

PATCHWORKS FILMS PRESENTS

HAVANA

Curveball



A FILM BY MARCIA JARMEL AND KEN SCHNEIDER

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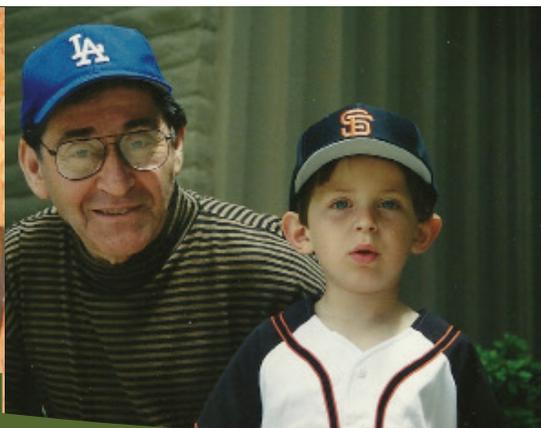
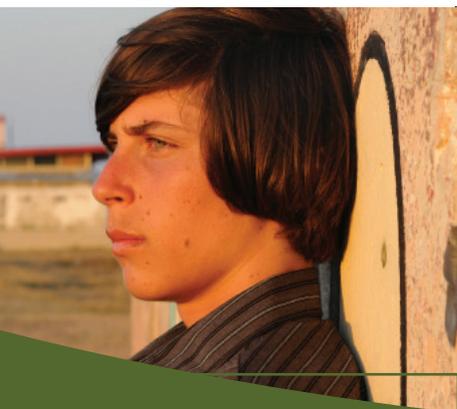
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JEWISH EDUCATION GUIDE

www.havanacurveball.info



PatchWorks
Films

Marcia Jarmel & Ken Schneider, Filmmakers



CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT
DOCUMENTARY

SAN FRANCISCO
FILM SOCIETY

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A NOTE TO JEWISH EDUCATORS

HAVANA CURVEBALL (www.havanacurveball.info) is a coming-of-age documentary that follows a young teenager with a grand vision of donating baseball equipment to Cuba as his Bar Mitzvah service project.

This guide is designed for use with the film in a multitude of settings related to Jewish education. It is ideal for religious and day school students in grades 6th through 12th, who are learning about Jewish values, identity and community service. It also packs a powerful emotional message that can bring together members in the broader Jewish community, particularly youth groups, intergenerational audiences, and social justice groups.

When used in a day school setting or when time allows deeper exploration, the guide offers discussion and activities that encourage students to think critically about the relationship between people doing service and the communities they serve, and the challenges of growing up.

Pre- and Post-Film Discussion and Activities

Discussion topics for before and after viewing the film have been customized for different audiences (B'nai Mitzvah, Middle School, High School and Community Screenings) and can be adapted to meet your unique learning objectives and circumstances.

The activities are designed for grades six through twelve (and adaptable for grade five) in religious or day school classrooms and for youth group retreats or events. You can use each activity on its own or in combination with others. Each activity includes printable handouts for students. Suggested lesson plans can be adapted for a single class period or as a series of classes for a longer unit or block of study.

Content addresses the following objectives:

- Deepening understanding of Jewish values and tradition, with a focus on tzedakah, tikkun olam and social justice.
- Inspiring individuals and groups as they are developing service or social justice projects.
- Enriching exploration of intergenerational relationships and family stories with particular regard to the Holocaust.

RECOMMENDED AUDIENCES

Synagogue Supplementary or Day School

- B'nai mitzvah
- Middle school
- High school/Youth groups
- Community screening
- Family education

Community Audiences

- B'nai mitzvah families
- General congregation
- Service/social justice committee
- Youth groups

Key Subject Areas

- Jewish Values
 - Tzedakah
 - Tikkun Olam
- Jewish identity
- Community service
- Social justice
- Intergenerational connections



ABOUT THE FILM

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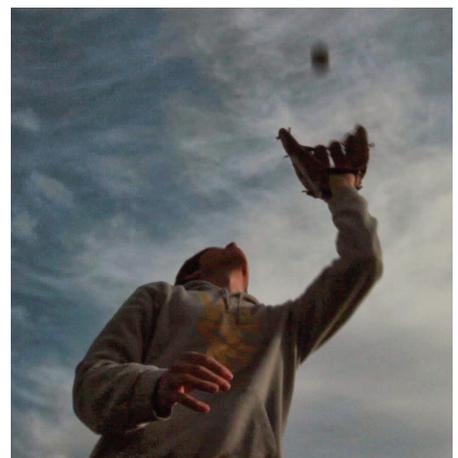
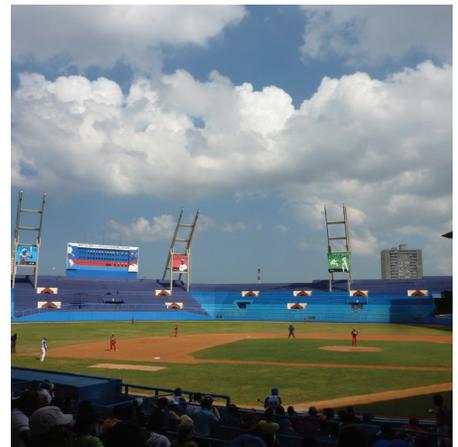
Mica is a pretty cool young teen. He's energetic, idealistic and passionate about baseball. At 13, as he is studying for his Bar Mitzvah, he takes to heart the importance of his rabbi's assignment to undertake a project that will help to "heal the world."

Imagining himself a savior of sorts, Mica comes up with a grand plan to send baseballs to Cuba, a country that has a strong, mysterious pull for him. He knows only that Cubans lack resources and love baseball — and that Cuba gave his grandpa refuge during WWII. He dives into collecting bats, mitts and balls, not stopping to consider that his good intentions might not be enough.

Mica's filmmaker parents pick up a camera and follow his journey. They have a hunch that the U.S. embargo with Cuba will throw him a curveball. After two years of twists and turns, Mica finally boards a plane to Havana with his parents and 200 pounds of baseball gear, along with all the hopes, expectations and worries of family, friends and history.

Imagining he is finally in the home stretch, Mica's experience in Cuba transforms his sense of himself and the world and prompts him to ask: "Does what I do matter?"

MICA'S
EXPERIENCE
IN CUBA
TRANSFORMS
HIS SENSE OF
HIMSELF AND
THE WORLD
AND PROMPTS
HIM TO ASK:
"DOES WHAT I
DO MATTER?"



FROM THE FILMMAKERS

It can be daunting to point the camera at your own family. When we first pressed “record,” we thought we were making a little film about our son Mica’s Bar Mitzvah service project. As the project grew in scope and complication, it became clear that a dramatic and compelling story was unfolding in front of our lens.

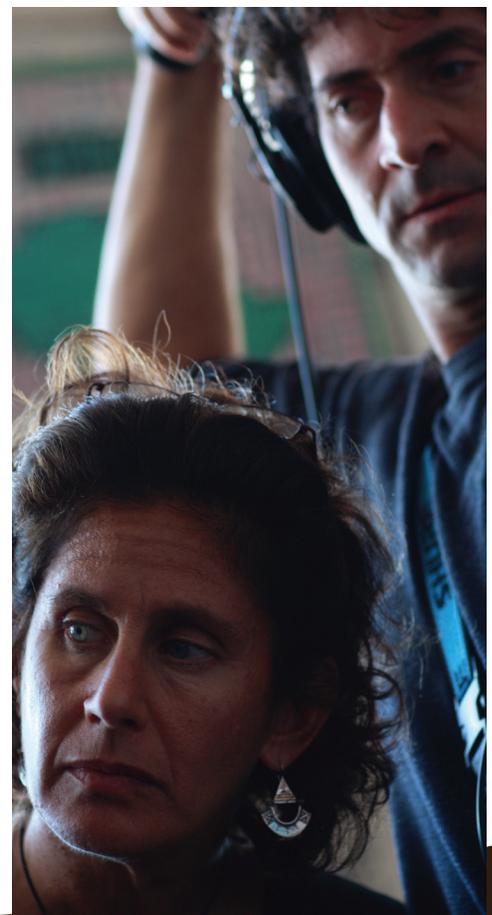
HAVANA CURVEBALL tracks Mica’s growth from a gangly teen to a broad-shouldered young man, and it gives viewers an unusual opportunity to witness in real time his coming of age through the process of navigating the gap between youthful ideals and the complex, messy reality of the adult world.

