

Good  
Deeds  
Day

# Educational Supplement

Ages 7-10

Doing a  
World of  
Good



Participating in Good Deeds Day is one way to share Jewish values with your students—from an educational and from a practical standpoint. These supplements are designed to offer introductions to four Jewish metavalues and provide ways to bring them into your classrooms, youth groups and camp/retreat environments, to be followed up by participating in a Good Deeds Day project of your choosing.

This educational supplement for participating in and enriching your Good Deeds Day experience will frame activities using Jewish values, and give you options for bringing deeper meaning, mindfulness and lasting significance to that sacred act.

Almost every service project that may be chosen to do for Good Deeds Day will be an example of one of the four following Jewish metavalues:

- food security/*hazan et hakol*/providing food for all
- secure shelter/safe space/*sukkat shalom*/providing shelter
- caring for the environment/*shomrei adama*/partners with God in creation
- being present/*hineni*/personal growth/human comfort & contact

Notice that each value has a Hebrew phrase and an English tag line. Doing a good deed and being a *mensch* (a person of integrity or honor) is indeed a universal value; however, Jewish tradition provides a value-added challenge—to be mindful of the sacredness of the act of doing a *mitzvah*, simultaneously preserving dignity, acting upon justice and seeing each human as an image of God.

### How to use this booklet:

We found that these steps before, during and after a Good Deeds Day project will help turn the service into service learning. For many participants, this learning, in the form of framing, discussing and reflecting, make the service more meaningful and memorable. You may use any or all of the following five steps to frame, enrich and debrief from the projects you have chosen to do leading up to or during Good Deeds Day. The activities are structured to enable a facilitator to use them in a formal or informal setting.





## STEP 1

### Recognize that there are needs in the community/world that need to be addressed

#### Anchor text

*“Vayomer: Moshe, Moshe. Vayomer: Hineni!”*

God called to Moses, and he responded “I am present and ready to serve!” (Exodus 3:4)

Before Moses was able to respond so quickly, he first had to become sensitive to the needs of others. Read Exodus 2:11-15. In it, we see stages of Moses’ growing awareness of those needs. When he decides to get out of the palace, his comfort zone, he looks around at the slaves and feels they are his brothers. He decides to act on the injustice he saw, even at personal risk. What can we do to grow our sensitivity to the needs of others? How can we leave our comfort zone to build empathy (and not just sympathy) for others?



## STEP 2

### Learn about four Jewish metavalues related to Good Deeds Day:

#### METAVALUE #1: FOOD SECURITY

*Hazan et Hakol*, providing food for all, is the value underlying the work to combat hunger and provide food security to all.

#### Anchor Text

In the Grace after Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*), we aspire to the divine goal of *hazan et hakol*, providing food for all. In what ways may we partner with God to help distribute food to those who are hungry while preserving their dignity?

#### Life Context/Story

In one classic Yiddish story, a humble and pious man goes to heaven but before he enters, he asks to see hell, as a comparison. In hell, people are starving, even though they have a table laden with food in front of them and spoons that are too long to use for eating. In heaven, the situation is the same, but instead of people wasting away for an inability to use the silverware for eating, each person has chosen to feed the person sitting across the table from him/her. This description of heaven highlights the role of human beings in helping feed and care for each other. Learn about food banks and see what your role could be in creating a more heavenly society now by gathering and distributing food for the hungry.

#### Seasonal Tie-In

Ask your group to share something about being involved in a fire drill. Why do we have fire drills? Tell participants about the Passover Seder tradition of opening the door at the beginning of the Seder to ask if anyone is hungry or has need. Since we have already started the Seder, it seems a little late to be inviting guests, but in what way could this be like a fire drill?

One interpretation: the hope is that people who do the “Welcoming Guests to the Seder” ritual will take on the sensibility and the habit to open doors to help others. It is a drill to train us that when we do see a fire (i.e. someone who has a need like hunger), we should have the reflex to ask them in and help.

#### Media Summary

Read the PJ Library® book, **Bone Button Borscht**, by Aubrey Davis and Dusan Petricic. In this gentle retelling of the Stone Soup tale, an imaginative beggar teaches the miserly residents of a *shtetl* (a small Jewish town or village in eastern Europe) the spirit of community.

