

Script of Play: Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro or "The Pretzel Lady"

By Mrs. Risa Gross

Grade Level: 1-8

Description:

This colorful and true play tells the story of the Lower east Side's Pretzel lady and her devotion of harbotzas haTorah. After bachurim from Yeshivas Tiferes Yerushalayim saved her life, her fortunes changed and the Pretzel Lady, Mrs. Weber, eventually had a grandson who founded Hatzolah in Williamsburg. The play is adapted here for Chanukah but can easily be changed to tie into Shabbos or any other theme.

Goals/Objectives:

Students will dramatize the story of the Pretzel Lady to help them internalize the message of being Nosei B'Ol Im Chaveiro.

Instructions:

1. Teach about the middah of Nosei B'Ol Im Chaveiro. Use stories to illustrate the point.
2. Distribute parts for the play.
3. Design scenery and/or costumes if desired.
4. Have students rehearse their lines and practice the play.
5. Present the play at a school assembly and invite parents and grandparents if applicable.

Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro – Chanukah 2004

Elisha tape on

(Background: brick buildings, leaves, and signs)

SPOTLIGHT Children sitting around Bubby in rocking chair.

Esty: Bubby Rhatza, won't you and Bubby Tova, tell us the story again, tell us about your friend the Pretzel lady.

RISA Bubby 1 (Rhatza):

What do you think Tova, it is a Chanukah story, shall we?

YOCHEVED Bubby 2 (Tova): Not only that but it fits right into YSV's theme-Vene'eman Attah. Okay kinderlach, pay very close attention.

Spotlight peddlers

RISA: Well, this true story took place oh about 50 years ago. Fifty years ago, the lower East Side of New York City was a colorful, bustling place to live. Delaney and Essex Streets of New York City were in a neighborhood that consisted mostly of Yidden with a smattering of Italians, Chinese and Greeks. All of these people added to the flavor and seasoning of the era. Times were hard, financially. Many people lived very simply and just tried to make ends meet.

YOCHEVED: Peddlers filled the streets trying to sell their wares. Some had carts filled with ripe luscious red apples, some, sold house wares - knives, cups, pots and pans. Others sold stationary- pencils, erasers, and-paper. There were peddlers who had carts filled with bolts of fabric- yards and yards of polished cottons, sturdy wools, and corduroys. There were merchants with baskets selling hats and gloves. Peddlers with baskets filled with loaves of freshly baked bread. You could hear all the noises and sounds of sales and bargains in the making. The whole picture was that of an exciting, friendly, bustling community.

Spotlight CHOIR:

ZAIDY SONG

Spotlight peddlers

Peddler 1 CRS: Apples, Apples, nice and shiny apples 3 cents each!

Peddler 2 SD: Copper pots and pans for sale. They will last a lifetime. Get you knives sharpened for free- when you buy a pot or pan!

Peddler 3 CS : Get your pencils and stationary here. Pencils, papers, envelopes for sale.

Peddler 4 SRK: Ladies, Do your children need new clothes? Come and look at my cart filled with fabric and different kinds of cloth. \$1.00 a yard!

Peddler 5 AW : Keep warm; Come see my collection of hats and gloves for sale. Unbelievable prices.

Peddler 6 HT: Freshly baked bread and rolls! Get it while it's hot - 30 cents a loaf

Peddler 4 SRK : Here comes the Pretzel Lady now. We were worried about you.

(Enter the pretzel lady laden with 2 baskets of pretzels.)

Pretzel Lady ZIPORA: Good morning my good friends, I see you have your wares out early this morning. I guess my baskets are a little heavier this morning and I'm making my way a little slower. Boruch Hashem, another beautiful day!

Peddler 4 SRK: Good morning, are you still shlepping all of your pretzels in those baskets. It is quite a heavy load. You need to get a cart.

Peddler 5 AW: Maybe you can share my cart, somehow? I don't think anyone would mind if their hats smelled of delicious freshly baked pretzels! (Picks up hat and smells it)

(ALL PEDDLERS LAUGH)

ZIPORA: Thank you for your concern, Shloima, That is so kind of you to offer. You know I simply can't afford a cart. Boruch Hashem, I'm strong and healthy. I can carry this load. In fact my load feels lighter just knowing you all care so much about me!

Peddler 7 LW: Well the least I can do is advertise your pretzels for you. Pretzels, hot fresh pretzels, Come and get them 5 cents a pretzel! Pretzels, hot fresh pretzels, Come and get them 5 cents a pretzel!