Our unusually intimate access made it possible to capture small details along the way—from Mica’s first shave and special moments with his grandfather, to the frustrations and successes of his journey. He was gracious enough to tolerate our filming. We owe a debt of gratitude to him and his grandfather for letting us observe and share their story. We hope it will inspire and provoke.

Marcia Jarmel & Ken Schneider

Marcia & Ken

WHAT DO YOU DO
WHEN YOU’RE
FOLLOWING YOUR
VISION AND IT
THROWS YOU A
CURVEBALL?



A NOTE FROM MICA

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As a young boy traveling in Nicaragua, I had played baseball with the locals and their scrappy homemade equipment. When my synagogue announced the required Bar Mitzvah community service project, I immediately thought of that makeshift gear, and began to collect bats, balls, and mitts. I donated it to youth leagues in Cuba, the country that sheltered my grandfather during the Holocaust.

For three years, my family navigated around the United States foreign policy that threatened my project. With great effort, we sent twelve boxes of equipment. Finally, we went to Cuba, the last 300 pounds in tow.

I feared giving the equipment directly to kids. I feared facing the poverty, and recognizing my own privilege. Yet on my last day in Cuba, swept up in the moment, I offered my remaining gear to a group of kids playing street ball. They swarmed over me, grabbing and claiming the gear.

“I FELT BOTH
DISCOURAGED AND
VINDICATED. I HAD
ADDRESSED THE
NEED—WASN’T THAT
AN ADMIRABLE
ENDEAVOR?”

In that moment, I understood that my “huge” project was just a drop in their bucket. I felt both discouraged and vindicated. I had addressed the need — wasn’t that an admirable endeavor? Yet I had helped only a sliver of the needy with a sliver of donations.

My first reaction was to question the meaning of my “positive work.” I understand its value but much remains unanswered. Regardless, I seek the fulfillment that this work provides. I board the train to seek deeper truths, not knowing where I will end up.

Mica J S



Introduce the film by explaining that HAVANA CURVEBALL is a film about a boy and his Bar Mitzvah service project. If you want to provide more background, read [ABOUT THE FILM](#) or summarize it for your students.

READ TO STUDENTS

Each of you is preparing for a big moment. When you chant Torah from the bima, you are taking the first step toward adulthood. But becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is much more than that. As you take on the mitzvot (commandments), you are making a commitment to lead a life that includes acts of tikkun – repair – of yourself, your community and the world — Tikkun Olam.

In HAVANA CURVEBALL, you will meet a boy who brings light and life to people who are in need. As you watch Mica's story and see how he meets the curveballs thrown in his path, it might inspire you, scare you, or help you decide what you want to do (or not do) on your own.

Before continuing into the activities, read the following quote to the class. Do they find it meaningful in the context of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

"Jews do not observe Torah in order to survive; they survive in order to observe Torah.... observing Torah means much more than worrying only about our own souls."

- Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President Emeritus of the Union for Reform Judaism

HAVE YOU EVER PARTICIPATED IN A COMMUNITY SERVICE OR TZEDAKAH PROJECT WITH YOUR FAMILY, CLASS OR COMMUNITY?

DISCUSS

If students are planning a bar/bat mitzvah service or tzedakah project, invite them to describe it briefly. Why did they choose this project? What challenges might they face?

Ask students:

1. Have you ever participated in a community service or tzedakah project with your family, class or community? For those who have, please describe the experience.
 - What were your challenges?
 - What did you find most enjoyable or meaningful?
 - How did it affect your feelings about undertaking another project that involves helping others?
2. Have you ever visited another country? How was it different from the United States? How did it feel being a "foreigner" in someone else's homeland?

PRE-FILM ACTIVITIES

Distribute the following HANDOUTS and do the activities before the film:

[DEFINITIONS](#)
[MAIMONIDES LADDER](#)
[WHILE WATCHING THE FILM](#)

Introduce the film by explaining that HAVANA CURVEBALL is a film about a boy and his Bar Mitzvah service project. If you want to provide more background, read [ABOUT THE FILM](#) or summarize it for your students.

DISCUSS

1. Ask students if they have ever participated in a community service or Tzedakah project with their family, class or community. Invite those who have to describe the experience.
 - What were their challenges?
 - What did they find most enjoyable and/or meaningful?
 - How did it make them feel about doing another project that involves helping others?
2. If students are planning a bar/bat mitzvah service or Tzedakah project, invite them to describe it briefly and say what they think their challenges might be. If they are not planning anything at this point, ask them what community service interests them and what the challenges might be in doing a project.
3. Ask students if they have ever visited another country. How was it different from the US? How did it feel being a “foreigner” in someone else’s homeland?

HAVE YOU EVER
PARTICIPATED
IN A COMMUNITY
SERVICE OR
TZEDAKAH
PROJECT WITH
YOUR FAMILY,
CLASS OR
COMMUNITY?

PRE-FILM ACTIVITIES

Distribute the following handouts and do the activities with students before the film:

[DEFINITIONS](#)
[MAIMONIDES LADDER](#)
[WHILE WATCHING THE FILM](#)

Introduce the film by explaining that HAVANA CURVEBALL is a film about a boy and his Bar Mitzvah service project. If you want to provide more background, read [ABOUT THE FILM](#) or summarize it for your students.

DISCUSS

1. Ask students if they have ever participated in a community service or Tzedakah project with their family, class or community. For those who have, ask them to describe the experience.
 - What were their challenges?
 - What did they find most enjoyable and/or meaningful?
 - How did it make them feel about doing another project that involves helping others?
2. If students did a bar/bat mitzvah service or Tzedakah project, invite them to describe it briefly and say what was challenging and rewarding.
3. Ask students if they have ever visited another country? How was it different from the US? How did it feel being a “foreigner” in someone else’s homeland?

HAVE YOU EVER
PARTICIPATED
IN A COMMUNITY
SERVICE OR
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PROJECT WITH
YOUR FAMILY,
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PRE-FILM ACTIVITIES

Distribute the following handouts and do the activities with students before the film:

[DEFINITIONS](#)
[MAIMONIDES LADDER](#)
[WHILE WATCHING THE FILM](#)

PREPARATION & PRE-FILM DISCUSSION

COMMUNITY SCREENING

B'NAI MITZVAH
MIDDLE SCHOOL
HIGH SCHOOL
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BEFORE YOUR SCREENING

Identify your screening goals: Why are you screening HAVANA CURVEBALL? How can it benefit and support your synagogue, Jewish organization, social justice group or community service project?

Here are some ideas:

- Educate families in your community, synagogue or faith-based group about the value of service opportunities for youth.
- Inspire activism: Motivate viewers to get involved in local, national or international service.
- Launch a group or class community service project.
- Deepen understanding of service and charity: Help your group or class members think about who benefits from service work and how?
- Showcase service work: Screen the film as the kick-off to a "Service Fair" that highlights the volunteer/service work of young people in your group, school, or community.
- Create opportunities for intergenerational connection: Jump-start an intergenerational storytelling or oral history project.
- Educate parents, students and community members about the relationship between the U.S. and the Cuban Jewish Community.
- Fundraise for your synagogue, Jewish organization, social justice group or community service project.

WHAT JEWISH VALUES ARE IMPORTANT TO MICA AND HIS JOURNEY?

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

Explain that HAVANA CURVEBALL is a film about a boy and his Bar Mitzvah service project.

Ask audience members if they have ever participated in a community service or Tzedakah project with their family or community. For those who have, ask them to describe the experience.

- What were their challenges?
- What did they find most enjoyable and/or meaningful?
- How did it affect their feelings about undertaking another project that involves helping others?

WHILE WATCHING THE FILM

Encourage viewers to consider:

1. What are the challenges Mica faces? How does he address them?
2. How is Mica's relationship with his grandfather important to the story?
3. Do you have intergenerational stories in your family, like Mica's grandfather, that you would like to know more about or share with young people?
4. What Jewish values are important to Mica and his journey?
5. How can this story be helpful to those who want to start their own community service project?"

