



CREATING SPACES  
TO SHARE OUR STORIES  
AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS DIVIDES

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## Where can we find Wisdom? – JUDAISM

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### Background:

“Who is wise? One who learns from every person ...  
Who is rich? One who rejoices in what they have.”

There is much wisdom to be found in the Jewish sacred texts of Torah and the Talmud but there are also traditional stories that help reveal important values and beliefs. This story comes from Polish Jewish folklore. It is set in a time when every village would have a 'Rebbe' (Rabbi). The Rebbe would be seen as a source of wisdom and advice as well as Jewish law and teaching.



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## A Goat, a Cow and some Chickens - (Story can be found on back)

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### Follow up questions:

1. Did you like the rabbi's plan? Why? Do you think he was wise?
2. What do you think the message of the story is?
3. The man in the story goes to see a Rabbi for advice. Can you think about a person in your life who is wise? How do you think they became wise?
4. The quote at the top says that someone who is wise learns from every person. Have you ever learned something wise from someone unexpectedly?

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## A Goat, a Cow and some Chickens

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A poor couple lived with their six children in a very small one-room house. They were always getting in each other's way and there was so little space they could hardly breathe! Finally, the man could stand it no more. "Go see the rabbi," his wife told him.

The rabbi greeted him and said, "I see something is troubling you. Whatever it is, you can tell me." And so, the poor man told the rabbi how miserable things were at home with him, his wife, and the six children all eating and living and sleeping in one room. The poor man told the rabbi, "We're even starting to yell and fight with each other. Life couldn't be worse."

The rabbi thought very deeply about the poor man's problem. Then he said, "Do exactly as I tell you and things will get better. Do you promise?" "I promise," the poor man said. The rabbi then asked the poor man a strange question. "Do you own any animals?" "Yes," he said. "I have one cow, one goat, and some chickens." "Good," the rabbi said. "When you get home, take all the animals into your house to live with you."

The poor man was astonished to hear this advice from the rabbi, but he had promised to do exactly what the rabbi said. So, he went home and took all the farm animals into the tiny one-room house.

The next day the poor man ran back to see the rabbi. "What have you done to me, rabbi?" he cried. "It's awful. I did what you told me, and the animals are all over the house! Rabbi, help me!" The rabbi listened and said calmly, "Now go home and take the chickens back outside." The poor man did as the rabbi said but hurried back again the next day. "The chickens are gone, but rabbi, the goat!" he moaned. "The goat is smashing up all the furniture and eating everything in sight!" The good rabbi said, "Go home and remove the goat and may God bless you."

So, the poor man went home and took the goat outside. But he ran back again to see the rabbi, crying and wailing. "What a nightmare you have brought to my house, rabbi! With the cow it's like living in a stable! Can human beings live with an animal like this?" The rabbi said sweetly, "My friend, you are right. May God bless you. Go home now and take the cow out of your house." And the poor man went quickly home and took the cow out of the house.

The next day he came running back to the rabbi again. "O rabbi," he said with a big smile on his face, "we have such a good life now. The animals are all out of the house. The house is so quiet, and we've got room to spare! What a joy!"

*(This story comes from Polish Jewish folklore)*