

## A Sense of Jewish Symbols 24/7



for the Early Childhood & Primary School Classroom  
 A weekly idea from SAJES Dept. of Early Childhood Education  
 Week of January 20 - 25, 2008 / 13 - 15 Shevat, 5768

### Jewish Symbols -24/7 Tzedakah Box

The Tzedakah box is a way for people to perform one of the most important acts of Judaism. The commandment of giving charity is considered equally important to all other Jewish commandments. The word Tzedakah comes from the Hebrew word *tzedek*, which means righteous. In the Torah, the word *Tzedakah* refers to justice, kindness and ethical behavior. In modern Hebrew, it refers to charity, of giving to those in need. Judaism considers charity to be an act of justice. According to Jewish tradition, people in need have a right to food, clothing and shelter. Others who are more fortunate are obligated to honor this right. In this way giving *Tzedakah* is not voluntary, it is considered an act of justice. According to the Maimonides, there are eight levels of Tzedakah, the highest being when the recipient becomes self-reliant. Giving charity can often be just as rewarding to the giver as to the receiver. The spiritual reward for giving, can often be just as great as the benefit to the person who receives it. There is the opportunity to appreciate the good one has and to share it with others. A *Tzedakah* box can be found in most Jewish homes. Some families give children money each week just prior to Shabbat, to teach them the commandment of *Tzedakah*. Many synagogues have *Tzedakah* boxes, so that people who come to pray, study, and celebrate are able to fulfill the mitzvah of righteousness. A *Tzedakah* box can take any form, from a coffee can to a piece of artwork.

*"The more Tzedakah the more peace" Hillel*

### Multi-Intelligence Integration Ideas

★ Well, of course there should be a Tzedakah box in the classroom! But I will also suggest (as is done at the Hewlitt-East Rockaway Jewish Center Early Childhood Center) that a Tzedakah box be put in the hallway for parents to be able to give Tzedakah with their children. According to Cheryl Karp, the school's director, they put out some challah with it on Fridays, so that parents can share in the challah and the Tzedakah box is right next to it. Also any Tzedakah collections (baby supplies, mittens, health and beauty supplies) are also right there so that all can be able to participate in the Mitzvah.



★ Danny Seigel's book, *Tell Me a Mitzvah*, can be used in a paraphrasing way to talk about people who do various Tzedakah projects that might be inspiring for a class to consider.

★ I like to discuss Tzedakah also near President's week. Both Abraham Lincoln and George Washington have their pictures on money, and both can be examples of Tzedakah – meaning *JUSTICE* not just charity. the children can also do rubbings of the various coins, compare size and color.

★ As we are approaching Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, it would be a great opportunity to find some Tzedakah venues in Israel that would be meaningful for the children, and not only collect until May, but for the entire year that Israel is 60!

### HEBREW VOCABULARY

כֶּסֶף / KE-SEF / MONEY

נוֹתֵן / NO-TANE/ GIVE(m)

קִיבֵּל / KA-BEL / RECEIVE

*The Symbol: the outward expression of the inward signification- should above all charm the senses by and for itself. Heine*

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