PRE-FILM ACTIVITY I

JEWISH VALUES: DEFINITIONS

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- MAIMONIDES' LADDER
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Adapted from “Where Do You Give” (American Jewish World Service)

1. Divide into small groups and ask each group to list the central values of Judaism.
2. Ask each group to share its list with the whole class.
3. Give students the **DEFINITIONS** handout and ask someone to read aloud each definition. Ask if there are any questions. If *tzedakah* and social justice or *tikkun olam* were not on their values list, ask if they should be added – and discuss why or why not.
4. Take a few moments to discuss the difference between charity (defined as “a voluntary action or donation to help those in need”) and *tzedakah* as expressed in the definition.
5. Tell students that there is no Hebrew word for charity and ask them why they think that might be.
6. Explain that *tzedakah* is an obligation about increasing justice in the world and making things right or fair. As such, not all forms of giving are considered *tzedakah*.
7. Discuss whether Mica’s project was an example of charity or *tzedakah*. Ask for examples of each.
8. Break class into three (or six) groups, one (or two) for each definition, and instruct each group to spend 15 minutes creating an illustration or poster that illustrates the concept or an example of each word and definition.
9. Invite the groups to spend one minute explaining their poster to the class. After all groups have presented, conduct a discussion using the following questions:

NOTE: *The conversation should draw out the idea that tikkun olam is a concept or practice of social justice, while tzedakah and mitzvah are both “commandments.”*

- o How are *tzedakah*, *mitzvah* and *tikkun olam* similar? How are they different? Why does it matter that *tzedakah* is an obligation or commandment, rather than a voluntary action? What does that mean for us as Jews and for our community?
- o Does Mica’s project seem more like *tzedakah*, *mitzvah* or *tikkun olam*? Why?
- o Which one seems most interesting for you to practice as an individual? As a class? Why?

PRE-FILM ACTIVITY 2

MAIMONIDES' LADDER

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▶ MAIMONIDES' LADDER
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Adapted from activity by *North American Federation of Temple Youth*

INTRODUCTION

Explain to students: This activity will reinforce how tzedakah is an important Jewish value by relating Mica's project to tzedakah and educating students on the different ways that tzedakah can make a difference in our world.

Tzedakah may seem like a simple concept. It is one of the first things we often learn about when we begin our Jewish journey. But what is tzedakah really and what makes it important to us as Jews? Tzedakah is one of the many important mitzvahs God commanded us to do. Tzedakah is mentioned many times throughout the Torah.

Tzedakah is one of the three things that can grant you forgiveness for your sins during the Days of Awe. This concept of looking out for your fellow man, the homeless, orphans, widows or any other person in need has continued on into the present day and into the lives of Jews. Today we will be continuing this journey of tzedakah, and we will learn about what tzedakah really means to us — as a group and as individuals.”

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

Distribute and read through the handout **MAIMONIDES' 8 LEVELS OF TZEDAKAH**. Ask students:

1. Why do you think that Maimonides put those eight concepts on the rung of the ladder in the order that he did?
2. Do you think that Maimonides forgot any important concepts or would you change the order that he created for the eight concepts of giving?

WATCH HAVANA CURVEBALL

AFTER WATCHING THE FILM

Ask students:

1. What level(s) of tzedakah from Maimonides' eight levels does Mica do?
2. In what ways could Mica's project be improved as an example of tzedakah?
3. Does Mica's project inspire you to do tzedakah? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel that tzedakah is important in your life? Why? Why not?

“When there is among you a poor person, among your kin, in one of your cities, in your land which the Lord your God gives you, do not harden your heart, do not close your fist from your poor kin: Rather, you shall surely open your hand, and make him a loan, sufficient for his need, whatever he lacks”

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

“Tzedakah is as important as all the other commandments put together.”

Talmud Baba Batra 9a

Distribute the handout [WHILE WATCHING THE FILM](#). Ask students to read over the questions on the list and keep them in mind while watching the film. After the film, have a brief discussion about each question.

1. Why did Mica choose to do this project?
2. What did Mica learn?
3. What are the most rewarding parts of his project?
4. How did Mica go out of his comfort zone?
5. What challenges does Mica face? How does he address them?
6. If you are doing your own project, does Mica's experience change the way you are thinking about it? Why or why not?
7. How is Cuba different from America? How does youth baseball competition compare to what you have experienced?
8. What stories would you like to learn about in your family's history?

Have students discuss the quotes from the film in small groups or as a class. For the WRITE AND SHARE sections, have students get together in pairs and allow a 2-4-minute time period for each one to talk about what he/she wrote while the other listens, then switch. If time permits after that, allow about 5-10 minutes to give students an opportunity to share and discuss their thoughts with the whole class.

TIKKUN OLAM

“I feel like it’s our job to kinda gauge the problems in the world and see how we can make it better.”

1. Ask students to define *tikkun olam* or read the definition from the [DEFINITIONS HANDOUT](#). How is Mica’s project an example of *tikkun olam*?
2. Do you agree with Mica that it is “our job” as Jews to make things better?
3. Describe how this feeling of responsibility is – or is not – a part of your bar/bat mitzvah experience?



WRITE AND SHARE: For students doing projects: What inspired you to choose your own project. Does your project embody *tikkun olam*? If so, in what way? For other students: What kind of project might you want to do one day? Why?

CONFRONTATION

“I think I needed to see ... that some of my donations would not be received exactly ... as I had wished them to be. And I understand. If I was in their position, I would probably do the same. But it was harrowing to see. I was hoping that it wouldn’t happen this way.”

1. What was happening in this scene? Describe what you felt while watching it.
2. What do you think Mica was feeling in this scene? What do you think the other kids were feeling?
3. What makes it difficult for you to give to people who have less than you? What might make it difficult for those receiving your donations?
4. Would having an experience like that influence your desire to stick with a project? Why or why not?



WRITE AND SHARE: For students doing projects: Describe how your project presents similar or different challenges? How might you deal with them?

For other students: Do you think you would respond to the kids in this scene the same way Mica did? Why or why not?

POST-FILM DISCUSSION

B'NAI MITZVAH

- ▶ B'NAI MITZVAH
- MIDDLE SCHOOL
- HIGH SCHOOL
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GROWING UP

“Three years ago, I felt that this project would catapult me to manhood. I would automatically be, be a mensch, a good person, you know. But I know now that that’s not how it works. It’s all part of the task.”

1. What does Mica mean by the last sentence?
2. What do you think makes someone a good person?
3. Do you think trying to “do good” helped Mica grow up? How?



WRITE AND SHARE: *Pick one of the topics below.*

Describe an experience that changed you deeply or changed your perspective on the world. How might your bar/bat mitzvah help you become more of an adult? How might a service project help?

How are Mica’s challenges similar to ones you might face doing a service project? How are they different? Are there challenges you might choose to avoid after seeing this film? Does Mica’s experience inspire or discourage you from doing a project?

SUCCESS

“I felt good that I set a goal and, and accomplished something, but I started to understand how complex the world was and how complex my project was.”

1. Do you think Mica’s project was successful? Why or why not?
2. What do you think Mica learned from his experience?
3. Based on Mica’s experience, do you think that engaging in community service is a good way to cross cultural boundaries? Why or why not?
4. Did Mica’s experience affect your thoughts about one person’s ability to make a difference?



WRITE AND SHARE: Do you think one person can make a difference? Write your answer based on Mica’s experience or on something you have seen or experienced yourself.

SHARING STORIES

“Grandpa has always been the cool older guy. We would always play catch. Those are some of my best memories of childhood.”

1. Describe Mica’s relationship with his grandfather.
2. How did his grandfather’s history affect Mica’s choice of a service project?
3. Do you have (or have you had) a special relationship with older people in your family or community?
If yes, how has that relationship made a difference in your life?
4. What do you know about your grandparents’ childhoods? Where were they born? Did they face any challenges or difficulties in their childhood? Do you think their history has impacted who you are? If so, how?



WRITE AND SHARE: Think of an important elder in your life. What do you think are his or her strongest values? What is most important to them? Do you think their beliefs and values impact you? If so, how?

Have students discuss the quotes from the film in small groups or as a class. For the WRITE AND SHARE sections, have students get together in pairs and allow a 2-4-minute time period for each one to talk about what he/she wrote while the other listens, then switch. If time permits after that, allow about 5-10 minutes to give students an opportunity to share and discuss their thoughts with the whole class.

TIKKUN OLAM

“I feel like it’s our job to kinda gauge the problems in the world and see how we can make it better.”

1. Ask students to define *tikkun olam* or explain that it means “repair of the world” – a Jewish concept of social justice that is defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world.
2. Is Mica’s project an example of *tikkun olam*? Why?
3. Do you agree with Mica that it is “our job” to make things better?



WRITE AND SHARE: Think of something you would like to do that can make the world better. Describe what it is and how you might do it.

CONFRONTATION

“I think I needed to see ... that some of my donations would not be received exactly ... as I had wished them to be. And I understand. If I was in their position, I would probably do the same. But it was harrowing to see. I was hoping that it wouldn’t happen this way.”

