



Listen to the PJ Library Musical CD

The Mitzvah Bus (4s)

By Mister G



Synopsis

This joyous CD uses a variety of musical styles from funk and rap to ska and bossa nova to celebrate Jewish holiday foods and traditions. Mister G, a Latin Grammy award winner, intersperses his tunes about challah, matzah, and Shabbat with sprinklings of Hebrew, Spanish, and Yiddish. His songs melodically describe the pleasures of doing mitzvot and extending kindness to all.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Enhancing the mitzvah (holiday foods) / *Hi-dur mitz-vah* - הדור מְצוּה

Acts of loving kindness / *Ge-mi-lut cha-sa-dim* - גְּמִלוֹת חֶסֶדִים

Hiddur mitzvah / enhancing the mitzvah (holiday foods)

Hiddur mitzvah refers to the practice of elevating a commandment, or *mitzvah*, by using beautiful materials to perform the task. The Talmud, a second century volume of rabbinic law and commentary, encourages individuals to enhance their Shabbat and holiday celebrations by using and/or creating the most magnificent ritual objects and Torah scrolls for their celebrations (Shabbat 133b). Preparing delicious, mouth-watering foods has become an additional way of engaging in hiddur mitzvah and adding to the joy of holiday and life cycle celebrations.

Gemilut chasadim / acts of loving kindness

Judaism cites *gemilut chasidim*, acts of loving kindness, as one of the three pillars that support the world (*Pirkei Avot* 1:2). *Gemilut chasidim* refers to benevolent acts that are performed without an expectation of receiving a reward. Examples are visiting the sick, comforting mourners, and burying the dead (Shabbat 127a). Although acts of loving kindness are to be performed without ulterior motives, biblical scholars note that kindness can reap indirect rewards, such as creating stronger, more tightly knit communities and bringing the doer a sense of satisfaction, (Describing the joy that comes from performing acts of kindness, Mister G sings, “There’s nothing that makes me feel better inside than helping others and being kind.”)

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?

In the Classroom / Centers

- ✧ **Hiddur mitzvah/enhancing the mitzvah/holiday foods:** Download and laminate pictures of the various foods mentioned in songs “Challah-lalala,” “Matzah on My Mind,” “Latkes for Breakfast,” and “Shabbat Shalom.” Display these pictures along with scarves, streamers, rhythm sticks and other musical instruments in your **music corner**. Encourage children to hold the appropriate picture cards as they create joyous dances and stories to accompany each song.
- ✧ **Hiddur mitzvah/enhancing the mitzvah/holiday foods:** “Challah-lalala,” “Matazah on My Mind,” “Latkes for Breakfast,” and “Shabbat Shalom” can be used as the inspiration for **cooking projects**. Try baking challah, *sufganiyot* (jelly donuts) or the other foods mentioned in these songs. Be sure to play the appropriate song in the background, as your budding chefs prepare their holiday delicacies.
- ✧ **Gemilut chasidim/acts of loving kindness:** What acts of kindness or *mitzvot* (plural of mitzvah) can your students perform for others in your school community? Sing or play “The Mitzvah Bus” as you take a **journey around your school** looking for acts of kindness and mitzvot to do, such as greeting staff in the hallway, picking up trash, or bringing a fresh baked snack to share with another classroom.
- ✧ **Gemilut chasidim/acts of loving kindness:** Using good manners and prefacing requests with the word *bevakasha* (please) is a way of showing kindness to others. Try singing “Bevakasha” as you rearrange the classroom **job chart** and assign new classroom responsibilities to each student.
- ✧ **Hints:** Play songs one at a time instead of letting the CD play in its entirety as background music. This way you can focus on the value or activity in each song. Learn one Hebrew word each week, and find ways to use this word throughout the day, every day.



Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?
How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about musical inspiration



There are so many ways that music enhances the early childhood experience. Let us know how you used the music in this CD. Did one tune become your class theme song? Did you use a melody to inspire an art project or enhance a story? Perhaps you incorporated a song into your morning prayer ritual.

Please share with all of us in our next newsletter! PJGtS@hgf.org