References in liturgy: learn to sing the first paragraph of *Birkat Hamazon*, the Grace After Meals.

References in Jewish pop music: learn to sing “*V’ahavta L’reyacha Kamocho*” (love your neighbor as yourself) and discuss the challenges of doing for others, treating them the way you would wish to be treated, and also the ways we can get into that habit.



## Further Study

- How-to video on chanting the Grace After Meals, *Birkat Hamazon*: <http://ow.ly/rGe25>
- Read **A View from Heaven**, one retelling of the heaven and hell story, in **Three Times Chai: 54 Rabbis Tell Their Favorite Stories**, by Laney Katz Becker and Terry S. Kaye, p. 11
- Learn about the Capital Area Food Bank: <http://ow.ly/rGe6M>
- Watch a video related to opening the door on Passover and to help: <http://ow.ly/rGeal>
- “V’ahavta L’reyacha Kamocha” by Rick Recht: <http://ow.ly/rGeel>
- “V’ahavta L’reyacha Kamocha,” by Mah Tov: <http://ow.ly/rGejM>

## METAVALUE #2: SECURE/SAFE SHELTER

We act in the divine image when we provide shelter and protection from violence, *Sukkat Shalom*.

### Anchor Text

*Ufros aleynu sukkat shelomekha*  
Spread over us the shelter of Your *shalom*  
(from the evening prayers)

What does *shalom*, defined in this context as peace, have to do with feeling sheltered? What could *shalom/shalaym*, when defined as wholeness, add to the feeling of being sheltered? How can we imitate God and provide shelter for others?

### Life Context/Story

Hear what it is like for an eight-year-old living in a shelter with her family: <http://ow.ly/rGeoT>. Discuss what part of Paris’ description most connected with you. In what way could we say that Paris shows courage every day? Why doesn’t she define herself as homeless?

### Seasonal Tie-In

In ancient times, the residents of Jerusalem made sure that every pilgrim to the Temple from around the country had a place to stay during the pilgrimage festivals. When we open the door at the beginning of the Passover Seder to ask if anyone is hungry or has need, we also invite them in, thereby

giving them shelter. What do you think a traveler would need away from home? What would a homeless family need? As you shop for the next holiday, put aside money to buy items a family in a shelter might need.

## Media Summary

Welcoming guests is one way to create a habit of providing shelter and recognizing the needs of people not in their own homes.

Read **The Yankee at the Seder**, by Elka Weber and Adam Gustavson

Synopsis: as a confederate family prepares for Passover the day after the Civil War has ended, a Yankee arrives on their doorstep and is invited to their Seder.

Learn to sing and sign the phrase, “*Uferos aleinu sukkat shelomekha*.” Use this video to learn the words, music, and hand motions: <http://ow.ly/rGete>.

## Further Study

Tie together the challenge of homelessness and hunger. Watch the video about “Lily,” a muppet facing poverty. <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=248812298500013>

Download the PJ Library Reading Guide for **A Yankee at the Seder**: <http://ow.ly/rGeyt>.

## METAVALUE #3: CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

We are partners with God in creation, *Shomrei Adama*, which includes a need to care for the environment.

### Anchor text

“The purpose of [the] *mitzvah bal tashchit* (do not destroy or waste) is to teach us to love that which is good and worthwhile and to cling to it, so that good becomes a part of us, and we will avoid all that is evil and destructive. This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society, who love peace and rejoice in the good in people and bring them close to Torah: that nothing, not even a grain of mustard, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can.



Not so are the wicked, who are like demons, who rejoice in destruction of the world, and they are destroying themselves.” (*Sefer Ha-Chinukh*, #529)

The *Sefer Ha-Hinukh* (text #5), a thirteenth century text which details the 613 *mitzvot*, elaborates greatly upon this notion of ethical training. It states that the underlying purpose of *bal tashchit* is to help one to learn to act like the righteous, who oppose all destruction and waste. Doing so helps good become a part of us. A basic way to care for the environment is to appreciate the gifts of nature and not to waste them, the Jewish value of *bal tashchit*.