1. What was happening in this scene? Describe what you felt while watching it.
2. Would having an experience like that influence your desire to stick with a project? Why or why not?
3. What do you think Mica was feeling in this scene? What do you think the other kids were feeling?
4. What makes it difficult for you to give to people who have less than you? What might make it difficult for those receiving your donations?



WRITE AND SHARE: Write about a time you have seen or experienced someone giving to others who are less fortunate. How did it compare to what happened with Mica and the boys in Cuba? Do you think you might respond to the kids in this scene the same way Mica did? Why or why not?

GROWING UP

“Three years ago, I felt that this project would catapult me to manhood. I would automatically be, be a mensch, a good person, you know. But I know now that that’s not how it works. It’s all part of the task.”

1. What does Mica mean by the last sentence?
2. What do you think makes someone a good person?
3. Describe the things that happened during Mica’s journey of “doing good” that helped him grow up.



WRITE AND SHARE: Have you had an experience that changed you deeply or changed the way you see the world? If so, describe your experience. How did it help you become more grown up?

SUCCESS

“I felt good that I set a goal and, and accomplished something, but I started to understand how complex the world was and how complex my project was.”

1. Do you think Mica’s project was successful? Why or why not?
2. What were the biggest challenges Mica faced? How did he handle them?
3. Based on Mica’s experience, do you think that engaging in community service is a good way to cross cultural boundaries? Why or why not?



WRITE AND SHARE: Do you think one person can make a difference? Write your answer based on Mica’s experience or on something you have seen or experienced yourself.

SHARING STORIES

“Grandpa has always been the cool older guy. We would always play catch. Those are some of my best memories of childhood.”

1. Describe Mica’s relationship with his grandfather.
2. How did his grandfather’s history affect Mica’s choice for his service project?
3. Do you have (or have you had) a special relationship with any grandparents or elders? If yes, describe the relationship and how it has changed you.
4. What do you know about your grandparents’ childhoods? Where were they born? Have any major events changed their lives or family situations? Describe any impact these events have on you.
5. What do you think are their strongest values? What is most important to them? How do their beliefs and values impact your life?



WRITE AND SHARE: Think of an important elder in your life. What do you think are his or her strongest values? What is most important to them? Do you think their beliefs and values have an influence on you? If so, how?

Have students discuss the quotes from the film in small groups or as a class. For the WRITE AND SHARE sections, have students get together in pairs and allow a 2-4-minute time period for each one to talk about what he/she wrote while the other listens, then switch. If time permits after that, allow about 5-10 minutes to give students an opportunity to share and discuss their thoughts with the whole class.

TIKKUN OLAM

“I feel like it’s our job to kinda gauge the problems in the world and see how we can make it better.”

1. Ask students to define *tikkun olam* or explain to them that *tikkun olam* means “repair of the world” – a Jewish concept of social justice that is defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world.
2. Ask them to describe how Mica’s project is an example of *tikkun olam*.
3. Ask if they agree with Mica that it is “our job” – because it is a Jewish value – to make things better



WRITE AND SHARE: Describe an example of how you and/or your family demonstrated *tikkun olam* or something you would like to do to demonstrate it in your life.

CONFRONTATION

“I think I needed to see ... that some of my donations would not be received exactly ... as I had wished them to be. And I understand. If I was in their position, I would probably do the same. But it was harrowing to see. I was hoping that it wouldn’t happen this way.”

1. What was happening in this scene? Describe what you felt while watching it.
2. Would having an experience like that influence your desire to stick with a project? Why or why not?
3. What do you think Mica was feeling in this scene? What do you think the other kids were feeling?
4. What makes it difficult to give to people who have less than you – for both you (as the giver) and for those who are receiving?



WRITE AND SHARE: Write about an example you have seen or experienced, where someone gives to others who are in need or less fortunate. How were the challenges similar or different to Mica’s?

GROWING UP

“Three years ago, I felt that this project would catapult me to manhood. I would automatically be, be a mensch, a good person, you know. But I know now that that’s not how it works. It’s all part of the task.”

1. What does Mica mean by the last sentence?
2. What do you think makes someone a good person?
3. Describe the things that happened during Mica’s journey of “doing good” that helped him grow up.



WRITE AND SHARE: Have you had an experience that changed you deeply or changed the way you see the world? If so, describe your experience. How did it help you become more grown up?

CUBA

“My grandpa told me that when he lived in Cuba, he would see kids playing baseball everywhere with mitts made of cardboard and balls made of rocks wrapped in, in paper rags. The bats were just sticks.”

1. In which scenes did Mica form meaningful connections with people he met?
2. In which scenes did you feel that it was challenging for Mica to connect across cultural boundaries?
3. How do you think Mica felt when he was playing baseball with the Cuban team?
4. How do you think the Cuban guys felt about having Mica on their team?
5. Why did Mica feel like he didn’t want to hand the Cuban kids his donations after they played together?
6. Would you want to give donations directly to people? Why or why not?



WRITE AND SHARE:

Based on what you observed of Mica’s experience, is community service a good way to cross cultural boundaries? Why or why not?

OR

Do you think Mica’s visit to Cuba met his expectations? How was it different from what he expected?

SUCCESS

“I felt good that I set a goal and, and accomplished something, but I started to understand how complex the world was and how complex my project was.”

1. Do you think Mica’s project was successful? Why or why not?
2. What were the biggest challenges Mica faced? How did he handle them?
3. Based on Mica’s experience, do you think that engaging in community service is a good way to cross cultural boundaries? Why or why not?

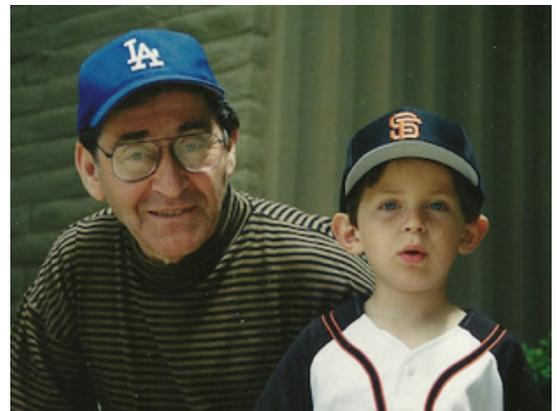


WRITE AND SHARE: Do you think one person can make a difference? Write your answer based on Mica’s experience or on something you have observed or experienced yourself.

SHARING STORIES

“Grandpa has always been the cool older guy. We would always play catch. Those are some of my best memories of childhood.”

1. Describe Mica’s relationship with his grandfather.
2. How did his grandfather’s history affect Mica’s choice for his service project?
3. Do you have (or have you had) a special relationship with any grandparents or elders? If yes, describe the relationship and how it has changed you.
4. What do you know about your grandparents’ childhoods? Where were they born? Did they face any challenges or difficulties in their childhood? Do you think their history has impacted who you are? If so, how?



POST-FILM DISCUSSION

COMMUNITY SCREENING

B'NAI MITZVAH
MIDDLE SCHOOL
HIGH SCHOOL
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Discuss the following either in small groups or with the entire audience or congregation. If you start with small groups and time permits, allow about 10-15 minutes to provide an opportunity for a whole audience discussion.

GENERAL

1. What were the most successful aspects of Mica's project? What were the most challenging?
2. How can our community learn from this story for our own community service endeavors?
3. Does Mica's story change the way you feel about community service or *tikkun olam*? If so, how?
4. How is Mica's relationship with his grandfather important to his journey?
5. How do the actions of you and/or your family (or how does our community) manifest *tikkun olam*?

JEWISH VALUES

Adapted from "Where Do You Give" (American Jewish World Service)

"I feel like it's our job to kinda gauge the problems in the world and see how we can make it better."

Tzedakah vs Charity

Ask for audience members to offer definitions for the term Tzedakah.

Explain: AJWS defines Tzedakah/תְּצַדֵּק as the obligation or commandment to give righteously. The word is based on the root word for Justice - Tzedek/תְּצַדֵּק The quality of being fair, right or moral.

1. How is Mica's project an example of *Tzedakah*?
2. What is the definition of charity?
3. How are Tzedakah and charity similar? How are they different?
4. What are examples of each?

Explain: There is no definition for the word charity.

5. Discuss why this might be so.
6. Why does it matter that *Tzedakah* is an obligation or commandment rather than a voluntary action? What does that mean for us and for our Jewish community?



