



# What's in Your Pocket?

## **Topic**

Yom Kippur

## **Grade Level(s)**

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and Up

## **Goals for the Lesson/Activity**

### **Students will:**

- Identify *middot* (personal characteristics) that are important for being a good person
- Relate which *middot* they embody
- Appraise which *middot* they can do better

## **Materials needed**

- *Middot* chart (downloadable on JTeach.org)
- Pencils/Pens
- *Middot* Pocket Cards (included), printed on cardstock.

## **Background for Teachers**

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa was one of the great Chasidic masters. Among his followers were the Kotsker Rebbe, the Mei HaShiloach, and the Ger Rebbe.

Reb Simcha taught that everyone must have two pockets. In the right pocket must be a note that says, "For my sake the world was created." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). In the left pocket must be a note that says, "I am but dust and ashes." (*Bereshit* 18:27). Thus, when we feel despondent and lowly, we can reach into the right pocket and feel the pride of the world being created for us. However, when we feel too proud, we can reach into the left pocket and feel humble about our origins.

According to Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, one should confess both the good and the bad that one does: "Just as there is great benefit to repairing the soul through confession of transgressions... so too through the confession of *mitzvot* in order to gladden one's heart and to strengthen the ways of life in the path of God." (*Ein Ayah* on Mishnah *Ma'aser Sheini* 5:10).

## **Description of Activities**

1. **Trigger:** Students empty their pockets onto the table in front of them. Students may also choose to empty their backpacks or other carrying case.
2. Ask students what the contents in their pockets/backpacks say about them.
3. Relate the teaching of Rabbi Simcha Bunim (see Background for Teachers).

©2016 JTeach.org

Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago's Online Resource Center

Lead author:



## What's in Your Pocket?

4. Pass out copies of the *Middot* Chart.
5. Students choose the three *middot* that best describe themselves and the three *middot* that they would most like to do better.
6. Ask students why it is important to remind yourself both to be proud of your good qualities and also to be humble about what you can do better.
  - a. For older students, consider using the commentary from Rav Kook (see Background for Teachers) as a source text.
7. On the pocket cards, students write their three *middot* to place in their right pockets and their three *middot* to place in their left pockets.
8. If possible, laminate the pocket cards and return them to students.
9. Consider reflecting each month so that students can assess their progress.

### **Differentiation Options**

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

#### ***For learners who need more assistance***

- Students use the bull's-eye target to write down what they do well and what they are working on.

#### ***For learners who need extension opportunities***

- Students research more teachings of Rabbi Simcha Bunim (or other Chasidic masters) and relate the stories and lessons to the class.



## What's in Your Pocket?

I am but dust and ashes.  
(Genesis 18:27)

---

---

---

For me the world was  
created. (Sanhedrin 4:5)

---

---

---