

### JCI CURRICULUM: *UNIT 1: CHAPTER 4 – TZEDEK, TZEDAKAH, & CHESED* LESSON 2: THE STORY OF MAR UKBA

#### LESSON 2: THE STORY OF MAR UKBA (45 mins)

##### Goals:

For students to:

- Analyze the Mar Ukba story through the lenses of *Tzedek*, *Tzedakah* and *Chesed*
- Appreciate the drama in the story.
- Empathize with the characters in the story.
- Understand the underlying teachings of the story.

##### Materials:

- Poster paper
- Colored markers / crayons
- Computer with web access (optional)
- Text sheet (*Do not distribute until the activity at the end of the lesson*)

##### Procedure:

#### Mar Ukba story – Babylonian Talmud, *Ketubot* 67b (20 minutes)

- Divide the class into small groups of 2-3 students. Read the story to the students aloud one portion at a time. After each portion of the story, you will ask the students to discuss one question in their small group.

##### Story:

*“Mar Ukba was a renowned scholar. Every day, on his way home from the Beit Midrash, he would slip 4 zuzim under the door of a poor man who lived in the neighborhood.”*

Question: How would you categorize this kind of giving? *Tzedek*, *Tzedakah* or *Chesed*? (You may want to mention Rambam’s anonymous giving).

*One day, the poor man thought, “I will go and see who is being so gracious to me.”*

Question: What do you think of this idea? Is it OK? Why would he want to do this?

*On that very day, it happened that Mar Ukba was late in returning from the Beit Midrash, and his wife came by to see what was keeping him. On the way home, Mar Ukba, accompanied by his wife, stopped by the poor man’s house, as usual, and stooped to slip the zuzim under the door.*

Question: What do you think is going to happen next?

*At that moment, the poor man opened the door to greet them.*

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Question: What would you do in this situation? You are trying to give anonymously, but it looks like the gig is up!

*Mar Ukba and his wife fled, and hid in an oven from which the coals had just been swept.*

Question: What were they afraid of? Why was it so important for them to flee that they would hide in an oven?

*Mar Ukba's feet were burning, but his wife said: lift your feet and put them on mine.*

Question: Why do you think that only Mar Ukba's feet burn, but not his wife's?

*Mar Ukba became upset [because his wife was clearly the recipient of a miracle and he was not].*

Question: Do you have a guess as to why his wife might merit a miracle, while he doesn't?

*But his wife said to him: [I have merited this miracle] because I am usually at home, and my gifts are immediate and direct.*

Question: How would you categorize Mrs. Ukba's kind of giving? *Tzedek, Tzedakah or Chesed?*

Ask the whole class:

What is the text trying to teach us?

What directive does it give towards my own *tzedakah*?

The value of *tzedakah*?

What would be a modern analog to each way of giving today?

[Possible answers: Mar Ukba gives money, his wife feeds the hungry food at her own kitchen table. She has a relationship with the poor. He does not. Living and working with the poor, rather than writing a check.]

#### Activity (25 mins)

Create a Facebook/Myspace page for each of the characters in the story.

Each page must have:

- The character's image
- Categories
  - Hobbies
  - Favorite Movies
  - Favorite Books
  - What I'm doing to make the world a better place
- Links to philanthropic/activist organizations

# Just

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Distribute the text of the story for reference.

This activity can be done individually, or in small groups. It is fine to have multiple groups working on the same character or to add categories.

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#### Appendix

#### TEXT

Mar Ukba was a renowned scholar. Every day, on his way home from the *Beit Midrash*, he would slip 4 *zuzim* under the door of a poor man who lived in the neighborhood. One day, the poor man thought, "I will go and see who is being so gracious to me." On that very day, it happened that Mar Ukba was late in returning from the *Beit Midrash*, and his wife came by to see what was keeping him. On the way home, Mar Ukba, accompanied by his wife, stopped by the poor man's house, as usual, and stooped to slip the *zuzim* under the door.

At that moment, the poor man opened the door to greet them. Mar Ukba and his wife fled, and hid in an oven from which the coals had just been swept. Mar Ukba's feet were burning, but his wife said: lift your feet and put them on mine.

Mar Ukba became upset [because his wife was clearly the recipient of a miracle and he was not]. But his wife said to him: [I have merited this miracle] because I am usually at home, and my gifts are immediate and direct.  
Babylonian Talmud, *Ketubot* 67b