KEEP SPOTLIGHTS ON PEDDLERS

YOCHAVED: The Peddlers had a special bond with each other. They had a very special friendship. Each one was concerned for the other. They cared for one another. If someone had a problem, they took the problem on as if it was their own. Sometimes, they couldn't change the situation. Like the pretzel lady not having a cart and her having to carry all the pretzels in a basket. The other peddlers barely made enough money to keep their own family going, but they identified and felt for the pretzel lady.

Peddler HT: Well it is Erev Shabbos.

Peddler LW: We must sell as much as we can quickly so we can get ready for Shabbos.

Apples, pots and pans, pencils, clothing, hats, bread and rolls FOR SALE

(All peddlers go off stage shouting their wares for sale)

***Make place for peddlers to sit**

RISA: Everyone loves this old woman. She is affectionately known to everyone as the pretzel lady.

She always has a kind word, a warm smile and a compliment to say to everyone. Let's follow the Pretzel Lady home. She lives in that one room basement apartment over there.

(Lights on pretzel lady)

She lives by herself. She is happy to have what she does and never complains. The pretzel lady lives her whole week for Shabbos. Shabbos is so holy for her. It is a time when she can sing her zemiros and reconnect with Hashem. Sadly, her biggest disappointment is that she is never able to invite guests or bochrin from the Yeshiva over for a Shabbos meal. She simply can't afford to. Her own meals are sparse if she eats at all. But the lights of the Shabbos candles glow and fill her heart.

ZIPORA LIGHTS CANDLES

(Softly) She lives by herself in a one-room apartment.

Choir SONG “she lives by herself in a one room apartment”

SPOTLIGHTS ON PRETZEL LADY AND ON BUBBY

RISA: Sunday morning, the Pretzel Lady woke feeling renewed and that Hashem loves her. Once again, she joined the rest of the patchwork of the Eastside peddlers. She greeted everyone with a smile, as always, and went about the rest of day as usual.

The Pretzel lady wakes early every morning and stops at the Bakery where she buys hot pretzels for 1 cent apiece. She fills her baskets to the brim and covers them with a heavy blanket to keep them hot and then goes out on the street to sell her pretzels.

ZIPORA: “Good morning Anshel, How is your back feeling today? I’ll take my usual basket full of pretzels, please. Have a wonderful day. Try to take a rest. Get off your feet for a little bit”.

YOCHAVED: Hot pretzels - 5 cents each! The pretzel lady has her regular customers. There is Tony the local policeman, who eats a hot pretzel with his coffee every morning. There are the construction workers filling in the potholes on Hester Street. There is Rabbi Klinebrodt, the Houston Street Shul’s Rabbi. He always buys two pretzels, one for him and one for his son in law the tailor.

ZIPORA: “Good morning Policeman Tony. How are you doing today? I hope the city is behaving itself. So your job will be easier. Here is your pretzel. Enjoy.”

RISA: When her basket is empty, The Pretzel Lady makes her way back to Anshel the baker and fills another basket. Lunch hour is coming and she’s always ready for her customers, no matter the weather, she’s reliable and dependable.

Usually by 4:30 in the afternoon, there are only a few pretzels left. But for the Pretzel Lady- this is the most important part of her day-the part of her day she loves the most. She puts on a bright smile and buys all the rest of Anshel the baker’s leftover pretzels. She heads straight to the Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim, the local boy’s Yeshiva. The boys have a break between 4:30 and 5:00. The Pretzel Lady stands in front of the Yeshiva and sells her pretzels to the boys for a discount at 2 cents each. She knows they are hungry and this is their break. They don’t go home for dinner until 7:00.

Then they come back for Mishmar - it is a long day.

KEEP SPOTLIGHTS ON PRETZEL LADY AND ON BUBBY

YOCHEVED: The Pretzel Lady has a big heart. The pretzels are really only part of the reason to see her Boys, her Bochrin. She knows all of the boy's names. She knits scarves for the boys who have no family. To let them know that she cares. She asks after their welfare. How are they? How was the Shiur today? To the boys, The Pretzel Lady is a steadfast and reliable friend. Someone you could count on for advice, for anything. Someone you could count on to be there. The Pretzel Lady loves those boys as if they were her own.

