

## Read the PJ Library Book

### It's a Mitzvah, Grover! (3's)

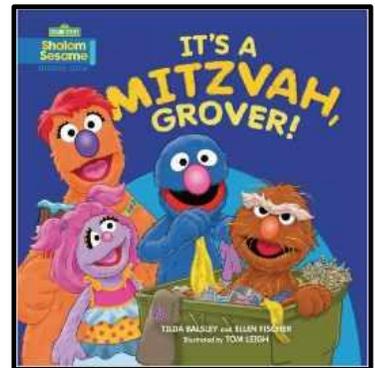
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#### Synopsis

Grover is visiting Israel and learning about *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. A storm makes a mess of the playground, and it needs repair. Grover and his new Israeli friends discover there is a *mitzvah*, or good deed, for everyone to do in the playground. The friends clean, fix, and paint the playground the colors of the beautiful things they see in Israel. Even Moishe Oofnik the Grouch does a mitzvah, by separating the recyclables from the trash!



## Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Commandment/Good deeds - *Mitz-vot* - מצוות

Repairing the World - *Ti-kun O-lam* - תיקון עולם

Do not destroy/waste - *Bal Tash-chit* - בל תשחית

**Commandments/good deeds – Mitzvot.** *Mitzvot* is the plural of the Hebrew word *mitzvah*, meaning commandment, and it refers to the 613 precepts and rules commanded by God in the Torah. “All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply...” (Deut. 8:1). There are positive commandments, such as “Honor your mother and father” (Exodus 20:12), and negative commandments, such as “do not steal” (Exodus 20:15). Some commandments are ethical in nature, as in “do not cheat your fellow” (Lev 19:13), and some mitzvot are ritual, such as hanging a mezuzah on the door (Deut. 6:9). Another class of mitzvot developed, based on the collective understanding of centuries of rabbinic scholars. These mitzvot include customs and the general directive to become good human beings, i.e. doing good deeds.

**Repairing the world - *Tikkun Olam*.** The Hebrew phrase *Tikkun Olam* literally means "repairing the world," and we often use it to refer to the pursuit of social action and justice. The phrase gained widespread popularity through the *Kabbalah*, Jewish mysticism. Kabbalistic teachings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century suggest some of God's divine light was contained in vessels. As our world became "broken" through misdeeds, the vessels shattered and shards of divine light dispersed. Humanity's job, therefore, is to gather the broken shards and collect this light. In other words, if we do *mitzvot*, good deeds, we can repair the world. *Tikkun olam* includes physical repair as well as spiritual and emotional healing.



**Do not destroy/waste – *Bal tashchit*.** The concept of protecting the earth comes from the warning that during a wartime siege of a city, "you shall not destroy (*lo tashchit*) its trees by forcing an ax against them; for you may eat of them..." (Deuteronomy 20:19). The concept expanded to include a ban against destroying anything that might still have some use or purpose. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, 19<sup>th</sup> century leader of the Jewish Orthodox movement, instructed, "Regard things as God's property and use them with a sense of responsibility for wise human purposes. Destroy nothing! Waste nothing! (Horeb, Jewish book of philosophy, Chapter 56, Section 401).

## Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

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

### In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Good deeds:** In this book Grover and company do a mitzvah by creating purple paint, knowing it will make their friend Avigail happy. Help children understand this concept, by labeling behaviors you do to please others. For example: "We will have pretzels with **snack** today, because Samantha loves pretzels," or "Let's sing Liam's favorite song during **music time**."
- ☆ **Good deeds:** Doing a mitzvah can be as simple as saying hello. Take a mitzvah walk with your students. Visit the office staff and/or your clergy and say, "Hello! Have a great day!"
- ☆ **Tikkun olam:** What better place to conduct a tikkun olam project than to beautify your school. Start a **garden** around the outside of your school. Perhaps families will contribute small outdoor plants in the spring or bulbs in the fall.
- ☆ **Tikkun olam:** Have a fix-it week in the classroom. Enlist children's help to reorganize the **block corner**, tape together torn books in your **library**, and remove or repair broken toys.
- ☆ **Do not destroy/waste:** In our story, recycling is Moishe Oofnick's way of doing a mitzvah. Add clearly labeled recycle bins to your **snack area**, and encourage children to carefully sort and recycle their disposables. Place smaller recycle bins in the **dramatic play area**, so children can remember to recycle even while playing house or restaurant.
- ☆ **Do not destroy/waste:** Take the old crayon stubs (remember to remove the paper wrapper) from your **art center**, and bake them in fancy-shaped muffin tins or silicon molds to create new beautiful crayons. There are lots of ideas on Pinterest:



<http://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=crayon%20stubs>



## Bridging Home and School

### It's a Fixer-Upper

Set aside a day for fixing and picnicking in your school's playground. Invite families and staff to work together to clean, paint, and plant. Challenge families to create a planter out of an unusual object, such as an old plastic boot or row of teacups. Join for a festive meal to celebrate your accomplishments.



### Make Someone Happy

Tell your families you have been exploring the theme of doing mitzvot to make others happy. Send home this fill-in-the-blank conversation starter: *I like to make people happy, and I like to see you smile, so I will...* Suggest families use this as a brainstorming game to come up with mitzvah ideas for friends and family. Hopefully they will share their ideas with the class.

## Family Engagement at Home

### It's A Wonderful Day in the Neighborhood

Spring is a time when many of our neighbors are outside working in their gardens. Encourage families to take a walk around outside and notice which friends could use help bending, raking, collecting, bagging or digging. Offer a neighbor an hour or so of help. The children and parents will be beautifying the neighborhood and doing a wonderful mitzvah.

# Share

your stories and experiences with everyone.

**What happened?**

**How can the learning go deeper?**

### Tell us a story... about doing mitzvot

Brainstorm and chart examples of mitzvot that you can follow at school. Add photos of your students enacting each mitzvah. Call attention to a mitzvah while it is being performed, and add it to the chart. For example: *Joey fell and scraped his knee today. Greg immediately got him a bandage. I think that counts as bikkur cholim, visiting – or in this case caring for – the sick.*

(See the link below for a great chart of mitzvot you might adapt for your students.)

Share with all of us on our private Facebook group page! <http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook>

# More

resources and websites for inspiration

Tikkun Olam-Shalom Sesame: <http://www.shalomsesame.org/parents-and-educators/jewish-values/making-a-difference>

Chart of mitzvot for children: <http://biblebeltbalabusta.com/mitzvah-chart/>

Shavuot on Pinterest: <http://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/shavuot-books-and-activities/>

