

Tzedekah – What does it mean to give? (5 – 7 years)

Learning Outcomes

Emerging

- Explain what it feels like to give and receive
- Give a reason why it might be good to give

Expected

- Use the word 'Tzedakah' correctly showing understanding of its meaning
- Explain why two different type of things can both be given as gifts
- Explain the purpose of Tzedakah in Judaism

Exceeding

- Make a link between conversations about giving and receiving and a Jewish stimulus (artwork or story) studied
- Explain why Tzedakah is important in Judaism

Key words

- **Judaism:** Judaism, the religion of the Jews, traces its roots back to Abraham, and most of its laws back to the time of Moses. It is a worldwide religion with around 15 million followers. The vast majority of Jews live in Israel and the United States of America. Many of the words here are Hebrew in origin, though some variations come from Jewish communities who lived throughout central and eastern Europe, and elsewhere.
- **Tzedekah :** This is an act of charity and literally means, 'justice, fair action' or 'righteousness'. Jewish people traditionally give 10% of their income to charity and it is an important religious duty to give assistance and money to those in need.
- **Mitzvot:** This means 'Commandment', that is, what God commands that people do or don't do. The Torah – the first five books of the Hebrew Bible – contains 613 Mitzvot. In practice, Jews should do **mitzvot** every day.
- **Torah** The Torah is the first part of the Jewish bible. It is the central and most important document of Judaism and has been used by Jews through the ages.

Learning activities

- Set the learning activities in the context of a key question: □ 'What does it mean to give?'
- Show a picture of **Julie Wohl's Tzedekah** (found on the link below, if broken, search Google for the painter and title: <https://www.pinterest.pt/pin/92394229825353634/>)
- Ask the children to spot 10 things in the painting.
- Can they make a link between two or more items and something in their own lives?
- Introduce children to some stories about giving, e.g., *A Thread of Kindness* (ISBN 1-929628-01-3) or *Ten Tzedekah Pennies* (ISBN 1929628196) and ask the children to say what things in the story might be special to Jewish people.
- In order to help children understand what it is like to give something away they could try this exercise: Each child could be given some Play Doh (or similar modelling clay) to make into a 'gift'. When they have made a gift, ask them to give it to their neighbour. Ask them to talk about what it feels like to give something away. Is it a difficult thing to do?
- With separate pieces of Play Doh ask them to make something which represents something that doesn't cost money but would be good to give to someone else. This could be a shape which represents friendship, a smile, good wishes. They could be asked 'Are there other things which we can give as gifts which don't cost money?'
- Engage children in thinking about what they like to give and receive. Ask them such questions as: 'What is the best present you have ever given to someone?' 'Why do you think they loved it?' 'What do we value that doesn't cost money?'
- Ask, 'When we give something away, do we sometimes get something back?'
- Explain that Tzedekah tells Jewish children something important about how to live together: that it is important to give to people in need: that we enjoy things which people give to us: that gratitude is important: that there are things apart from money which we can give to other people. Children could ask one another whether they enjoy giving or receiving – reflecting on when they might have been given something which is exciting and that they had wanted. How does it feel to give something, e.g., a picture, or something they have made such as a cake, to someone in their family?
- Ask the children to think about whether they should share some of the things they have been given, and to talk to a partner about things that should be shared. Gather some ideas from the class as a whole.

Encourage children to ask their own questions about giving and receiving. What questions would they ask Julie Wohl about the gifts in her painting?

- Provide the children with some boxes with *Tzedekah* written on them and ask them to create pictures of people in need within their own community, e.g., someone looking lonely. Give the children tokens to put in the boxes. As they put the token in the box they could say why Jewish children might want to help that person. Ask them to say whether children from other religious groups might want to help those people and to give a good reason for their answer.

The children could have a blank box where they reflect quietly on who they think might need help in their school and family and what the token could do for them. Provide large circles of paper to act as

'tokens'. On the token, ask children to complete the sentence 'I think they are in need because... and 'This is what could be done to help them: ...' When they have finished, ask them to fold their tokens and put them in the Tzedekah box. Ask the children whether they think the tokens should be read out, or be kept secret. What reasons can they give for their answer? What other questions can they think of about giving and receiving?

- Remind the children of the big question: 'What does it mean to give?' and of the main resource, the Tzedekah Artwork by Julie Wohl. Show children pages from the Islamic Aid, Christian Aid and Comic Relief websites and explain that all sorts of people of different religions and beliefs try to help people in need. Ask them to describe things on the websites which seem similar and some things which seem different, e.g., The Christian Aid site may show crisis appeals; The Islamic Aid site may show current projects; the Comic Relief site may show comedians and Red Nose Day. All the sites may show people in need, how to give money, etc.