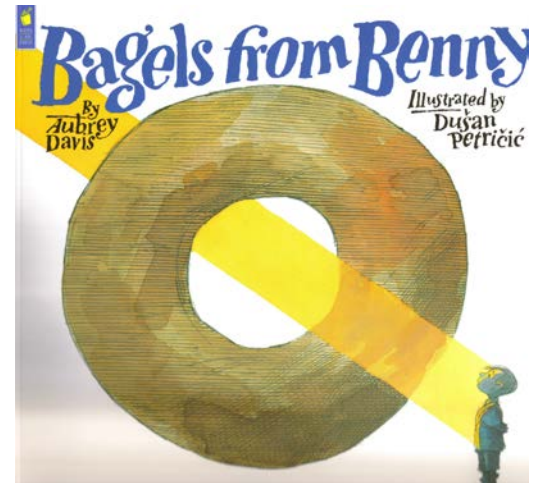


Bagels from Benny

By Aubrey Davis

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 3-6
 Time frame: 60-90 minutes
 Central value: Feeding the Hungry



Synopsis

Young Benny loves helping his grandfather work at the bakery and enjoys hearing customers praise the cakes, breads, and bagels his grandfather bakes. He is confused when his grandfather feels that the customers should not be thanking him until his grandfather explains that it is God who should be thanked. Benny works hard to find a way to say thank you to God, learning much along the way.

Goals

The primary goal of this program is to teach that one way we say “thank you” to God is to make the world a better place (*tikkun olam*) by caring, sharing and helping others. Specific values and *mitzvot* include:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| • <i>Ma’akhil Re’evim/Tzedakah</i> | Feeding the hungry/Giving to those in need |
| • <i>Tikkun Olam</i> | Making the world a better place |
| • <i>Tzedakah</i> | Acting and sharing justly |
| • <i>Ahavat HaShem</i> | Loving God |
| • <i>Gemilut Chasadim</i> | Acts of kindness |

During the program, families will:

- Create a birthday cake gift package to donate to a local food pantry
- Actively listen to the story and share their favorite parts
- Explore the Holy Ark (*Aaron HaKodesh*) if the story is read in a synagogue sanctuary
- Enjoy a snack together, saying “Thank You” for the food before eating
- Create a *tzedakah* box to help families continue the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*

Submitted by

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Plan in advance

Meeting Space

General space

Select a large room with separate reading and work spaces. You can use the power of dramatic storytelling to bring the “awe” of the sanctuary into the reading space. If possible, arrange for the loan of a Torah. Get “up close and personal” by showing families the outside and inside of the scroll.

Synagogue Space

Find a space in a congregation that has a captivating sanctuary and a nearby room (ideally with a sink in the room or nearby) for some “messy work”.

- The *Bima* (ark), or the space in front of the *Bima*, should be large enough for all to be seated for story and conversation
- Work room needs tables for families to spread out (2 or 3 families/table for the first project)
- Speak with the congregational staff prior to program to understand any rules about who can/cannot open the *Aron HaKodesh* – the Holy Ark where the Torah is kept (or, as Benny says, “where God’s special book is”)
- Ask if the children &/or adults will need to wear a *Kippah*
- If you are bringing in snacks, check to be sure you are complying with their *kashrut* policies

Prepare Care Packages

- Find out what donations would be helpful: birthday packages, packed lunches, etc.
- Have families bring donations for food bank (cake mix, frosting, candles, etc.) to create a special “birthday cake” pack for families who visit a food pantry when a family member’s birthday is coming up

Materials Needed

- Little slivers of tissue or construction paper for “sprinkles”
- Crayons to spread out among the tables
- 1 brown paper bag sheet per child

Advanced Preparations

- Gather paper bags from a local grocery store (most will be glad to donate)
- Cut off bottom of bags and cut the bags open down one side so you will have big sheets of brown paper for each family to use
- Bring a few extra sets of birthday cake mix for those who forgot



Prepare Tzedakah Boxes

Materials Needed

- One empty plastic topped can per family – cocoa tins, frosting containers, coffee cans, international coffee tins, etc.
- Small paint brushes – one per child (inexpensive ones from the dollar store)
- Small plastic cups to hold glue/water mix (1 part white glue to 2 parts water works well)
- Scraps of colored tissue paper OR collect a variety of family oriented magazines
- Waxed paper or wax coated paper plates for families to work on
- Wet wipes or sink space and towels for hand clean up
- Adult and children Scissors (if using magazines)
- Sticker or paper label with the word *tzedakah* in Hebrew &/or English (see attachment)

Advanced Preparations

- Cut a slit in the plastic top of each container
- Prepare small cups of glue/water mix – two or three per table along with paint brushes
- Pre-wrap just the metal cans with plain paper
- Stack magazines on work tables (at least 1 per family) or prepare baskets of tissue paper scraps for each work table
- Place waxed paper pieces or coated paper plates on tables for families to use as a work surface



Introduce with an activity

Greet Families

Station a greeter to help families find an art table, ensure others at the table welcome them, and give activity directions.

Make Birthday Care Packages

Directions

1. Invite families to decorate the brown paper by coloring a giant birthday cake, possibly “sprinkling the cake” with tissue paper sprinkles, using the glue stick to attach them.
2. Parents (and older children) can write a birthday message such as “Enjoy your birthday and your cake... from PJ Library families” or “From Emily & her mom.” Encourage families not to use last names for a somewhat anonymous gift.
3. When finished, ask everyone to go and wash their hands and then to come sit by you.

