

Jewish Poverty Curriculum
To the Educator:

Many are unaware of the prevalence of Jewish poverty, but one of every five Jews in New York City lives in poverty. Furthermore, with the high costs of maintaining a Jewish lifestyle, it is an increasing problem which receives far too little attention. This curriculum is designed to remind students of the cost of a Jewish lifestyle, the importance of *Tzedakah*, and the important role they can play in helping to strengthen their own communities.

Lessons include:

Part I - *Understanding Poverty and Jewish Poverty*

- What is Poverty?
- The Budget Game
- The Facts of Poverty

Part II- *Jewish Responsibility*

- What is Our Relationship as Jews to *Tzedakah*?
- Is One *Mitzvah* More Valuable than Another?
- *Mitzvah* Superheroes: *Tzedakah* in Action

It is important to note that the curriculum is designed so that it may be tailored to specific student needs and time restrictions. Educators are encouraged to add or subtract portions of the material in accordance with the learning level of their particular class. While the curriculum was created with *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*-age students in mind, it can certainly be adapted for older or younger groups. Similarly, although it was created for use within New York City, it will still be beneficial for children from other localities.

Also included is basic information about Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty. Please feel free to share this information with the class, parents, and colleagues, and do not hesitate to contact Met Council for further copies or information (volunteer@metcouncil.org or 212-453-9500).

Included you will find:

- Met Council Volunteer Guide
- Jewish Poverty Report
- Near Poor Report

We wish you the best of luck in the teaching of the curriculum and sincerely thank you for your interest in our work and the important issue of Jewish Poverty.

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Part I: Understanding Poverty and Jewish Poverty Overview	Page 3
Part II: Jewish Responsibility Overview	Page 4
Part I: Understanding Poverty and Jewish Poverty	
Part I (A): What is Poverty?	Page 5
Handout #1: Case study #1 Single Father Fights for Family	Page 9
Handout #2: Case study #2 He Witnessed a Bombing	Page 11
Handout#2a: Questions about Handouts#1 and #2	Page 13
Part I (B): The Budget Game	Page 14
Handout #3: Life Situations	Page 17
Handout #4: Teacher's Key to Government and Non-Profit Programs	Page 19
Handout #5: Budget Worksheet	Page 20
Handout #6: Price List	Page 21
Handout#6a: Cost of Education List	Page 22
Handout #7: Housing Classified	Page 24
Handout #8a: Brach's Kosher Food	Page 26
Handout #8b: Foodtown Kosher and Non-Kosher Food	Page 27
Part I (C): The Facts of Poverty	Page 32
Handout #9: Lifestyle Chart	Page 34
Handout #10: Scrambled Answers	Page 37
Handout #10a: Game Pieces	Page 38
Part II: Jewish Responsibility	
Part II (A): Our Relationship with <i>Tzedakah</i>?	Page 40
Part II (B): Is One <i>Mitzvah</i> More Valuable Than Another?	Page 46
Handout #11: <i>Mitzvah</i> Signs	Page 48
Handout #12: Maimonides' Ladder Worksheet	Page 51
Handout #13: Maimonides' Ladder Worksheet Teachers Answer Key	Page 52
Handout #14: Maimonides Background Information	Page 54
Handout #15: Take Home-Contemporary Reading	Page 55
Part II (C): Mitzvah Superheroes: <i>Tzedakah</i> in Action	Page 56
Handout #16: Goal Worksheet	Page 60

Handout #17: The Hands of God	Page 61
Reflection	Page 62
Bibliography	Page 65
Evaluation	Page 66
Part I: Assessment of Initial Perceptions and Views	Page 67
Part II: Handout#18: Student Evaluations	Page 68
Part III: Handout#19: Teacher Evaluation of Curriculum	Page 70

Part I: *Understanding Poverty and Jewish Poverty*

Overview:

The first part of the Jewish Poverty curriculum is to introduce students to what poverty is and why people live in poverty. Many believe that Jewish poverty is negligible, but one of every five Jews in New York City lives in poverty. Additionally, with the high costs of maintaining a Jewish lifestyle, Jewish poverty is an increasing problem that receives far too little attention. Lessons in the Jewish Poverty Curriculum include case studies of people in poverty, background information about poverty in New York City, and an assessment of how much it costs to live a Jewish lifestyle.

Goals:

- To help students understand what poverty is and how it affects Jews living in New York City.

Objectives:

- Students will consider case studies in order to think about what poverty is and how it affects people of differing lifestyles.
- Students will be able to understand the costs of living in New York City, living a Jewish lifestyle, and living in poverty; additionally, students will learn to budget and utilize the resources that they are given or procure.
- Students will learn the scope and size of problems associated with poverty.

Part II: *Jewish Responsibility*

Overview:

Part II will confront stereotypes about Jewish charity and giving and relationship to money. Students will learn text on Jewish giving and our responsibilities as Jews.

Goals:

- To work with students to consider our unique relationship as Jews to *Tzedakah*.
- To teach students what Judaism teaches about giving, including an understanding of Rambam's Ladder.
- To help students figure out what they can and would like to do to give *Tzedakah*.
- To teach students ways in which they can carry out their own *Mitzvah* projects.
- To have the students complete their own *Mitzvah* projects.

Objectives:

- Students will confront stereotypes about Jews and money
- Students will learn their responsibilities as Jews of giving *Tzedakah*
- Students will learn the eight steps of Maimonides' ladder.
- Students will figure out what kind of *Mitzvah* projects they would like to do.
- Students will devise and implement their own *Mitzvah* project.