends on 1-2-3 things.
The whole world, the whole wide world
Depends on 1-2-3 things.

Number 1: Learn Torah, let’s all learn Torah (x 2)

CHORUS

Number 2: Do good work, let’s all do good work (x 2)

CHORUS

Number 3: Act kind and loving, act kind and loving (x 2)

CHORUS

ADDITIONAL MUSIC CONNECTIONS: ACT WITH LOVING KINDNESS

To access additional Jewish and secular songs from a variety of traditional and contemporary artists that reinforce and teach this value, visit www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music.



Evidence of Learning

Observe and document students over time and throughout their daily activities to see if they are using and “living” the word kindness—*chesed* in their play and interactions.

Using a chart divided into two columns, with “Kind” written at the top of one column and “Unkind” written at the top of the other, share real-life scenarios you have witnessed in terms of kindness (or lack of kindness). Ask students where each scenario should be recorded, in the “Kind” or the “Unkind” column. (Note: Examples for the “Unkind” side should fit actual student experiences but none from your specific room, since it is difficult for children at such a young age to separate an unkind act from an unkind person.)



Home and Community Connections

Encourage families to learn more about the value and reinforce the concept with their children through video and song by visiting www.jewishlearningmatters.com.

KINDNESS COUPONS

Send letters or emails to parents introducing the “Kindness Coupons” that their children have created. Encourage families to create similar coupons for family and friends; this should involve families working together to give of themselves and their time in order to act with loving kindness—*g’milut chasadim*. Coupon ideas include: “Good for 15 minutes of picking weeds,” “Good for one day of watering the garden,” or “Good for a plate of homemade cookies.”

CHESED GRAMS

Send “*Chesed* Grams” to parents that recognize ways in which their children demonstrated kindness. Ask parents to send a *Chesed* Gram to class when they have “caught” their child demonstrating kindness—*chesed*. Explain that the child will be recognized for this during class.

As parents read books with their children, encourage them to discuss Jewish values, such as acting with loving kindness, as appropriate and relevant to the story. Through discussion, parents can help their children develop empathy and compassion.

Remind parents that they are their children’s first teachers and, as they model *chesed*, their children will follow by example.



Literature Connections

| Title | Author(s) and Illustrator(s) | Summary |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Rabbit's Gift</i> | George Shannon Laura Dronzek | Children learn about friendship, kindness, and sharing as one kind act propels a cascade of more kind acts. |
| <i>Nico & Lola: Kindness Shared Between a Boy and a Dog</i> | Meggan Hill Susan M. Graunke | After Nico agrees "to be so kind as to watch" his aunt's dog, he begins to wonder how he will be kind. He learns that kindness is showing concern for others. |
| <i>How Kind!</i> | Mary Murphy | Repetitive text demonstrates kindness as each animal in the book does something nice for another animal. Children learn that good feelings are shared as a kind deed is done deliberately. |
| <i>Bim and Bom: A Shabbat Tale*</i> | Daniel J. Swartz Melissa Iwai | Bim, a builder, and her brother Bom, a baker, work hard all week, and then spend every Friday doing good deeds, <i>mitzvot</i> . At sundown, they joyfully meet to celebrate <i>Shabbat</i> together. |

*PJ Library Book



Thematic Connections

Fables
Animals: behavior, habitat
Big / little

LESSON CONTRIBUTOR

Barbara Bernstein
Temple Beth Am Day School, Early Childhood Program, Miami, Florida