



Read the PJ Library Book

The Mitzvah Magician (4's)

By Linda Elovitz Marshall

Illustrated by Christiane Engel

Published by Kar-Ben Publishing



Synopsis

Gabriel begins his magical career by spilling milk and poking his sister.

Gabriel's mom explains that good magicians try to make people happy by doing *mitzvot*, good deeds. Gabriel re-thinks his approach to magic and becomes the Mitzvah Magician. Suddenly the kitchen becomes clean, his toys are organized, and everyone eats cookies. How does he do it? He uses new magic words – do try this at home!

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Good deeds - *Mitz-vot* - מִצְוֹת

Responsibility - *ach-ra-yut* - אַחֲרָיוּת

Honoring our parents - *Ki-bud av v'eim* - כְּבוֹד אָב וְאִים

Good Deeds – Mitzvot. The word *mitzvah* (*mitzvot* is plural) is translated as “commandment,” though we take *mitzvot* to mean good deeds as well. Jewish tradition states Moses received a total of 613 commandments. Numbers have special meaning in Jewish numerology or *gematria*. Rabbinic sages divided the *mitzvot* into positive commandments (remember the Sabbath) and negative commandments (do not steal). There are 248 positive *mitzvot* corresponding to the number of bones and organs in the body, and 365 negative *mitzvot* corresponding to the number of days in the year. Any way you do the math, it is clear that the idea of *mitzvot* is to make us better human beings.

Responsibility – Ach-ra-yut. *Pirkei Avot*, the Ethics of Our Ancestors, tells us “the freedom of choice is given” to us by God [3:19]. Simi Peters, a modern feminist Jewish scholar, teaches that free will is the foundation of all human responsibility. If we have the ability to choose our actions, we must take responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Responsibility in Jewish thought is a moral obligation to consider the needs of others as well as the effect our actions have on our community and those around us.



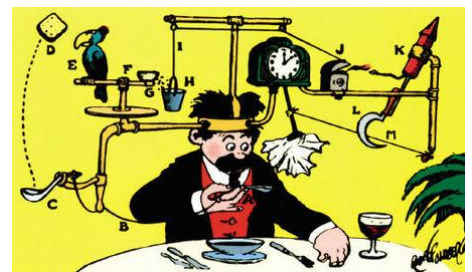
Honoring our parents – kibur av v'em. God tells Moses to direct the Israelites to “be holy, because I, the Lord your God am holy” [Leviticus 19:2-3]. God’s first instruction on being holy is for each person to revere his mother and father. Ancient rabbis taught that we revere our parents when we do not sit in their chair, speak for them, or contradict what they say. Modern rabbis say that an active approach to honoring our parents includes doing good deeds in their name.

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, Gabriel thinks about the ways in which he can do mitzvah magic. Take some time at **morning meeting** to ask children how they can make life pleasant for one another in the classroom. Teach the Mensch song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t67OiurE0BU#t=20>
- ☆ **Good deeds:** Teach the magic words “One-wish, two-wish, Jew-wish.” Assign a daily or weekly Mitzvah Magician as part of your classroom **job chart**. Work with the child to come up with the mitzvah magic of the day. Some suggestions are delivering a treat to the office staff, singing a song in the toddler room, or making a “get well” telephone call to a classmate who is home.
- ☆ **Responsibility:** Enlist the children’s help in thinking of common problems and their solutions. Then help them create **artistic representations** of “What do to when...” (You spill the juice, a basket of crayons falls, or the blocks are in disarray.) Use photography or collage to create this essential reference tool and hang it in the classroom.
- ☆ **Responsibility:** Responsibility is related to the concept of cause and effect. A physical way to interpret cause and effect is by creating a Rube Goldberg machine. Rube Goldberg was an inventor and cartoonist who made complex chain reaction machines to achieve simple tasks. (Does anyone remember the game *Mousetrap*?) This is a fun way to experiment with taking responsibility, or cause and effect, in the **math and science center**. For a simple machine you can make with young children watch this 15 second video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7gofHhGXT0>
- ☆ **Honoring our parents:** A great way to honor the parents of your school is to let them know when their children do mitzvot; parents love to *kvell* (proudly rejoice) when their children do something wonderful. Keep a supply of “honor cards” in your **literacy center** ready to fill out and decorate. When a student does a mitzvah, such as comforts a friend or cleans up a mess, write an explanation on the card. For example: *Rebecca did a mitzvah today in your honor. She helped Sam pick up his puzzle pieces.* Allow her to address the card to her parents and decorate the card.



Bridging Home and School

Magic Mitzvah Fair/Picnic

Invite your families to gather for an after school or camp picnic. Set up a few tables with information or activities relating to mitzvot, such as a table where foods magically disappear into a bag for a local food pantry. Perhaps you will have a throne where mom or dad takes the seat of honor for photo ops. Invite representatives from local charitable organizations to talk about family-friendly volunteer opportunities.

Mitzvah Magic Morning

Ask one or two parents to help you and your students prepare a special morning treat for your families. As parents and care-givers arrive, allow children to offer them a flower, cup of juice or home-made yogurt and granola parfait. Have a magical day!



Family Engagement at Home

Make your own magic

What type of mitzvah magic can your families do at home? Send a list of suggestions home along with a school-made magic wand. Will they choose to surprise a family member with a favorite treat? Will they Skype with far-away relatives and make smiles magically appear? Will children help water the garden or clear dishes after dinner? You might be able to create your classroom's Book of Magical Mitzvot with shared stories and spells.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about everyday magic

How are the children in your classroom beginning to understand the effects of doing good deeds? Let us know when you notice children are internalizing the desire to do the right thing. For example: *Our class used to add a puff ball into a jar each time we noticed a child doing a mitzvah. We planned to have a celebration when the jar was full. The children were very focused on those puff balls! Now I see children are in the habit of helping one another, and we celebrate a happy classroom all of the time.*

Please submit your stories for our monthly eNewsletter at PIGtS@hgf.org

More resources and websites for inspiration

5-year-old's machine: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=2OhDG4Kxr8U

Honoring parents: <http://tinyurl.com/kveller-respect-parents>

Kids and responsibility: <http://www.parents.com/kids/responsibility/values/its-not-my-fault/>

Mensch Song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t67OiurE0BU#t=20>