### Life Context/Story

In the wonderfully written and beautifully illustrated book, *This Tree Counts!* by Alison Formento and Sarah Snow, a multicultural group of children gathers behind their school to plant trees. Before they dig, their teacher asks them to listen to the school’s large oak tree. They learn the tree is home to many living things and that trees are important in a variety of ways.

### Seasonal Tie-In

Passover is called the Holiday of Spring, *Chag Ha’aviv*. How is celebrating spring like celebrating the exodus from Egyptian slavery? What symbols of spring and the renewal of the earth do we have on our Seder plate (e.g. the *karpas* greens, like celery or parsley)? What does it mean to live a greener life? How would you suggest we help keep the earth green?

### Media Summary

**Dear Tree** by Doba Rivka Weber and Phyllis Saroff

In this endearing PJ Library book, a young boy writes a *Tu B’Shevat* (Jewish New Year of the Trees) letter to his tree wishing it all good things for the year to come. The boy promises to take good care of his tree and knows, in return, the tree will provide fruit and shade. It is as appropriate for Earth Day as it is for *Tu B’Shevat*.

**Let the Whole Earth Sing Praise**, illustrated by Tomie dePaola

Inspired by Psalm 148, this book is a beautiful prayer for Earth Day and every day. Whenever you want to appreciate the world we live in and renew your pledge to work toward repairing all the harm that has been done to it in recent years, simply pull this book off the shelf.

Here are five more kids’ books that do a great job of teaching Jewish values about protecting the environment:

1. **An Environmental Guide from A to Z** by Tim Magner
2. **Colonel Trash Truck** by Kathleen Crawley
3. **Grover’s 10 Terrific Ways to Help Our Wonderful World** (Sesame Street) by Anna Ross
4. **Tell Me, Tree: All About Trees for Kids** by Gail Gibbons
5. **The Peace Book** by Todd Parr

Listen to “The 3 R’s” (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) by Jack Johnson. While the song is playing, have participants write down how they can implement the 3 R’s at home or at school. One video for the song: <https://ow.ly/sCuUF>

For a song about *bal tashchit*, not wasting the beauty of this world, watch <http://ow.ly/rGeHC> and learn the blessing *shekacha lo b’olamo*, thanking God for the beauty of the world.

### Further Study

- Learn more about *bal tashchit*: <http://ow.ly/sCvwx>
- For more environmental book recommendations, visit <http://ow.ly/rGeLx>

### METAVALUE #4: BEING PRESENT

We can be a gift or blessing to others by being present, saying “*Hineni*” (I am here). This value also encompasses personal growth, human comfort and contact.



## Anchor Text

Review the text referenced in Step 1, which we used to sensitize us to the needs of others. Another translation of the response “*hineni*” (I am here) is I am here for you.

“One of the *mitzvot* that requires that you give yourself as a gift in doing the good deed is visiting the sick, *bikur cholim*. The essence of the *mitzvah* to visit the sick is to attend to the needs of the patient, to see to what has to be done for him/her, and to ensure the ease/comfort/pleasure of his/her company (make him/her at peace with family and friends); also to consider his/her condition and to pray for mercy on his/her behalf.” (Kitzur Shulhan Arukh, 193/3)

How would you determine the needs of the patient, and how may you attend to them?

## Life Context/Story

Many Jewish communities have established a *Bikur Cholim* Society, a volunteer group that helps attend to the needs of the sick and those that care for them. Check out more information on our local chapter: <http://ow.ly/rGeSo>.

## Seasonal Tie-In

When we recite the 10 plagues, it is our tradition to spill of some wine from our Kiddush cups to symbolize that when any people suffer, our cup cannot be full. Can you generate 10 modern health plagues that make people sick or homebound? Even if we cannot completely heal them, how may we comfort them and make them feel better, even if in spirit?

## Media Summary

### Even Higher! A Rosh Hashanah Story

In this PJ library book, an old-world tale by Eric Kimmel and Jill Weber, the rabbi disappears just before Rosh Hashanah. The villagers are certain their rabbi flies up to heaven to speak with God. A skeptical village visitor spies on the rabbi and witnesses an enormous act of human compassion.

