



THE CIRCUS SHIP

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Jewish Values: Build Community—*Kehillah* קהילה and
Welcome New Friends—*Hachnasat Orchim* אורחים

Enduring Understandings

- One of the core values in Judaism is that of building community. There are many types of important communities: school communities, religious communities, neighborhood communities, etc.
- In each community there is a desire to live, work, pray, or learn together with respect and kindness.
- Each of us brings something special to our communities; we should welcome new friends when we meet them, all of G-d's creatures.

Book Summary

In this fictionalized account of an historical event, told through rhyming text, a circus ship runs aground off the coast of Maine. After swimming through the freezing waters, the animals finally make it safely onto a small island. Waking up to find circus animals walking, bathing, and “hanging” around, the townspeople are not happy, but they ultimately grow fond of their new neighbors. Together, they work to outwit the greedy circus owner when he returns to claim the animals, illustrating the strong bonds of community.

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.)

Not only is *hachnasat orchim* a Jewish value, but it is also a *mitzvah*, a commandment within Judaism. This value is biblically modeled by Abraham and Sarah, who warmly welcomed three visitors to their tent, only to discover that they were angels, messengers of G-d (Genesis 18:1-15). This virtue of hospitality is not simply about standing at a door and welcoming those who choose to walk through that door, but it is about bringing in all guests or strangers. An aspect of hospitality, then, is inclusiveness; it is essential that we depend on each other, support each other, and be united together. Being inclusive means bringing people in as part of the larger community—*kehilla*. Implicit to being inclusive and hospitable is a welcoming and gracious demeanor.

Tradition often provides three ways in which *hachnasat orchim* plays a role in our lives today. Between people, hospitality is about bringing in guests, inviting guests, and being welcoming. Between you and yourself, this value is about being gracious and accepting of the various traits you might have. Between you and G-d, this is about thinking of ways in which G-d can continuously be present in your life, even though you may not realize G-d is there.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do we invite G-d into our lives?
2. How can the entrances to our houses be more welcoming and accessible?
3. What can you do personally to be more welcoming and hospitable?
4. How can you incorporate the value of *hachnasat orchim* within the classroom?



Jewish Every Day Incorporate Jewish Values

Emphasize the importance of your school community throughout the day during various routines to help create a common language.

- Create an “Our Community” attendance puzzle. Each puzzle piece includes one class member’s name, picture, and a holder in which each student places his or her “I’m here” puzzle piece each morning. During meeting time, review the puzzle to discuss who is present and who is missing. Mention that although some students are not in school today, they are still a part of “Our Community” and that we are thinking of them and cannot wait for them to return to school. If you know that they will be out for a few days, use this opportunity to create cards to send them, call them on the phone, or post a sign to welcome them back to “Our Community.”

When reviewing the job chart, reaffirm that “Our Community” isn’t complete when everyone isn’t in school, and point out how the dynamics of the group change even when one student or the teacher is not present. Check to see what substitutions have to be made on the job chart for the day, what buddies are missing, etc.



Materials and Resources

MATERIALS

- Copy of *The Circus Ship*

TECHNOLOGY

- After the Story: “We Are Family: A Musical Message for All”:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnD8BYjZiW0>
- After the Story: “Abraham and Sarah and the Three Visitors”:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irtCpnaqZs4>



Sharing the Story

INTRODUCING THE STORY

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

To access and enhance background knowledge, discuss the following:

- How many of you have ever been to a circus?
- What kinds of animals are at the circus?
- Reinforce that there are many types of animals that live together and perform together at the circus.
- Explain the meaning of the word *community* and give several examples such as the following: every time we leave our homes and come to school, we are leaving our home community and entering our school community. If we are on a sports team or a dance squad, that becomes a type of community. The animals in the circus have their own communities.

Share the cover of the book and look at the title and illustrations. Have students ever seen a circus ship? How would they describe it? Where do they think it might be going? Of what other ships might this remind them? (If it isn't brought up, you may wish to mention Noah's Ark.)

Explain that they are going to read a book about a community of circus animals traveling together on a boat. Say, "Let's see what 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 values to **build community**—**kehillah** and **welcome new friends**—**hachnasat orchim**.*

Ask the following questions:

- Have any of you heard of the state of Maine? Locate Maine on a class map. Discuss its location in terms of where you live.
- Pause at the picture of the animals on deck. Can students identify each?
- Focus on the picture of Mr. Paine, the circus boss. After reading the page about how he stomped and screamed, how would students describe him?
- Do you think all the animals are going to survive the shipwreck? Do you think the animals will help one another to get to land?
- Where do you think each animal will feel most comfortable living? (for example, the monkeys in the trees, the hippo in the water, etc.)
- Focus on the expressions of the townspeople when they first discovered the animals in their town. How did the neighbors feel about the animals at first?
- What do you think the townspeople will do to the animals?
- Everything changed the night the Abbots' shed caught fire. What happened that made the townspeople care about the animals and welcome them into their town?
- When Mr. Paine arrives, what did the community do to help their new neighbors?