(Lady stands at corner waiting) 2 hoodlums all dressed in black come running by and push the lady, laughing and grab the pretzels, the rest fall to the floor along with the Pretzel Lady

Hoodlums: CTB "Give us your money"

SG "And those pretzels" **(they run off)**

2 Yeshiva boys see what happened and Run to help

FRIMI Boyl Chaim: Hey you!

CHAYA ITTA Boy 2 Shmuli: Never mind them, Quick, the Pretzel Lady might be hurt.

FRIMI: Are you okay? (Both boys start picking up basket and pretzels)

PRETZEL LADY GETS UP SLOWLY

ZIPORA: Boys, thank you, I'm okay (sadly) but now you won't have anything to eat. Those robbers stole all of the money I earned today. I was going to save today's money for some Chanukah candles. Tomorrow night is Chanukah.

FRIMI: Oh, we are so sorry. Can we help you in some way? Let us walk you home to make sure you are okay.

ZIPORA: Thank you, I wouldn't mind that. I am so tired and weary. If you could - just carry my baskets home for me. It would be a great Chessed.

CHAYA ITTA: Of course, we will.

RISA: That day, Shmulie and Chaim walked their beloved Pretzel Lady home. They had never done that before, in fact even though they knew the Pretzel lady for many years, they never thought about her private life - where she lived or about her family. But they had come to love her, like a Bubby. Every afternoon, she came to Yeshiva, sunshine, rain or snow. She kept their pretzels hot for them. They looked out the window for her every day. They counted on her.

YOCHAVED: They were ashamed that they had never thought about her and her needs before. Why, the Pretzel Lady was always there to share in the boy's accomplishments or to help them out with their problems. She always had good advice. Why, the whole Yeshiva depended on her. She took extra special care of the boys who came to learn in the Yeshiva from far away. Those who didn't have family living close by. There were times when a Bochur was sick; she would send him soup and Daven for him.

RISA: Shmuli and Chaim walked the Pretzel Lady home. They were shocked that she lived with almost nothing. The furniture in the apartment consisted of two scanty chairs, a rickety table, which was balanced on a book, because one table leg was broken. There was a small bookcase filled with some Seforim and an old bed covered by a thin threadbare blanket. There was no heat. The pretzel lady kept warm by drinking warm drinks.

(Lady makes them tea they wave goodbye)

CHAYA ITTA: Chaim, I feel really bad. We never even thought about the poor Pretzel lady. She works so hard and she lives all alone. Can you imagine? The only thing she cared about, when her money was stolen was how she would do the mitzvah of Neiros Chanukah. She has true Ne'emanus, she really is a Ne'eman to us and to Hashem.

FRIMI: You are right Shmulie, Remember what Rebbe taught about Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro. Why the Pretzel Lady herself is a lesson in that — she always puts others first and doesn't even think of herself.

CHAYA ITTA: Yeh, Rebbe also taught that Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro is when we take the pain of another to heart. Even if we can't solve their pain or worries we should help minimize the pain of loneliness. We must honestly make them feel that they are not alone and that other people care about them and they are important.

FRIMI: Even if it's only in a small way we should be better listeners. The Pretzel lady always asks us how we are. How did we do on and our tests? And, who won the baseball game? I feel really bad. After knowing the Pretzel Lady for so many years - this is the first time we even cared to find out where she lives.

CHAYA ITTA: The Pretzel Lady is also a great smiler. I know it helps me, when I'm feeling down, like when there's a lot of homework or I get a bad mark on one of my tests. She listens and gives me a great big smile and encourages me with her kind words.

FRIMI: Shmuli, I know I have a lot to think about. I better think a lot less about me and more about others.

CHAYA ITTA: You are absolutely right!

RISA: That night, both boys went home with a lot on their minds. They both came up with wonderful ideas on how to start being true Nosei Bol im Chavero. Shmuli asked his mother if she could spare a warm heavy blanket to give to the Pretzel Lady since she had no heat and her apartment was absolutely freezing. And, Chaim asked his father if he had an extra box of Chanukah candles for the Pretzel Lady to have. Chaim told his father how those robbers stole the Pretzels Lady's money and now she couldn't afford to buy the Chanukah candles.

YOCHAVED: The next day, the boys came to school and were glad that they had both taken the lessons of Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro to heart. They had put their Sechel, their minds and their Nefesh, their hearts to work- at how they could lighten the Pretzel Ladies burden.