## Sam and Charlie (and Sam Too!)

In Leslie Kimmelman and Stefano Tambellini’s PJ Library book, new neighbors have moved in next door to Sam: two girls named Charlie and Sam (too!). As the three of them become friends, they share jokes, Jewish holidays, misunderstandings and a sick day—and soon learn what it means to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Listen to Debbie Friedman’s “*Mi Shebeirach*”:

<http://ow.ly/rGf15>. Discuss why our tradition created a public prayer for healing. How can thinking of people who are ill help them? How can we make our lives a blessing by helping those who are sick or homebound? How is a visit a way to renew the spirit of a person?

## Further Study

- A guide to visiting the sick with empathy: <http://ow.ly/rGf4Q>



## How can you help?

Learning about needs is important...but only if it leads to action.

Follow up your learning by asking the following questions from Danny Siegel’s book ***Mitzvah Magic***:

“Each of us has talents and skills that can be pooled to help improve the community. All of us should make an appointment with ourselves to honestly ask: What bothers me about the world so much I really need to change it? What do I really like to do? What am I really good at doing? Who do I know? Why not? Each of us has talents and skills that can be pooled to help improve the community.”

As a group, discuss the values that resonate most with each person and then brainstorm ways to apply those values to a communal need. For a list of project ideas, please visit [GoodDeedsDayGW.org](http://GoodDeedsDayGW.org).



## STEP 4

### Engage in a project; do the good deed. Things to think about during the project

Rabbi Hillel said, “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? *Im ayn ani li mi li?*” (Avot 1:14). Ask participants to introduce themselves before they get to work on doing their good deed. Have them respond to the question, “What am I expecting to get out of this experience today? What is the gift I will receive?” Then continue with Hillel’s saying, “But if I am for myself only, then what am I? *U’kesheani l’atzmi, mah ani?*” Now ask participants, “What impact am I expecting to achieve today? What is the gift that I am giving?” Continue with Hillel’s punch line, “And if not now, when? *V’im lo akhshav, aymatai?*” Remind participants that Good Deeds Day is an international movement, and that Jews around the world are doing projects like theirs, and in our community alone over 6,500 participants will be working to repair the world. How does this commitment to service define our community?

## STEP 5

### Reflect on your good deed and what comes next

After engaging in a project, the process of reflecting deepens the impact and engagement. Try to cover at least the first two questions in a discussion or through a reflective email to the participants, giving them more time to reflect and respond.

1. How am I changed by having done this good deed?
2. How was someone else changed by my having done it?
3. How is my community/the world changed?
4. How could I make a continuing commitment to a life of service?

5. Reflect on why we gain strength from responding as a community:

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For should they fall, one can lift the other; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and there is no one to lift him.” (*Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) 4:9-10)

6. Read the following meditation on the above text:

“The strength and continuing vitality of a community rests on the ability of its individual members to care for one another, especially in times of need. *Kohelet* suggests the positive benefit of helping one’s fellow, and cautions that the individual alone, living in isolation, cannot thrive and flourish. Thus, out of practical necessity, we must be alert to and mindful of the needs of our fellow and in turn, have the confidence that they will be similarly responsive to our needs. Such “compassionate reciprocity” assures all community members the ongoing support and attention necessary to live secure and meaningful lives, and to receive “a good reward for their labor.” (From the Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council, a program of the New York Jewish Board of Family & Children’s Services)

Judaism encourages individual responsibility. And yet, we also ask people to come together as a community to do good deeds. Musician Dan Nichols expands upon the phrase we wish each other whenever we complete the reading of a book of the bible, or complete any task as a group: “*Chazak, chazak, venitchazek*. Be strong and strengthen one another!” We do believe in the power of one, but we also understand the multiplier effect of doing things as a group. Since our mission is to repair the world, Malcolm Gladwell might agree that doing things as a community helps us reach the tipping point of repair much sooner.



Good  
Deeds  
Day

Doing a  
World of  
Good

For more information please contact:

**Good Deeds Day—School Involvement:**

Sarah Rabin Spira  
301-230-7243  
sarah.rabinspira@shalomdc.org

**Good Deeds Day—Educational Questions:**

Avi West  
240-283-6218  
avi.west@shalomdc.org



The Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER WASHINGTON

Jewish Life &  
Learning



The Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER WASHINGTON

