



## TOP TEN FOLKTALES

Each listing includes the story's source (and link, if possible), origin, summary, tags, and a Big Question that orients the story towards one possible use in Unitarian Universalist worship

### 1. Water Bearer's Garden

source: *UU & Me!*, p. 41

(<http://www.uuabookstore.org/UU-Me-P16961.aspx>)

origin: India

*summary:* A man ferries water in two pots, one of which is cracked and leaks. Over time, though it carries less water to his final destination, it waters the flower garden he has planted along his route, offering great beauty.

**tags:** #imperfection #limitations #acceptance #purpose

★ **The Big Question:** Beyond what is expected of you, what is your real work in the world?

### 2. The Retiring Carpenter

source: Author unknown, available online at [http://](http://www.inspirationpeak.com/cgi-bin/stories.cgi?record=22)

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*summary:* A weary carpenter is commissioned to build one final house before retiring, cuts corners, and is then given the house as a gift.

**tags:** #purpose #integrity #intentionality

★ **The Big Question:** What would help you bring your best self, and full presence, to the tasks before you?

### 3. The Empty Pot/The Emperor's Flowers

source: (retold by Elaine Lindy here: [http://www.storiestogrowby.com/stories/empty\\_pot\\_china.html](http://www.storiestogrowby.com/stories/empty_pot_china.html))

origin: China

*summary:* The Emperor holds a gardening contest and discovers that all but one small child is willing to lie to win. The child's honesty earns him the throne.

**tags:** #humility #courage

★ **The Big Question:** When are you afraid to tell the truth? What helps you tell it anyway?

### 4. Water, Not Wine

source: *Doorways to the Soul*, ed. Elisa Davy Pearmain, p. 66

★ full multigenerational service available: <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/complete-service/what-will-you-bring-feast> (in *Story, Song and Spirit*, by Erika Hewitt, p. 1)

origin: Africa and China

*summary:* When the whole community is invited to a feast and all they need to bring is wine, one man reasons that if he contributes only water no one will notice. Unfortunately, many others have the same plan.

**tags:** #community #accountability

★ **The Big Question:** How do our choices and behavior change when we understand that our actions matter?

### 5. The Three Questions

source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Three\\_Questions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Three_Questions)

(Also popularized in the picture book by Jon Muth)

origin: Tolstoy

*summary:* A wise man helps a king interpret his lived experience to determine the answers to three significant moral questions.

**tags:** #morality #mindfulness #kindness

★ **The Big Question:** What helps you remember to be present and kind, giving the gift of your attention to the matter or person at hand?

### 6. Buried Treasure

source: *Doorways to the Soul*, ed. Elisa Davy Pearmain, p. 29

origin: Sufi

*summary:* Four lazy brothers are excited by their dying father's claim that there is buried treasure in their fields. The treasure they find is even more sustaining than they expected.

**tags:** #working together #effort #sustainability

★ **The Big Question:** Where is the best, most sustaining place to put your energies?

### 7. Rabbi on the Train

source: *Yom Kippur Readings: Inspiration, Information and Contemplation*, by Dov Peretz Elkins and Arthur Green, p. 77

[https://books.google.com/books?id=oSKSa\\_NhYZMC&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=heschel+story+rabbi+train+forgiveness&source=bl&ots=HtCpgTAXo1&sig=riL1HJpVVv2LMe54jFVII8c9dIA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=19GBVYB7gdf4AcuqgagO&ved=0CDcQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=heschel%20story%20rabbi%20train%20forgiveness&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=oSKSa_NhYZMC&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=heschel+story+rabbi+train+forgiveness&source=bl&ots=HtCpgTAXo1&sig=riL1HJpVVv2LMe54jFVII8c9dIA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=19GBVYB7gdf4AcuqgagO&ved=0CDcQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=heschel%20story%20rabbi%20train%20forgiveness&f=false)

*summary:* Two travelers deride a poor man on a train only to find out that he is actually a well-regarded rabbi they were traveling to visit. When they beg his forgiveness, he tells them forgiveness is not his to give and directs them back to the poor man they insulted.

origin: Abraham Joshua Heschel

*summary:* Two travelers deride a poor man on a train only to find out that he is actually a well-regarded rabbi they were traveling to visit. When they beg his forgiveness, he tells them forgiveness is not his to give and directs them back to the poor man they insulted.

**tags:** #forgiveness #assumptions

★ **The Big Question:** How do you make amends when you've missed the mark? What are the conditions that make forgiveness possible?

### 8. Leave Your Name on the Door

source: *Doorways to the Soul*, ed. Elisa Davy Pearmain, p. 10

origin: Middle East

*summary:* In frustration over a missed appointment with Nasrudin, a man leaves a note for “Stupid Oaf.” Nasrudin finds the note and seeks out the man, saying he was reminded of the appointment when he saw the man’s name on his door.

**tags:** #anger #judgement

★ **The Big Question:** What steps can you take to keep your anger from coming back to haunt you?

### 9. The Caged Bird

source: Available online: <http://www.live-education.com/Curriculum/SampleLesson?lesson=19>

origin: Rumi

*summary:* a caged bird wins her freedom through the clever assistance of a faraway relative

**tags:** #solidarity #freedom #oppression

★ **The Big Question:** How can you be mindful of your own collusion in oppressive systems? How can you use your privilege for good?

### 10. The Tree of Sorrows

source: *Doorways to the Soul*, ed. Elisa Davy Pearmain, p. 71  
origin: Jewish

*summary:* People are invited to leave their sorrows in a bundle from the branch of a tree if they agree to take a

bundle. After examining all the other bundles, each retrieves their own bundle after all.

**tags:** #struggle #compassion

★ **The Big Question:** How can you cultivate and maintain a compassionate heart?

