



THE MAGIC POMEGRANATE

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Three clever, adventuresome brothers search the world over for something unique, use what they find to help save a princess, and then vie for the privilege of marrying her.

Folktales play a central role in Jewish literature. They are a powerful means of remembering the past and of transmitting valuable lessons and history to the next generation. This tale, *The Magic Pomegranate*, while not religious in content, points to Jewish ideals through the Portrayal of the brothers within the story. Each brother uses his “unusual gift,” and after seeing the princess’ need, not one of them hesitates to help her. That one brother selflessly shared the pomegranate for her benefit shows the Jewish folktales’ role in educating about our responsibilities to others.

Encourage your children to create a folktale in which the storyline leads to helping someone. You might suggest that they include a Judaic item—such as *matzah* or *Shabbat* candlesticks—as a reminder of Jewish values the tale exemplifies.

SACRED OBLIGATIONS

Mitzvot, or sacred obligations, set behavioral boundaries and are found in the Torah—the first five books of the Bible. The 613 *mitzvot* found in the Torah contain both positive expectations and unacceptable behaviors on a variety of subjects. It is common today to think of a

mitzvah as a “good deed” that is done to provide help for others.

How can your children learn to recognize situations where there is need and appropriate ways to help?—By actively watching for opportunities to serve. To understand and keep this in mind, consider the following questions for family discussion:

- Why are *mitzvot* necessary?
- Is a “small” *mitzvah* important?
- Can everyone perform *mitzvot*?
- Will performing a *mitzvah* make the world a better place?
- Should we expect a reward for doing a *mitzvah*? It is said in *Pirke Avot* (The Ethics of the Fathers) that the reward for a *mitzvah* is another *mitzvah*.
- Will performing *mitzvot* make us happier people? Pj

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