



BONE BUTTON BORSCHT

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In this gentle retelling of the Stone Soup tale, an imaginative beggar teaches the miserly residents of a shtetl the spirit of community.

When the beggar in this story first arrives in town, not one person welcomes him or is willing to share a morsel of food. The beggar is told, “We’re poor... We don’t give to each other... [So why should we give to you?]”

A central Jewish value is that of feeding the hungry, *ma’akhil re’evim*. Even those who are poor are instructed to give to others, as one can always find someone in greater need. The organized Jewish community often links opportunities to feed the hungry with Jewish holidays; for example, a food drive often takes place around *Yom Kippur*. As Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson states in his text *It’s a Mitzvah!*, “as long as we have the power to alleviate human suffering, we have an obligation to do so.”

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Talk with your children about ways your family can participate in feeding the hungry. There is likely a food basket at a nearby synagogue or church. When you go food shopping, take your children along and make it a habit to let them select an item to donate to the basket. Another wonderful family activity is volunteering at a soup kitchen. This can be done on a regular basis or at holiday times, when the need is often great.

Additionally, a great way to work on this *mitzvah* of feeding this hungry is to invite guests for a meal at your home. In

addition to friends, you might include elderly neighbors who may be lonely or people who are new to the community. Children can help prepare the meal and decorate place cards that can make your guests feel welcome.

Another fundamental Jewish value is that of *hachnasat orchim* (offering hospitality). The quintessential role models for this are Abraham and Sarah, our Biblical ancestors. When three guests unexpectedly arrived at their tent, Abraham and Sarah warmly welcomed them, made them feel comfortable, and fed them generously. We can emulate Abraham and Sarah in a variety of ways. In this busy world, even a seemingly small act—such as showing enthusiasm when your child asks to invite a friend to sleep over—sends a message that this is a precept you value.

Bone Button Borscht is a retelling of a well-known folktale, *Stone Soup*. There are many adaptations, including *Nail Soup*. There is even a *Hanukkah* version called *Potato Pancakes All Around*. The common thread is that a destitute person enters a town where the villagers resist sharing anything, and through the wit and clever actions of the beggar, the village is transformed into a generous community. By the end of *Bone Button Borscht*, not only are the villagers willing to share their food, but also invite the beggar to stay in their homes and are saddened at the thought of his departure. Pj