POST-FILM DISCUSSION

COMMUNITY SCREENING

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Tikkun Olam

Ask the group to define *tikkun olam* or explain that it means “repair the world – a Jewish concept of social justice that is defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world.

1. Describe how Mica’s project is an example of *tikkun olam*.
2. Do you agree with Mica that it is “our job” – as Jews – to make the world better?
3. Invite people to share experiences they have had practicing *tikkun olam* – doing service or Tzedakah projects, sharing intergenerational stories and activities, getting to know local immigrants, etc.



For groups that are kicking off a service project:

1. Did the film make you aware of some challenges you might face in your own work?
2. How did Mica’s project inspire you and/or give you ideas that might benefit your project?

CONFRONTATION

“I think I needed to see ... that some of my donations would not be received exactly ... as I had wished them to be. And I understand. If I was in their position, I would probably do the same. But it was harrowing to see. I was hoping that it wouldn’t happen this way.”

1. What was happening in this scene? Describe what you felt while watching it.
2. Would having an experience like that influence your desire to stick with a project? Why or why not?
3. What do you think Mica was feeling in this scene? What do you think the other kids were feeling?
4. What makes it difficult for you to give to people who have less than you? What might make it difficult for those receiving your donations?
5. Would having an experience like that influence your desire to stick with a project? Why or why not?



FAMILY HISTORY

“I do think that a lot of my Jewish identity came from my grandparents. They made it clear that, that Judaism was very important to them.

I’m not religious, but I’d always wanted to have a bar mitzvah. It was the beginning of my path to adulthood, even though that sounds corny. You have to kind of earn it by doing something for others. That’s how I understood it.”



1. Describe Mica’s relationship with his grandfather.
2. How does Mica’s relationship with his grandpa strengthen Mica’s connection to baseball, Cuba, and his Jewish identity?
3. Do you have (or have you had) special intergenerational relationships in your family? If yes, describe the relationships and how they have changed you.
4. Have you shared family history with other generations in your family? Why or why not? If so, describe the outcome.
5. What do you think are the values that best represent your family? How do those values impact your lives? How are the values tied to Judaism?

SUCCESS

“I felt good that I set a goal and, and accomplished something, but I started to understand how complex the world was and how complex my project was.”

1. Do you think Mica’s project was successful? Why or why not?
2. What were the biggest challenges Mica faced? How did he handle them?
3. From what you observed in the film, do you think that engaging in community service is a good way to cross cultural boundaries? Why or why not?
4. Based on Mica’s experience or on something you have seen or experienced yourself, do you think one person can make a difference? Why or why not?

SHARING STORIES

Tzedakah/Community Service Interview

(Distribute Handout for COMMUNITY SERVICE INTERVIEW)

1. During your lifetime, have you ever been on the receiving end of Tzedakah or received help from volunteers? Describe the circumstances and what it felt like to be a receiver of help.
2. Have you given Tzedakah or done community service for others? Describe the circumstances and what it felt like to be a giver of help. What do you imagine was the experience of the person on the receiving end?
3. What made you choose the organization or cause you helped? Would you do it again? Why or why not?
4. Let's say you are looking to do community service or give Tzedakah now. Mica chose his project because of his love of baseball and the refuge Cuba gave to his grandfather.
 - What cause or organization would you like to support?
 - How would you participate in giving your support to others? Hands-on service work or Tzedakah? Why?
 - What values, needs, interests and time constraints will guide your decision?

Cross-Generation Interview

(Distribute Handout for ELDER INTERVIEW)

1. What year and where were you born?
2. Where do you live now? If that is not where you were born, when and how did you come to live there?
3. Describe your childhood:
 - What was your home like?
 - What were your favorite things to do?
 - Did you have a close relationship with any of your grandparents? What did you do with them?
4. Tell me one of your favorite stories or memories from your childhood.
5. When you were growing up, were there any major events that had a big impact on your life or your family (e.g., war, discrimination, moving, death, divorce, job loss, economic challenges, etc.)?
6. Was Judaism an important part of your life growing up?
 - How religious was your family?
 - Did you have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? If so, what was it like? How did it compare to ones you have attended in recent years?
7. What Jewish values are important to you today? How did you learn them? Was there an elder in your life who had a strong influence on shaping your values?
8. If you could teach me one very important thing, what would it be?

Adapted from peoplehood.org

“Jews do not observe Torah in order to survive; they survive in order to observe Torah. And ... observing Torah means much more than worrying only about our own souls.... I have found that the work of “tikkun olam,” for all its rewards, is lonely and discouraging work, and only by absorbing the light of the Shabbat candles and by studying and worshiping with a strong, dynamic Jewish community can I immunize myself against the cynicism and alienation that surround me.”

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, *Judaism is always Tikkun Olam and More*, 2011

1. Pass out the handout for Activity 2: TIKKUN OLAM and assign one of the quotes to each of the four small groups.
2. Have each group discuss its quote and how it can have a practical application in their lives.
3. Ask them to think of an example, either something that was in the film or from their lives, that demonstrates the concept or value represented by the quote.
4. Invite each group to share with the class their quote, their explanation of it and the example they chose.

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

The Talmud

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.

Shemot 23:9

He (Hillel) used to say: If I am not for myself who is for me? If I am only for myself what am I? And if not now, when?

Mishna: Pirkei Avot 1:14

“We are here to make a difference, to mend the fractures of the world, a day at a time, an act at a time, for as long as it takes to make it a place of justice and compassion where the lonely are not alone, the poor not without help; where the cry of the vulnerable is heeded and those who are wronged are heard. ‘Someone else’s physical needs are my spiritual obligation,’ a Jewish mystic taught.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: To Heal a Fractured World: the Ethics of Responsibility

Historic Roots

The phrase *tikkun olam* is found in the *Mishnah*, a body of classical rabbinic teachings compiled in the 3rd Century. In this instance, the phrase is used when discussing issues of social policy, insuring a safeguard to those who may be at a disadvantage. Since the 1950s, other Jewish movements have adopted the use of the phrase and concept *tikkun olam* as a platform for the fulfillment of *mitzvot* (commandments) and *tzedakah* (justice, righteousness) Jews are often motivated by the concept of *tikkun olam* when they choose to be involved in social action and volunteer projects.

Importance

The most modern and broadly understood notion of *tikkun olam* is that of "repairing the world" through human actions. Humanity's responsibility to change, improve, and fix its earthly surroundings implies that each person has a hand in working towards the betterment of his or her own existence as well as the lives of future generations. *Tikkun olam* forces people to take ownership of their world. It is them, not G-d, who will bring the world back to its original state of holiness.

Philanthropic Ties

Tikkun olam embodies the spirit of philanthropy. Increasing the well being of humankind is one of the key elements of repairing the world. Helping those who are in need, no matter in what capacity, is crucial and "holy" work. *Tikkun olam*, as it relates to practical methods, applies to working in all communities, not just Jewish communities. Jews are members of greater society, and as such, their actions are not limited to their own communities. Social welfare and volunteer work, as well as the donation of monetary and physical resources, are ways in which people can be philanthropically involved, and at the same time, be involved in *tikkun olam*.

From *MyJewishLearning.com*

POST-FILM ACTIVITY 2 - PART I

TZEDAKAH

POVERTY, PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

TIKKUN OLAM
▶ TZEDAKAH
INTERVIEWS
DISCOVER YOUTH ACTIVISM
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT
HANDOUTS
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Lesson adapted from wheredoyougive.org (American Jewish World Service)

INTRODUCTION

Media, immigration and our global economy foster students' awareness of their connections with people from around the world, especially in developing countries. In this project students begin to look at the challenges many people in these countries face in their ability to access basic resources. Then students use a cartoon and Jewish texts to identify the role of chance or "accident of birth" in determining a person's wealth and position in life. Students consider the role that Tzedakah can play as a form of gratitude for one's good fortune and as a tool for balancing the scales.

MATERIALS

- World map (optional)
- [WHEEL OF FORTUNE](#) handout

ACTIVITY

1. Tzedakah Definition

Ask for a volunteer to read the definition of *Tzedakah* from Activity #1: Definitions. Remind students that Tzedakah comes from the root *tzedak*, which is related to justice or fairness/equality and that Tzedakah is a way to respond to inequality in the world. Explain that students will explore how people live around the world and how Tzedakah can help bring more justice and equality into the world.

