



Josh and the V'ahavta

Josh was a good boy with a great family and good friends. Josh had one problem. He thought he was just an average guy. Everyone seemed to be great at something but he could not think of anything that was his special talent.

Although Josh knew that he should not compare himself to others, he could not help himself. He felt that his brother Steve was the best baseball player in the whole school. Everyone wanted Steve on their team. He knew that his friend Sara was an outstanding student. She was really smart and she got perfect grades. The teacher was always reading her stories to the class. Tom could run the fastest, Mrs. Kaplan baked the best chocolate chip cookies, and Sue was just beautiful. Sam told the funniest jokes and Beth was the best artist. Everyone loved her paintings. When Josh thought about what his best qualities were, all he could think about was that he was a little too slow, a little too short, he couldn't draw and he wasn't a real athlete. While he was usually happy, he wished he could find his niche and excel in something.

Josh hoped that when he began Hebrew school he would be really good at that. He tried hard to be the best reader in Hebrew and be able to translate every prayer. Well, even though Josh paid really close attention, he had trouble telling the *daled* from the *raish* and confused other letters too. The order of the prayers was difficult for Josh to remember and his writing was as messy as in English.

Josh continued to work hard on everything but he almost gave up hope of being great at anything. In Hebrew school he learned that there are different kinds of Jews.

There were men who were very learned and lived by every word of the law. They studied Torah and Talmud. Well that left Josh out.

There were other people with really kind hearts. They were good gentle people. These people were also of great value to the Jewish



community. This Josh thought that he could try to do. He was kind to animals and helped his parents. He was a good friend.

In Hebrew school he told his teacher that he got the letters in his prayers all confused. He asked what prayers would be important for his whole life. While he was told that all of the prayers were important, his teacher suggested that he listen to hear if some prayer or part of the service seemed to have special meaning for him. After listening and looking over the prayer book several times, Josh stopped right after “*Shema Yisarel... V’ahavta et...*” You shall love the *Adonai* your God with all your mind, with all your strength and being...

“I can do this” thought Josh. I can speak of them in my home and on my way and they will remind me to be kind, gentle and nice to everyone all of the time. Even if I don’t speak the words, I can just think about the words by myself and they can be on my mind.

Josh was happy. He knew he could master this one prayer, not for his *Bar Mitzvah* or for his parents, but just for himself. He could be great at this one prayer, reading it and thinking about it.

Josh always remembered the *V’ahavta* and continued to have a good kind heart all the days of his life. He really excelled at that and he felt great.

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