Introduce the Story

- If you are not meeting in a synagogue, explain that some of this story takes place in a bagel shop, some in a school, and some in the sanctuary of a synagogue.
- If you are using space in a synagogue, let everyone know that you will be going to a special, very big room to share a story. Grownups and children can come to this room. Some people come here to learn, to think quietly, to sing, and to pray. When people pray, they talk to God. It is a place called the sanctuary. Invite them to repeat the word.
- Ask if anyone has ever been to the room in a synagogue where people pray. If so, ask them to tell you something they remember about it. You can prompt with questions about what it looked like, what the people were wearing, etc.
- Ask if anyone knows how we should behave in such a special place. Make sure they get to things such as speaking in quiet voices and sitting still – it isn’t a place to run.
- If appropriate, walk to the sanctuary. Stop in the middle of the room so that everyone can just “hear” the quiet. Then head to where you will read the story; ideally on the *Bima*.



Transition

- Welcome everyone and invite them to introduce themselves to the group.
- See if the children can tell you what they made and why. As you rephrase their comments, be sure they or you talk about wanting to help people; to be sure that other people get to celebrate their birthday with cake. “Sometimes, doing nice things to help others is a way to say “thank you” for having all the nice things we have.”
- Explain that the story you will soon read is about a little boy who also says “thank you” by doing something nice for someone else.

Talking about God

If children ask about what or who God is and you are comfortable answering them, you might share that some people think that God is like a parent who helps to take care of all the growing things in the world – people, plants, and animals; others think that God is who created everything in nature; some think God is like a little quiet voice we can hear inside that helps us make good choices – we can’t see God, but we can see a bit of God inside each one of us when we do the right things and treat people, animals, plants and everything in the world with care.

Talking about Prayer

If they ask about what “prayer” is, you might share it is when people talk to God. You don’t need to be in a sanctuary to talk to God. You can be in your room, outdoors, or anywhere. People might be saying thank you to God for all the good things in their life. Some might be asking God to help give them the energy to deal with the hard things in life. Others might be asking God to help them make good choices.

Read the story

Encourage Participation

Use movement to engage the listeners. Invite them to use silent mimes to help sweep the floor (sitting down); dust the shelves; put the baked goods on the shelf; pull open the doors of the ark.

At the end of the story ask “What did you like best about the story?” encouraging both children and parents to answer. If they mention something that relates to one of the values, it would be a nice follow-up to mention the value (i.e. That’s right! It is certainly important to share what we have with other people who are hungry).

Follow Up activities and resources

Open the Ark

If you have permission, or one of synagogue professionals is there to do it, (and you have planned enough time into your program) ask all to stand and invite the children to come up to help you open the ark. If possible, take out and undress a Torah scroll so that all can see one up close. It is wonderful if someone knowledgeable about the Torah is there, as there will be many questions! Some rabbis will allow the children (and adults) to touch the back of the scroll parchment. Be sure to check before inviting anyone to do so.

Say Thank You for a Snack

Offer a snack...ideally include bagels.

Ask the children who they might want to thank for the bagel snack.

Use either: the traditional *Motzi** *bracha* (blessing). All can repeat after you, word by word:

- *Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, HaMotzi lechem minHaAretz*
(Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Who brings forth bread from the earth.)

Or the words Benny used in the story: “Thank You for making the best bagels in town.”

Wrap Birthday Packages

Explain that now we can say “thank you” for having all the nice things we have by finishing to wrap our birthday packages to give to the local food bank.

Have families reclaim their decorated wrapping paper and wrap up their package.

Make Tzedakah Boxes

Introductory Remarks

Share with families that in addition to giving food to those that might be hungry, we also say thank you to God when we save and share our money with food pantries and other places that help make the world a better place. These places might help people find jobs, care for animals, or take care of the earth. We call that *tzedakah* – doing what is right. Today we are going to make a special bank – a *tzedakah* jar – so that you can save *tzedakah* at home!

Directions

1. Invite each family to pick a jar and to find a space at a work table.
2. If you are using tissue paper – show families how to pick colored scraps, one at a time, and while holding it on the can, cover it completely with the glue/water mix. They can then add colors, with each overlapping the one before it, covering the entire can.
3. If you are using magazines – explain that families should look for pictures of things that families need and could buy with the *tzedakah* you save and give (using the same method noted above)



Enjoy a Closing Song

Thank You God by Doug Cotler

Baruch Ata Adonai, Thank You God
Baruch Ata Adonai, Thank You God

Thank You for my mommy
Thank You for my dad
Thank You for their hugs; they always make me glad

Baruch Ata Adonai, Thank You God
Baruch Ata Adonai, Thank You God

Thank You for..... (Invite children and parents to fill in with their thoughts)

(You can find the song on Doug Cotler's CD *It's So Amazing* and on Shira Klein's *ShirLaLa Shabbat* CD).

Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Thank everyone for coming and for saying *Thank You* with you. Briefly give a wrap up message to parents how they can continue to guide their children in adopting the value of saying *Thank You* by encouraging them to “do the right thing” and taking care of others in the world.

Following the program, send families an email, thanking them for coming, and providing helpful links to nurture the value of “saying thank you,” support talking with their children about God, and providing connections to local organizations that feed the hungry.

Resources from Kveller (a Jewish Twist on Parenting)

- [Gratitude Advice](#), Wendy Mogel
- [Using Bagels from Beny to Talk About God](#), Amy Meltzer
- [How to Talk About God](#), Rabbi Sarah Reines

Resources from My Jewish Learning

- [How to Talk to Your Kids About God](#), Rabbi David Wolpe
- [Raising a Mensch](#), Sharon Estroff

Brachot / Blessing Information

- [Basic Brachot](#), Akhlah: The Jewish Children's Learning