2. Global Connections

- o Have students take turns sharing one country (not America) that they've had some kind of interaction with that day—it can be the country where their clothes were made, the country of a kind of food they ate (Thai, Indian, French, etc.), the country of origin of various people they encountered on the way to school, a country they read about in school or heard mentioned on TV or on the radio, etc.

Note: *If students have difficulty naming countries or only identify the same three or four, invite a few students to look at the tags on their clothes or other objects they have with them to see where they were manufactured.*

- o Option: If you have a world map and additional time, ask students to locate each country as it's mentioned. You can also ask students to write the name of their country on a sticky note and place it on the country on the map.
- o After each student offers the name of a country with which they were involved that day, invite students to reflect on their connections to people from all over the world.
- o Conclude the discussion by emphasizing that our lives are connected to the lives of people all over the world—sometimes just because we are all human, and sometimes in more practical ways, like when we buy clothing sewn by someone in another country. These connections mean that we can't ignore people who live far away from us. The next activity will help us understand how our lives compare to the lives of people around the world.

3. Wheel of Fortune – Stork Cartoon & Jewish Texts

- o Distribute the [WHEEL OF FORTUNE](#) handout and ask students to look at the stork cartoon.
- o Have students answer the questions on their own and discuss their answers as a class.
- o Have students read the text on PART 2 and answer the questions on their own. Ask one student to read the text aloud and then have the class discuss their answers together.
- o Help students understand that the cartoon expresses the reality that many more people in the world live in poverty or experience war, famine and disease than the number of people who are wealthy. The chance of being born into a situation of poverty is much greater than the chance of being born middle class or wealthy.

POST-FILM ACTIVITY ACTIVITY 2 - PART 2

TZEDAKAH

POVERTY, PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Lesson adapted from wheredoyougive.org (American Jewish World Service)

This part of the lesson looks at the relative privilege of students and their responsibility to respond to these social problems as a result of their privilege. Students engage in an interactive demonstration about the unequal distribution of wealth around the world. They then study two Jewish texts that suggest that wealth belongs to God, not to us, and use this as the basis for a discussion about ownership and Tzedakah.

MATERIALS

100 pennies or individually wrapped pieces of candy or fake \$1 bills.
 The activity will not work without 100 objects.

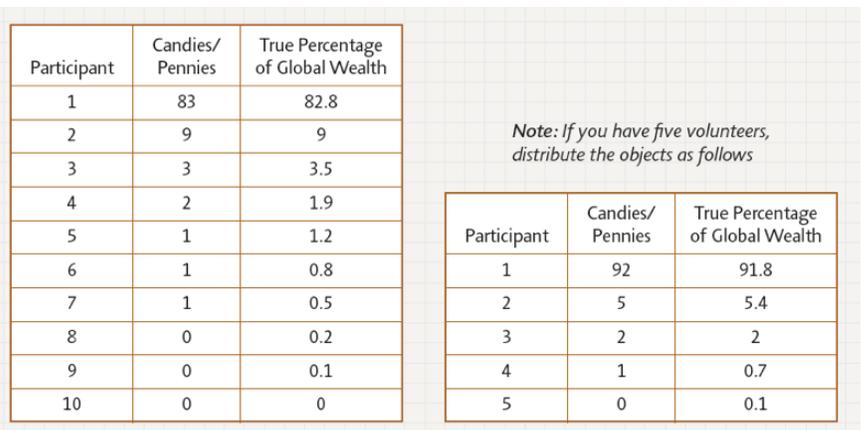
Option: Ask the students to bring in the pennies and put them in your class Tzedakah collection after the activity.

10 slips of paper, each with a number from 1-10
 Hat/bowl

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Tell students that they will continue their exploration about inequality in the world and how it relates to Tzedakah. The lesson begins with an activity to show how much money or wealth people have around the world.

The chart suggests a distribution of pennies that approximates the true percentage of global wealth. Data from "Global Wealth Databook," *Credit Suisse*, October 2010, p. 92, accessed 23 May 2012



- o Ask students to look at the stork cartoon on the [WHEEL OF FORTUNE](#) handout.
- o Have students answer the questions on their own and discuss their answers as a class.
- o Have students read the text on PART 2 and answer the questions on their own. Ask one student to read the text aloud and then have the class discuss their answers together.
- o Help students understand that the cartoon expresses the reality that many more people in the world live in poverty or experience war, famine and disease than the number of people who are wealthy. The chance of being born into a situation of poverty is much greater than the chance of being born middle class or wealthy.

Lesson adapted from wheredoyougive.org (American Jewish World Service)

1. Choose 10 student volunteers and explain to the group that these 10 volunteers represent everyone who lives in the world. Ask volunteers to draw numbers out of a hat, so that each volunteer has a number between 1 and 10. Ask students to line up in order of their numbers.

Note: *This activity is designed for a class with at least 10 students. If your class is smaller, take five volunteers and give each one a number between one and five.*

2. Show the students the 100 pennies/candies and explain that they represent all of the wealth that exists in the world. Wealth means the combined value of people's savings, property and possessions. Explain that you are going to divide the pennies/candies among the volunteers the way that wealth is divided in the world. Divide 100 pennies/candies among the volunteers as shown in the table, counting them out as you go so that everyone knows how much each volunteer has received.
3. After you've distributed all of the pennies/candies, ask the volunteers to share how they feel. Then ask the other students what they think about the distribution of pennies/candies.
4. If students need more prompting, consider asking any of the following questions:
 - o Do you think this distribution of pennies/candies is fair? Why or why not?
 - o Did the students who received more pennies/candies do anything to deserve the number they got? Does this make the distribution more or less fair? Why?
 - o What do you think the people with more pennies/candies should do? Why?
 - o If the candies represent wealth, what does this say about wealth in the world? Is this a world of tzedek?
 - o What do you think someone's life is like if they have very little wealth? If they have a lot of wealth?
 - o How do you feel about wealth in the world being distributed this way?
 - o Where do you think your family would fall? Do you think your family has more wealth than most in the world?

CONCLUSION

Ask students:

1. Does this activity make you want to do something?
2. Why or why not?
3. If so, let's move on to the next lesson to figure out what you might do!

Community Service Interview

Individually or with partners, have students identify someone they admire, a role model, who is doing good work in the world. This may be charitable volunteering or professional work, or doing something in the home or the family (like tutoring or helping out another family member). Younger students can use the Tzedakah/[COMMUNITY SERVICE INTERVIEW](#) handout. Older students can use the handout as a guide and should make up some of their own questions as well.

Elder Interview

Have students interview an elder in their family or someone older who plays a significant role in their lives. Distribute the [ELDER INTERVIEW](#) handout and encourage students to make up their own questions that will expand on what they already know about their subject.

Steps to a Successful Interview

- Set up a date and time for the interview and confirm it the day before.
- Record the interview with writing, videotape or audio.
- For video interviews, collect additional footage of your subject in action. This will make the interview more compelling. For written and audio interviews, take a photograph to add context.
- Edit the interview into a format — writing, video or audio — that can be shared, such as a blog post, a short video or a podcast.
- Share the interviews in class. Get inspired!
- Consider sharing the interview story in a podcast or video on the [HAVANA CURVEBALL Facebook](#) page.

Distribute the [YOUTH ACTIVISM](#) handout

- Have students work on their own, in pairs or in small groups to discover ways that young activists are making the world a better place.
- Once they have found a group that is working toward a cause that they believe in, have them learn more about it. They may choose to get involved or just follow its activities. If possible, they might go to a meeting or an event. There are many ways to participate besides direct action.
- Have students prepare a short report on the activities of the group they researched and present their findings to the class and/or on social media with #havanacurveball.

Explain to students that this lesson gives them the opportunity to use what they have learned about the importance of Tzedakah and tikkun olam, and to think about what interests them in terms of making a meaningful contribution to their greater community – as an individual or a class.

B'NAI MITZVAH OR INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PROJECTS

1. Think about Mica's project and what was most appealing, rewarding or challenging – and consider if you might or might not want to do something similar.
2. Consider what you would like to do for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah project. What problem you would like to address? What community would you like to help?
3. Discuss your idea with your Rabbi or teacher. Talk about why you have chosen this project and what it represents in terms of tzedakah or tikkun olam.
4. Once you have agreed on a project, do some research to see how you can be effective in accomplishing your goal. Connect with people and organizations doing work in that field, collect information, find out how you might be able to work with them to align your idea with the work they are already doing.
5. What are some of the challenges you might encounter? What challenges might the people on the receiving end of your project experience? What can be difficult about getting things from someone who is "better off" than you are?
5. Once you have done your research and made your connections, create a proposal for your project. Include a timeline and list of the first things you need to do to make your project a reality.

