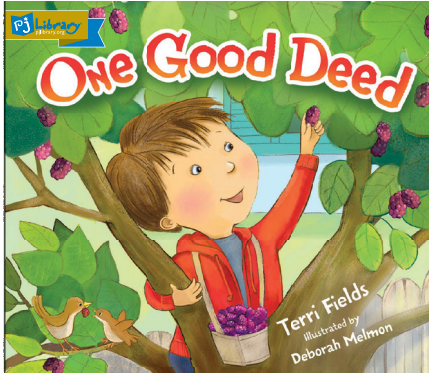


## BIG QUESTION

# What makes a neighborhood?



By Terri Fields

Illustrated by Deborah Melmon

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Acts of loving-kindness - *Ge-mi-lut Cha-sa-dim*

אֲמִילוּת חֶסֶדִים



## READ

the book for Jewish values

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

From an early age, children sense the joy in doing kind things for others and quickly learn that kindness is contagious. In *One Good Deed*, a child's simple act of kindness towards a neighbor sets a chain in motion that transforms Lancaster Street from being a place where neighbors keep to themselves to a true community in which young and old think of each other's needs and help one another. When we **take initiative to show others kindness**, our community becomes a stronger, happier, and more loving place to live.

#### Three aspects of this value to consider:

- Everyone can do acts of kindness.
- *Gemilut chasadim* includes many types of *mitzvot* without expectation of reward.
- Kindness is contagious and habit-forming.

Jewish sages considered *gemilut chasadim*, doing acts of loving-kindness, to be one of the three pillars supporting the world. "The world stands on three things: on Torah,

on service to God [and the community], and on acts of loving-kindness." (*Pirkei Avot 1:2*). Helping to care for others in any way, such as feeding and clothing the hungry, visiting the sick, and giving *tzedakah*, are all acts of *gemilut chasadim*. The modern idea of paying it forward is found in *Pirkei Avot*, which teaches that "*mitzvah goreret mitzvah*, one *mitzvah* brings about another *mitzvah*" (4:2). In *One Good Deed*, each recipient of an act of kindness is inspired in turn to help someone else. How might this type of interchange foster community in your classroom, in your students' homes, and in your organization or town?

#### Storytelling techniques

1. (*Materials needed: small sponge, little bit of paint, baby wipes*) Sit in a circle and give one student a damp sponge with watered-down tempera or a self-inking (washable) stamp. As students pass the sponge or stamp around the circle, each says something they could do to help a friend, and/or relates a time they were helped by someone. When the sponge returns to the first student, ask the children to look at their hands. How does the imprint left behind represent how one *mitzvah* can inspire another? Revisit this activity after you read the book. How does this relate to the way characters in the book interacted with one another? End with a simple act of kindness—have each student wipe the paint off another student's hand.
2. As children listen to the story, ask them to point out the acts of *gemilut chasadim* the neighbors are doing for one another, such as honoring the elderly, being cheerful, or giving *tzedakah*.



## DISCUSS

Jewish values with one another

### After you read

What types of things have you done to help friends, family members, or others without first being asked?

Why is it sometimes hard to step up to help someone else, even when you know it's a good deed?

What would our classroom, school, homes, or community be like if we were always trying to find ways to help one another?



## IMAGINE

how values will come to life

### Where are you going?

Play the memory game "I'm Going on a Picnic," but instead of a picnic, choose a location in the community that might need helpers, such as a hospital, community garden or elder care facility. Play the game with each child naming an act of loving-kindness that he or she could do to help in this special location.

### One thing leads to another

Provide students with a large set of dominoes and have them set up a domino run, either as a class or in small groups. Once the run has been successfully set into motion, ask the students to connect this activity to the ideas of mitzvah goreret mitzvah. How do our actions affect everyone else's actions?



## ENGAGE FAMILIES

in conversations about values

Brainstorm with your class to choose a local organization and come up with a list of things that children and adults can do together to help it. Invite parents to your classroom to work alongside their children to bring one of these ideas to life. The project could be brief and simple, such as making cards or creating craft kits for children in a local hospital. A more complex project might be cooking and serving a meal at a soup kitchen or shelter.

### MORE ON THIS TOPIC

#### PJ LIBRARY BOOKS

*Grandma Rose's Magic* by Linda Elovitz Marshall

*Simon and the Bear* by Eric Kimmel

*Matzo Frogs* by Sally Rosenthal