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| Grade Level: Middle School Lesson Length: 1 Hour | Lesson Topic: PART 2 (A): OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH <i>TZEDAKAH</i> |
| Lesson Authors: Met Council on Jewish Poverty | Date Created: 2007 |

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| Goal(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student reaction to poverty versus Jewish reaction to poverty. • Understanding and breaking down monetary Jewish stereotypes. |
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| Suggested Learning Sequence: Week four. Fourth out of six lessons. |
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| Objective(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help students understand what Jewish text says about obligation to <i>Tzedakah</i> and to share their opinions through a variety of activities and discussions. • To continue discussion about poverty while comparing and contrasting Jewish stereotypes. |
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| Equipment and Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journals • Pencil/Pens • Empty Cardboard boxes |
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ACTIVITY

Warm Up (15 Min):

A. Directions: Make and Break Down the Box of Hate

1. Split up the students into groups of 4-5 people
2. Give a cardboard box to each group of students.
3. Write down one of the words below on each box.
POVERTY, HOMELESS, JEWISH OR IMMIGRANT.
4. Have students write negative stereotypes about that group of people all over their box.
 - i. Stereotypes about Jewish culture, religion, appearance, or slurs can all be included.
 - ii. Think of stereotypes in the media such as characters in movies, television or literature. Some examples are listed below:
 - Jewish American Princess, materialistic, marrying for money, overbearing mother, cheap

- Jews hold only professional high paying jobs such as lawyer, doctor, accountant, or banker.
5. Then put all the boxes in the front of the room and ask if anyone wants to volunteer to come up and break down various boxes of hate. That person will talk about why the negative stereotypes are not true and physically break down the box.

(The student can rip up the box or jump on it)
 6. **Reflection:** As we learned from lesson 1 A, although many people think all Jewish people are rich, this is definitely not the case. It is important to break these stereotypes by talking about why they are not true.

Activity (30 Min):

B. Directions: Round Table

1. Have students all face each other by moving the chairs or desks and making a circle around the room.
2. Give out the handout #11.
3. Allow students 5-7 minutes to write down their answers and then proceed to class discussion.
 - i. Everyone should be able to make eye contact with their peers.
4. Remind students that this discussion is about opinions, therefore, everyone must show respect when someone else is talking.
5. **Class Discussion:**
 - i. **Question 1:** Where do you think the stereotype that Jews “are rich” or “have lots of money” originated from?
 - One idea: During the Middle Ages, Jews were treated as “foreigners.” Jews faced an increase in discrimination which resulted in fewer opportunities to participate in communal activities, as well as the ability to obtain certain jobs. As time progressed, Jewish artisans were often excluded from guilds. Money lending became one of the only occupations available to Jews. As a result of Jews being financially involved with many towns across Europe, the association between Jews and money emerged.
 - ii. **Question 2:** What are some characters or people in the media that play into the stereotypes of Jews and money? What do you think these stereotypes?
 - Stereotypes in literature: Shakespeare’s character Shylock, a moneylender, in *The Merchant of Venice*.
 - Stereotypes on TV: Fran Dresher in *The Nanny* looking for a rich husband, Ari Gold as a ruthless Hollywood agent in *Entourage*, Jerry Seinfeld in *Seinfeld*, or Larry David in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.
 - Stereotypes in film: Character of Fagin in “Oliver Twist” or Kyle as the smart kid in *South Park: Bigger, Longer, Uncut*.
 - iii. **Question 3:** Are Jews charitable? How do you feel about the stereotype that Jewish people are cheap?
 - Jews do strive to be charitable. United Jewish Communities annual campaign is the engine that drives the work of the federation system. The 155 federations across North America raises over \$1 billion each

year to address urgent needs in local communities, in Israel and in 60 countries.

- iv. **Question 4:** When you pass poor people asking for money on the street, do you usually give them money? Why or why not?
 - The way people have stereotypes against Jews is the same way people have stereotypes against the homeless. Have you ever wondered about or engaged a homeless person in conversation to learn their story?
- v. **Question 5:** What can you do as a humanitarian? What should you do as a Jewish humanitarian?
 - There are many mitzvahs that tell us what Jews should be doing for other Jews: To love other Jews--*Leviticus 19:18*, Not to oppress the weak--*Exodus 22:21*, Not to stand idly by if someone's life is in danger--*Leviticus 19:16*, To leave a corner of the field uncut for the poor--*Leviticus 19:10*, To leave the unformed clusters of grapes for the poor--*Leviticus 19:10*, To leave the forgotten sheaves in the field for the poor--*Deuteronomy 24:19*, To separate the tithe for the poor--*Deuteronomy 14:28*, To give charity--*Deuteronomy 15:11*.
- vi. **Question 6:** Who would you help first?
 - Take a look at the following: A poor person who is your relative should receive your charity before all others; and [likewise] the poor of your own household have priority over the poor of your city; and the poor of your city have priority over the poor of another city, as is stated, "To your poor and need brother, in your land" (*Deuteronomy 15:11*)

Teacher Wrap Up (15 Min):

G. Conclusion and Journal Entry

6. Have students take out journal and answer questions
 - i. As an individual and as a Jew, how do you feel after hearing all the stereotypes about Jews?
 - ii. Is there away to combat these stereotypes?
 - iii. Who do you help in your daily life and why?

Questions for the roundtable discussion.

1) Where do you think the stereotype that Jews “are rich” or “have a lot of money” originated from?

2) What are some characters or people in the media that play into the stereotypes of Jews and money? What do you think these stereotypes?

3) Do you think Jews make more money than non-Jews? Why or why not? Does this matter?

4) Are Jews charitable? How do you feel about the stereotype that Jewish people are cheap?

5) When you pass poor people asking for money on the street, do you usually give them money? Why or why not?

6) What can you do as a humanitarian?