CLASS PROJECT

1. Ask students to review the three definitions from the first activity and summarize what they have learned about tzedakah and tikkun olam.
2. Discuss Mica's project and what was most appealing, rewarding or challenging – and consider if they might or might not want to do something similar.
3. Ask students to come up with an idea about how their class can contribute to a greater community. This can start with an assignment for each student to research and share examples of other successful school campaigns (LGBTQ rights, environmental, etc.).
4. List the shared ideas on the board and briefly discuss each one. Have students brainstorm and discuss other ideas that interest them. Have them vote to narrow the list to five possible projects.
5. Assign small groups to research each of the five ideas. Have them collect information about schools that have done similar projects, connect with local people and organizations doing work in that field, find out if the class might be able align their project with work already being done.
6. Have each group prepare and present a proposal to the class that includes the information they learned, the challenges they might encounter and the first three things they would need to do to make this project a reality.
8. Have the class vote to select one project. Work together to create a timeline and divide up the tasks required to complete the project.

JEWISH VALUES: DEFINITIONS

Tzedakah / צדקה

The obligation or commandment to give righteously, associated with justice. צדק
 “Tzedakah” is the Hebrew word for the acts that are similar to what we call “charity” in English: giving aid, assistance and money to the poor and needy or to other worthy causes. However, there is an important difference between tzedakah and charity. The word “charity” comes from the Latin *caritas*, meaning to care. It suggests benevolence and generosity, a magnanimous act by the wealthy and powerful for the benefit of the poor and needy. The word *tzedakah* is derived from the Hebrew word *tzedek*, meaning righteousness, justice or fairness. In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous, magnanimous act; it is an act of justice and righteousness, the performance of an obligation, giving those in need their due. Tzedakah means righteous giving and is an obligation to Jews, whether or not they care about the recipients.

Mitzvah / מצווה

The simple meaning of the word mitzvah is “command”. A mitzvah is any one of the collection of 613 commandments or precepts in the Bible and additional ones of rabbinic origin that relate chiefly to the religious and moral conduct of Jews. In common usage, a mitzvah often means “a good or praiseworthy deed.” This usage is quite old—the Jerusalem Talmud commonly refers to any charitable act as “the mitzvah.”

Tikkun Olam / תיקון עולם

Tikkun Olam – which means “repair of the world” – is a Jewish concept of social justice that is defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world. The phrase is found in the Mishnah, a body of classical rabbinic teachings. It is often used when discussing issues of social policy, insuring a safeguard to those who may be at a disadvantage. In modern Jewish circles, tikkun olam has become synonymous with the notion of social action and the pursuit of social justice.

Part 1

1. In a small group, spend 15 minutes creating an illustration or poster that illustrates the concept or an example of one of the definitions above.
2. Share your creation with the class and describe what inspired it.

Part 2 (Class Project or Individual/B’nai Mitzvah project)

1. Think about the different definitions and about what interests you in terms of a contribution you would like to make to your greater community for your bar/bat mitzvah project.
2. Consider Mica’s project and what was most appealing, rewarding or challenging – and decide if you might or might not want to do something similar.
3. Think of an idea for your own project and write it down.
4. Write down the first three things you would need to do to make this project a reality.
5. Consider what could be challenging about your project and how you might respond to the challenges.
6. Discuss what challenges the people on the receiving end of your project might experience. What can be difficult about getting things from someone who is “better off” than you are?
7. Share your idea with your small group.

MAIMONIDES' LADDER: 8 LEVELS OF TZEDAKAH

Moses Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon, also called Rambam) was a physician, rabbi, and philosopher born in Spain in the 12th century. Maimonides is one of the most respected Jewish philosophers to date and his works are an important part of Jewish liturgy. Some of his works include the Commentary on the Mishna, Sefer Mitzvot ("The book of Commandments"), The Guide for the Perplexed, Teshuvot, and probably the most important of his works, The Mishneh Torah, which is a code of Jewish law. In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides compiled a list of different levels of tzedakah that outlines the degree of how charitable the act is. It goes as follows from lowest to highest degree.

1. **Giving begrudgingly** – The person giving the charity unwillingly and cruelly. They do not care about their fellow man, by giving begrudgingly the recipient feels worse than they did before they received the charity. This is the lowest rung of charity because the giver is not doing it out of kindness, but only out of obligation. True tzedakah is given with a warm heart.
2. **Giving less than you can afford, but giving it cheerfully.** This is slightly higher on Maimonides' ladder because they are giving it with a smile. By showing understanding and empathy you make the recipient feel better than if you gave them the charity negatively.
3. **Giving after being asked.** You are giving the amount that you can afford to the recipient but they had to ask before you were willing to give them what they needed.
4. **Giving before being asked.** Asking for help is often one of the most difficult things people do, even when they are in dire need. By giving charity without being asked, you show that you understand their situation and do not have to be asked for the help needed.
5. **Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity.** In the four lowest levels of tzedakah both the recipient and giver know each other. This creates a situation where the giver is superior to the recipient, the giver's ego is stoked and the recipient feels ashamed and inferior. When the givers do not know the identity of the recipients, they are humbled, however, the recipients carry the burden of knowing who their donors are and feelings are not spared.
6. **Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity.** This level of tzedakah is higher because the ego of the person giving charity is still being inflated, but the recipient's dignity is spared for the most part.
7. **Giving when neither party knows the other's identity.** This is the second highest level of tzedakah. When both the recipient and donor of charity do not know each other. This does not create a superior/inferior bond between the giver and recipient, but rather one of mutual understanding and respect.
8. **Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant.** This can be done by aiding someone in getting a job or setting up a business with them. This is the highest level of charity because it allows for the recipient to no longer require charity from others, and makes them able to give it, which is the greatest gift one can give. If you give a man a fish he will be fed for a day, if you teach the man how to fish he will be fed for life.

WHILE WATCHING THE FILM, THINK ABOUT...

1. Why did Mica choose to do this project?
2. What did Mica learn?
3. What are the most rewarding parts of his project?
4. How did Mica go out of his comfort zone?
5. What challenges does Mica face? How does he address them?
6. If you are doing your own project, does Mica's experience change the way you are thinking about it? Why or why not?
7. How is Cuba different from the United States? How is baseball competition different?
8. What stories would you like to learn about from your family's history

1. Take turns reading the text on the right to gain a better understanding of *tikkun olam*.
2. Discuss your assigned quote and how it can have a practical application in your lives.
3. Discuss situations that demonstrate the concept or value represented by the quote; either something that was in the film or from your lives.
4. Pick one of the examples to share with the class.
5. Have one person read your group's quote to the whole class, describe what it means to you and share your group's example that demonstrates its meaning.

GROUP 1

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

The Talmud

GROUP 2

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.

Shemot 23:9

GROUP 3

He (Hillel) used to say: If I am not for myself who is for me? If I am only for myself what am I? And if not now, when?

Mishna: Pirkei Avot 1:14

GROUP 4

“We are here to make a difference, to mend the fractures of the world, a day at a time, an act at a time, for as long as it takes to make it a place of justice and compassion where the lonely are not alone, the poor not without help; where the cry of the vulnerable is heeded and those who are wronged are heard. ‘Someone else's physical needs are my spiritual obligation,’ a Jewish mystic taught.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:
To Heal a Fractured World: the Ethics of Responsibility

Historic Roots

The phrase *tikkun olam* is found in the *Mishnah*, a body of classical rabbinic teachings compiled in the 3rd Century. In this instance, the phrase is used when discussing issues of social policy, insuring a safeguard to those who may be at a disadvantage. Since the 1950s, other Jewish movements have adopted the use of the phrase and concept *tikkun olam* as a platform for the fulfillment of *mitzvot* (commandments) and *tzedakah* (justice, righteousness) Jews are often motivated by the concept of *tikkun olam* when they choose to be involved in social action and volunteer projects.