Sharing the Story

continued

- What would you do? Do you think you would help to hide the animals, or would you give them back to Mr. Paine?

AFTER THE STORY

Discuss the following: What were some of the ways the animals helped the townspeople once they were living together?

Open the book to the special fold-out picture of the entire community living together, side by side. Involve students in a Visual Thinking Strategy (see Appendix). Ask:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What makes you say that?
- What more can we find? (Guide students in finding the various animals.)

Play the video “We Are Family: A Musical Message for All”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnD8BYjZiW0>. The video reflects the interaction of various animals and humans living together as part of one community. Use this to reinforce the concept of community. What does it mean to be a community? Ask students to which communities do each of them belong? (for example, school, home, family, sports, dance, etc.) Encourage students to sing along and dance to celebrate community.

Create the “Welcome Wagon.” During meeting time, discuss how each member of the class would welcome a new student and help him or her become part of their classroom community. What things would they want to share with the new student about their classroom community? Involve students in creating special booklets, “Welcome to _____ (school or class).”

- Have individuals or groups come up with one thing they would like their new classmate to know about their classroom community.
- Have them illustrate this and, as needed, help them write the caption.
- Make copies of the pages, bind them into a booklet, and have students decorate the cover.
- Include this in a “Welcome Wagon” basket to distribute to each new student and family. (See Home and Community Connections.)

Tell the story of Abraham and Sarah. The story of Abraham and Sarah and their special visitors is the earliest example of how Jewish people practice the value to welcome new friends. Share the story with your students with this Shalom Sesame video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irtCpnaqZs4>.



Explore, Discover, and More

Extension and Reinforcement Activities

ALL “SORTS” OF ANIMALS

SCIENCE

Explore sorting animals into different categories. Using toys, pictures, puppets, or felt pieces, help students “classify” animals into various categories. Depending upon ability, you may wish to sort animals according to their environment, how they move, or their scientific classifications.

NORMS AND CUSTOMS

SOCIAL STUDIES, FOOD, COMMUNITY

Send home a note asking parents to send in the name and description of a custom, food dish, bedtime ritual, etc., that they do in their family that is special. Share these ideas with the class, talking about how each of us comes from different families and we do different things, but we are all part of the same community and we live and play together no matter how alike or different we may be.

BLESSING FOR VISITORS WELCOME MAT

HEBREW, COMMUNITY, ART

Involve students in decorating a doormat, which will be the first thing that people see as they enter the classroom. *B'ruchim Habaim* literally means “Blessed are those who come” but is typically translated as “Welcome.” Ask students to work together to decide what messages or images people should see when they enter their classroom. You could have students decorate the welcome mat with their handprints or pictures. You could have a message such as “Welcome to our *kehilah kedoshah* (holy / special community).” Premade doormats can be painted or stenciled, or permanent markers can also be used to customize messages. Below you can find how to spell out *B'ruchim Habaim* in Hebrew.

בְּרוּכִים הַבָּאִים

THE CIRCUS SHIP—COULD IT HAPPEN?

SOCIAL STUDIES

Read the Author’s Note in the back of the book to learn the facts that inspired the story “The Circus Train.” The notes describe the events of the October 25, 1836, a disaster involving the *Royal Tar*, a side-wheel steamer. Since the story is loosely based on this event, help students learn to distinguish between what could possibly happen and what could not have happened. Reread the story, and as appropriate ask, “Do you think this could happen? What makes you say that?”

WHAT IF ...?

IMAGINATIVE THINKING, LITERACY

What if your students woke up one morning and saw circus animals in their front yards? What would they do? Record their responses.



Explore, Discover, and More

Extension and Reinforcement Activities

continued

EACH PERSON MATTERS

SCIENCE, COMMUNITY

It's one thing to tell students about the importance of community and how each of them is important and valuable to your classroom community—it's another to demonstrate in a more tangible way! You can demonstrate this using an Energy Stick, such as the one from Steve Spangler. (The Energy Stick is a fairly new tool in experimenting with open and closed circuits and is available online. Check package label to ensure safety).

- Have students join hands to form a large circle. Select two students standing next to each other to each hold one end of the energy stick. If everyone in the circle is holding hands, the Energy Stick will light up.
- Break the chain of the circle between any two other students in the circle. (These two students should each continue holding hands with the students on either side.) What happened? (The light went out.) Have them hold hands again. What happened? (The Energy Stick lit up again.) Experiment by having the circle broken in different places around the circle.
- Point out that no matter how near or far students are away from the Energy Stick, when the circle is broken, the light will go out. Using the same procedure, experiment with different numbers of students in the circle.
- Remind students that regardless of the number of students, it only takes the loss of one in the circle to end the magic! Each of them is valuable and special, and without each one, your classroom community would not be the same.

MODEL HOMES

ART, DRAMATIC PLAY

Involve students in recreating their home “communities.”