CHAYA ITTA: (pacing outside the school holding the blanket and candles)
Chaim, It is already 4:40, The Pretzel Lady is usually here at exactly 4:30 when we get out for break.

FRIMI: Gee, Shmuli, it is really cold out here today. Let's wait inside. This blanket is getting heavy. I can't wait to see the smile on the Pretzel Ladies face when she sees what we brought her.

CHAYA ITTA: No Chaim, we can't wait inside. It will be nicer if we wait out here to greet the Pretzel Lady as soon as she comes. Imagine how cold the Pretzel lady is, she spends practically her whole day outside.

(Pacing boys freezing)

FRIMI: Shmuli, She's really never late, maybe she's not feeling well after those robbers pushed her to the ground yesterday. Let's go to her house, just in case.

CHAYA ITTA: Okay Chaim, maybe we should.

YOCHAVED: And so the boys went to the Pretzel Lady's basement apartment. They knocked on the window. They peeked in and suddenly Chaim jumped.

FRIMI: (peering in the window) Shmuli, I smell gas. A lot of gas, Oh no, the pretzel lady's on the floor. The doors are always locked you need the person who lives here to open the door for you. Quick get help. I'll try prying open the window.

RISA: Shmuli saw a Frum man walking down the block. He cried for help, the man came running and broke open the window.
(Sound effect window shattering) Chaim climbed in and opened the door for the man. Boruch Hashem, the man was able to revive the Pretzel lady. She was overcome by the gas smell and fainted. It seems, since it was so unusually cold that day, the pretzel lady came home early to warm herself with a pot of tea before she went to the Yeshiva. She put the kettle on the stove and lit the gas. She hadn't realized the flame went out under the kettle and gas filled the apartment. The man made certain that the Pretzel lady was okay. The Pretzel Lady had such Hakaras Hatov to the man she insisted on giving him a token of appreciation. Of course, the man was so uncomfortable, he saw how poor the Pretzel Lady was. But, he also saw how important it was for her to give him something. Finally, he accepted a small Sefer, which the Pretzel Lady offered him from her bookcase.

Lights off of Bubbys.

ZIPORA: Boys, I can't describe my Hakaras Hatov to you. And such beautiful gifts, my, I will treasure them as I treasure your friendship. Hashem had sent you to save me. Hashem is so good he always takes care of me. I always count on him. He is always there. He is a true Neeman.
Vne'eman Attah.

CHAYA ITTA: Mrs. Weber, it's time to light the Chanukah candles. I would be honored to light the Menorah for you.

**Background Chanukah Music RUCHAMA
(LIGHTS MENORAH)**

Boys freeze and lights off

Spotlight choir

Choir

FRIMI: You know Shmuli; I think the most amazing thing is that the Pretzel Lady doesn't even think she is poor.

CHAYA ITTA: I figured out that she is really rich, in a different way. Not because of money but because she is Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro, She is closely connected to Hashem as He is a true Ne'eman, steadfast, and reliable, He feels our pain and we can count on Him. The Pretzel Lady is lucky because Hashem fills her heart.

RISA: Kinderlach, this is really not the end of the story. It turns out that the Sefer the man accepted as a gift of thanks from the Pretzel Lady was quite valuable. He sold it and gave the money to the Pretzel Lady, known also to many as Mrs. Weber. She was able to move to a different apartment which had heat and she was never short on Shabbos food or guests again.

YOCHAVED: A few years later, her only son, who was learning in Eretz Yisroel, moved back to New York and started a family of his own. She had her grandchildren near. She no longer sold pretzels but always remained a close friend of Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim and its Rosh Yeshiva, Ray Moshe Feinstein zt'l.

RISA: Her children and grandchildren always loved to hear Mrs. Weber's Pretzel stories. They grew up to appreciate the true meaning of Nosei B'ol Im Chaveiro. Their grandmother, Mrs. Weber, was their prime living example.

In fact her grandson, Hershel, had learned the lessons of Nosei B'ol im Chavero so well, He started the first Hatzala in Williamsburg 35 years ago.

You can count on me — Venne'eman Attah

ESTY: That was a great story Bubby Rhatza and Bubby Tova. How about we give pretzels to the whole school?

YOCHAVED: Good idea! A pretzel awaits each one of you. Enjoy it and always keep in mind what even a regular, plain, person like the Pretzel Lady can accomplish. Happy Chanukah!

Ruchama play