

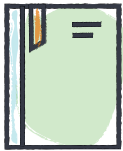
BIG QUESTION

How can we honor and respect the differences among those in our community?



Celebrating diversity - **Tze-lem E-lo-kim***
צֵלֵם אֱלֹקִים

Written and Illustrated by Barroux
Published by Little Bee Books



READ

the book for Jewish values

How does this book reflect the theme of taking action in the community?

Children know to say “you’re welcome” when someone thanks them, but what does the phrase “you are welcome” mean when it comes to making people feel at home in a community? The root of the word *tzibur*, community, comes from the Hebrew “to assemble,” referring to a community as a sum of its parts. A community survives only if there is a balance of all types of people. In *Welcome*, displaced polar bears seeking a new home aren’t welcomed by others. When the bears finally establish their own community, it is one in which diversity is embraced. Just as in the greater Jewish community, we are stronger when we respect that **everyone has a place and rights within the community.**

Three aspects of this value to consider:

- Every person is created in God’s image and has inherent worth.
- Being created in God’s image means that we have a responsibility in how we treat others.
- Differences are good; despite many similarities each person is unique.

During the sixth day of Creation, God speaks to the angels about creating humans: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... And God created man in God’s image” (Genesis 1:26-27). The Torah does not describe God’s physical image; humankind’s likeness to God is in our creativity and the ways we reflect God’s divine spark. Judaism encourages an effort to imitate God’s behaviors. The Torah refers to the 13 Attributes of God, which includes kindness, compassion, truth, and slowness to anger (Exodus 34:6-7). According to daily Jewish liturgy, people should emulate God’s efforts to feeds the hungry, clothe the naked, and show mercy and graciousness.

* Out of respect for God’s Hebrew name, we chose to replace the letter “hey” or “h” with a “kuf” or “k” as in *Elokim*. If we can show respect to the written word, are we also capable of showing respect to one another?

Storytelling techniques

1. (*Materials needed: large bowl; large spoon; trail mix ingredients, such as cereal, pretzels, chocolate chips, raisins/dried fruit; and sandwich bags*) Before reading, make trail mix as a class and serve it in bags while reading the story. What’s similar and different among the students’ bags? What would be different if they only had one or two items in their bags instead of a mix? How do they think trail mix is like a community?
2. Read this story as a “story walk,” in which different parts of a book are read at different locations. Every time the polar bears go to a different place, travel somewhere else in your school or building to read the next part. Afterwards, discuss the experience and how it relates to the story.



DISCUSS

Jewish values with one another

After you read

- Think about a time when you were new to a community, such as a new school or town. What makes someone feel welcome in a new place and with new people? What makes someone feel unwelcome?
- What reasons did the different groups of animals give to the polar bears for not inviting them to stay? How do you think the bears felt?
- Why do you think the polar bears welcomed the monkeys into their community after they were treated poorly by the other animals?
- What do you think makes people feel uncomfortable about inviting new members into their community?



IMAGINE

how values will come to life

Your face or mine?

Give each child a square of paper or canvas. Give students time to make self-portraits (they may glue them down or leave them loose). Then, compare similarities and differences. How does this relate to the value of *Tzelem Elokim*? You might also repeat this activity with children creating different objects (an apple, a holiday item, a Jewish star, etc.).

Provide the class with a wide variety of art materials (such as colorful scraps of paper and fabric, buttons, yarn, small pieces of hardware, and other found items that you have on hand).



ENGAGE FAMILIES

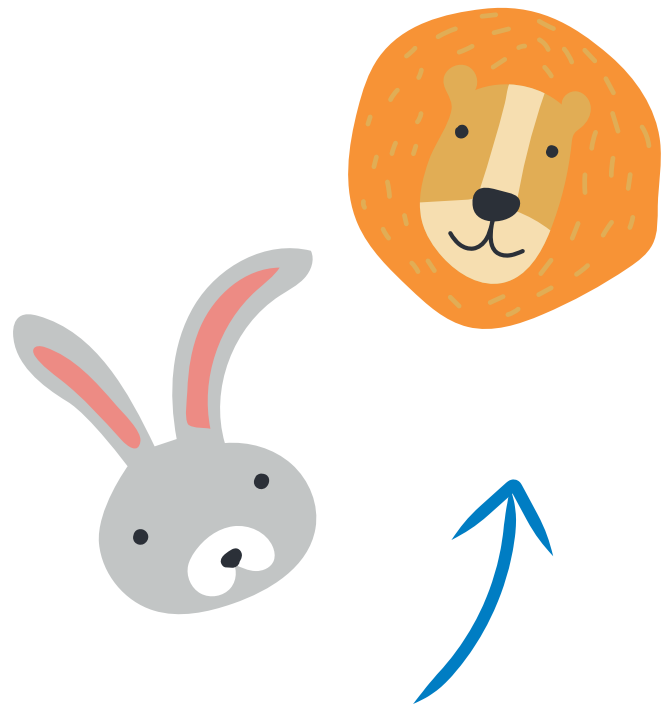
in conversations about values

Host a potluck meal at school to which each family brings a special family recipe or favorite dish. Encourage families to bring foods with family history or culture behind them. As you share the meal together, ask a member of each family to explain how their food relates to something special about the community in which it originated. You might also encourage a recipe swap via email or a small printed cookbook.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

WEB ARTICLE

bit.ly/celebrating-differences



Similarities and differences

Create a Venn diagram comparing two different living things that can be categorized in some similar way, such as two different animals or two students in the class. Is it easy or hard to find similarities? Are there more similarities or differences? What does this have to do with the concept of *Tzelem Elokim*?