Importance

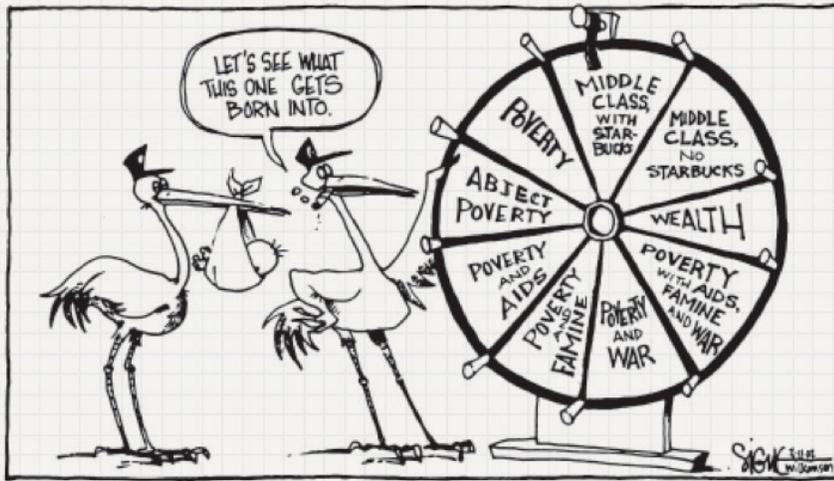
The most modern and broadly understood notion of *tikkun olam* is that of "repairing the world" through human actions. Humanity's responsibility to change, improve, and fix its earthly surroundings implies that each person has a hand in working towards the betterment of his or her own existence as well as the lives of future generations. *Tikkun olam* forces people to take ownership of their world. It is them, not G-d, who will bring the world back to its original state of holiness.

Philanthropic Ties

Tikkun olam embodies the spirit of philanthropy. Increasing the well being of humankind is one of the key elements of repairing the world. Helping those who are in need, no matter in what capacity, is crucial and "holy" work. *Tikkun olam*, as it relates to practical methods, applies to working in all communities, not just Jewish communities. Jews are members of greater society, and as such, their actions are not limited to their own communities. Social welfare and volunteer work, as well as the donation of monetary and physical resources, are ways in which people can be philanthropically involved, and at the same time, be involved in *tikkun olam*.

From *MyJewishLearning.com*

TZEDAKAH: WHEEL OF FORTUNE



Signe Wilkinson Editorial Cartoon used with the permission of Signe Wilkinson, the Washington Post Writers Group and the Cartoonist Group. All rights reserved.

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Part 1:

1. What does the wheel in this cartoon represent? Why are there so many more wedges for poverty than for wealth?
2. What do you think this cartoon is trying to say about why some people live in poverty while others are middle class or wealthy?
3. What title would you give to this cartoon?

Part 2:

Judaism also has an image of a wheel of poverty and wealth, based on the following verse from the Torah that teaches us that we shouldn't hesitate to give Tzedakah:

1. Deuteronomy 15:10

Give to the poor person readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return (*bi-gelal*) Adonai your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings.

דְּבָרִים טוֹי:

נְתוּן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא יִרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִתֵּנָהּ לוֹ כִּי בְּגִלְגַל הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְכָל מַשְׁלַח יָדְךָ:

The midrash makes a word play on the Hebrew word *bi-gelal* (for in return) from the verse above and connects it to the Hebrew word *gal-gal*, which sounds similar and means wheel.

2. Midrash Aggadah, Deuteronomy 15:10

For in return (*bi-gelal*). It is a wheel (*gal-gal*) that turns in the world. Maybe you think in your heart that you won't come to this fate [poverty]. You might not, but your child or your grandchild might. Therefore, a person should do good things for others whenever he can, in order that others will do good things for him if he or his children need.

מִדְרַשׁ אֲגָדָה, דְּבָרִים פָּרָק טוֹי:

כִּי בְּגִלְגַל. גִּלְגַל הוּא שְׁחוּזָר בְּעוֹלָם, שְׂאֲתָם חוֹשֵׁב בְּלִבְךָ שְׁלֹא תִבּוֹא לְמִדָּה הַזֹּאת, וְאִם לֹא תִבּוֹא אֶתָּה וְשִׂמְאָה בְּנֶךְ יָבּוֹא, אוֹ בֶן בְּנֶךְ, לְכָךְ צְרִיךְ שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה הוּא לְאַחֲרִים כָּל זְמַן שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּיָדוֹ, כְּדֵי שְׂיַעֲשׂוּ אַחֲרִים עָלָיו אִם יִצְטָרֵךְ הוּא אוֹ בְּנָיו.

DISCUSS:

1. What do you think it means that wealth and poverty are “like a wheel that turns in the world”?
2. How does this text make you feel about people who are poor?
3. According to the midrash, why should a person give Tzedakah? Do you think this is a good reason? Why or why not?

COMMUNITY SERVICE INTERVIEW

Interview another student, family member or role model about tzedakah or community service using the form below. You can also make up your own additional questions in advance or as you go.

Your name:

Date:

Name of the interviewee:

1. Why do you give tzedakah or do your community service?
2. How do you feel when you give tzedakah or do your community service?
3. When you give money, does it feel more like charity or tzedakah? Why?
4. Please tell me about one place where you or your family gave tzedakah in the last year.
Why did you choose this organization or cause?
5. If you have time, and there's anything else you want to know about your partner's tzedakah practice, ask it now.

Steps for a Successful Interview

- Set up a date and time for the interview and confirm it the day before.
- Record the interview with writing, videotape or audio.
- Pay attention to what your subject is saying. Make it a two-way conversation where you use the answers to inspire additional questions.
- For video interviews, collect additional footage of your subject in action. This will make the interview more compelling. For written and audio interviews, take a photograph to add context.
- Edit the interview into a format — writing, video or audio — that can be shared, such as a blog post, a short video or a podcast.
- Share the interviews in class and consider posting it in a podcast or video on the [HAVANA CURVEBALL Facebook](#) page.

HANDOUT

ELDER INTERVIEW

Your name

Date

Name of the interviewee

Relationship to interviewer

1. What year were you born?
2. Where were you born?
3. If this is not where you live now, when and how did you come to live here?
4. Describe your childhood:
 - a. What was your home like?
 - b. What were your favorite things to do?
 - c. What did your parents do for work?
 - d. Did you have a close relationship with any of your grandparents? What activities did you do with them?
5. Tell me one of your favorite stories or memories from your childhood.
6. Were there any major events that had a big impact on your life or your family? (war, discrimination, moving, death, divorce, etc.)
7. Was Judaism an important part of your life growing up?
 - a. How religious was your family?
 - b. Did you have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? If so, what was it like? How did it compare to ones you have attended in recent years?
8. What Jewish values are important to you today? How did you learn those values?
9. If you could teach me one very important thing, what would it be?

Steps for a Successful Interview

- Set up a date and time for the interview and confirm it the day before.
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- Share the interviews in class and consider posting it in a podcast or video on the [HAVANA CURVEBALL Facebook](#) page.

DISCOVER YOUTH ACTIVISM

- Using the links below as a start, do some research to find out about the work that youth activists are doing to make the world a better place.

<http://youthactivismproject.org/>

<https://www.dosomething.org/>

<https://freechild.org/>

- Find a group that is working toward a cause that you believe in. You may choose to get involved or just follow their activities. If possible, go to a meeting or an event. There are many ways to participate besides direct action.
- Write a short report on the activities of your group.
- Share your story with your class and on social media with #havanacurveball. Let other students know what you've been up to!

HAVANA CURVEBALL RESOURCES

FILM RESOURCES

These links will help you have a successful screening, whether it's for a single classroom or a larger community event. They offer ideas for clarifying your goals for the event, planning logistics, and stimulating meaningful and productive follow-up discussions and activities.

Community screenings require a DVD that is licensed for organizational or educational use with Public Performance Rights, or a screening rental license.

Visit HAVANA CURVEBALL's Host-a-Screening page for details: <http://www.havanacurveball.info/host-a-screening>.

- [Event Hosting Guide](#)
- [Customizable press release](#)
- [Email flyer](#)
- [Customizable mini-poster](#)
- [WebsiteTrailer](#)
- [Press kit](#)

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Jewish Values/Social Justice

[Just Action Lesson Plans](#)

[Where Do You Give \(AJWS\)](#)

[Facing History: Decision-Making Times of Injustice](#)

Youth Activism

<http://youthactivismproject.org/>

<https://www.dosomething.org/>

<http://www.freechild.org>

Jewish History/Holocaust Remembrance

[Center for Jewish History](#)

[United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

Cuba & U.S. Relations

[Time: A Brief History of US-Cuba Relations, Huffington Post](#)

Cuban Jewish Community

[In Cuba, Finding a tiny Corner of Jewish Life, New York Times](#)

Cuban Baseball

[Stealing Home, PBS documentary](#)

To order a DVD for educational use, please visit:
www.havanacurveball.info.