- Review ideas about community. Talk about how each of us lives in our home community, and when we come to school, we spend the day with our school community. Like the animals in the story *The Circus Ship*, we have created a caring and loving community at school. We help each other to have a safe and happy day, and take care of one another.
- Students (and teachers) can “recreate” their home communities, pretending that a shoebox is their own family’s home. Decorate the shoebox with craft items, artifacts, pictures, etc., to make it as realistic as possible. (For example, if the student has a dog, there should be a dog in the box, if the student lives with grandparents, they should be represented in the box, too.)
- Reinforce the idea that each student brings a part of their home community each day to help build your classroom community. Each of us is different, each of our home communities are different, and those things together make our school community so special.



Music

continued

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

“All of Israel” by “Miss” Emily Aronoff Teck Track # 11 from *Good Choices, Volume 2*

INSPIRATION TEXT

“All of Israel is responsible for one another—*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh b’zeh.*” -Sanhedrin 27b

“ALL OF ISRAEL” ACTIVITY

Share with students that Jewish people have a long tradition of taking care of one another, and share examples that might be relevant to your classroom. There are numerous examples: Discuss an organization like PJ library that helps Jewish families get books and music; or share with students the fact that Israel will help any Jewish person establish a home in Israel. Send a conversation starter home with students, asking parents to finish the sentence “The Jewish community has helped me by _____.” The next day, reinforce the students’ understanding by asking them to share their family members’ responses, writing a list of all the ways that the Jewish community has helped the family members of their classroom community. As appropriate, reinforce the meaning of the Hebrew phrase “*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh b’zeh,*” which means “All of Israel is responsible for one another.”

LYRICS

We all see the same stars
We all share the same start
Time and distance don’t matter
Jews are never far apart

CHORUS

All of Israel is responsible for one another, *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh b’zeh*
When we band together
We can last forever
Kol Yisrael arevim

One by one we’ve been lonesome
Together stand tall
Right now seems unimportant ‘til we remember it all



Music

continued

From Sinai to Babylon
Berlin to the Lower East Side
We share a rich history we can't afford to hide

CHORUS

When our world is *kol arevim*
We can worship as one
We feel as we're family
Each of us, a daughter or son

CHORUS

MUSIC CONNECTIONS

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



Evidence of Learning

- Students demonstrate the ability to articulate what makes up a community and the importance of community.
- Students are involved in welcoming new members into their school community.



Home and Community Connections

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

THE WELCOME WAGON

Involve parents in helping to create a “Welcome Wagon” for new students and families entering their child’s classroom or school. Ask parents to send suggestions for new members of the community. Include information on services (doctors, dentists, dry cleaners, etc.), activities and groups (sports teams, dance studios, gymnastics, etc.), places to go (restaurants, shops, etc.), things to do (best place to find _____), etc., along with their contact information (addresses, phone numbers, email). Categorize the information and create baskets to accompany the new student’s “Welcome to _____ (school or class name)” booklets. This may be something the entire school would like to take part in, creating baskets appropriate to ages.



Literature Connections

Title	Author(s) and Illustrator(s)	Summary
<i>Giraffes Can't Dance</i>	Giles Andreae Guy Parker-Rees	Gerald is an awkward giraffe who is too clumsy to dance with the other animals, until a cricket comes along and shows him that he can dance, given the right music. In Gerald's community, not everyone was kind, but he learns to reach out to those who can support him and help him grow.
<i>May I Bring a Friend?</i>	Beatrice Schenk de Regniers Beni Montresor	One day, a small boy receives a very special invitation—the King and the Queen have invited him to the castle for tea. He accepts, with one question: "May I bring a friend?" "Any friend of our friend is welcome here," says the King. But their guest's friend turns out to be someone they never expected!
<i>Miss Spider's Tea Party</i>	David Kirk	A sociable spider finds that no one will accept her invitations to tea. She doesn't know of her own scary reputation and is saddened when a parade of possible guests scurry away "in mortal dread." A rainstorm provides the perfect opportunity for Miss Spider to prove her good intentions. Before long her web is host to a full-scale tea party.
<i>Sammy the Seal</i>	Syd Hoff	Sammy the Seal wonders what it would be like to live in the city and leave the zoo. He leaves the zoo for the day to go an adventure, exploring the big city. He goes to the city, finds a school full of kids and new things to do, but at the end of the day he returns to his community and realizes that the zoo is where he belongs.
<i>Sammy Spider's New Friend*</i>	Sylvia A. Rouss Katherine Janus Kahn	When an Israeli family moves in next door to the Shapiros, Sammy Spider and Josh learn about the Jewish <i>mitzvah</i> of welcoming guests. In the process, they each make a new friend and learn some Hebrew words.

*PJ Library Book



Thematic Connections

Building community
Moving to a new place
New classrooms, new schools
Making friends
Protecting animals

LESSON CONTRIBUTOR

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