



TEACHING JEWISH VALUES

This story can be used with all of the lesson plans.

The Story of Three Friends: ARE WE REALLY SO DIFFERENT?

Frannie, Manny, and Danny have been friends since they were born.

Everybody called them the Three Musketeers. Their families were close and shared Shabbat dinners together every week.

In 1987, Frannie became legally blind. She could see out of the side of her eyes, but when she looked straight ahead, all she saw was a bunch of blurry dots. Thankfully, Danny was in her classes every year and would offer his arm so he could guide her to make sure she didn't fall or bang into anything or anyone.

Their senior year of High School was about to start and then, after graduation, they'd all be going into the army! They were excited! Frannie had spent the previous summer in Jerusalem working at a camp for blind children. Her vision had gotten worse, and she found herself bumping into all sorts of things. She decided to get a white cane and worked with a mobility instructor who taught her how to get around. She learned when you use a white cane, you've got to "sweep" the area in front of you to find obstacles. Then, if you hit something, you need to figure out what it is and how to deal with it.

The friends had not seen each other all summer, and tonight they met at their favorite restaurant. The boys were surprised to see Frannie walking toward them using a cane. "Sorry for being a little late, I'm still trying to get used to navigating around with *this* thing," she explained, pointing to her white cane.

"First, I want to tell you how much I appreciate you both for always treating me as an equal, not like I'm different just because I'm blind. I realize people are uncomfortable coming over to someone like me, and

I'm sure it's partly because of my white cane. I have never felt so isolated or alone in my entire life. One day, I was walking and didn't know there was a pickup truck with a ladder hanging over the back of it parked at the corner. I walked right into the ladder and cut my head. Another time, I walked into a tree branch hanging over the sidewalk and then almost walked into a car stopped at a red light in the middle of the intersection. My cane doesn't help when things are above the ground or stick out over the sidewalk.

I joined a support group for people who are visually impaired and met a woman named Miri who is lucky enough to have a guide dog named Bonnie. We talked about what it's like to use a white cane...how people don't interact with you... how you're dependent on other people. You have to plan your errands around them, not you. She explained once she got Bonnie, (from the United States) she felt like she had freedom again. Her life *completely* changed. Bonnie is also a "people magnet!" People love dogs, and when they see her with Bonnie, they come over to ask if they can pet her and start conversations! That *never* happened before. She said as long as Bonnie isn't "working" people can pet her. But when she's working, Bonnie has to concentrate on her job - which is keeping her safe and avoiding obstacles."

I'm really hoping one day, I'll get a guide dog to help me. But in Israel, it's a crazy process. You've got to travel

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