A Friend Indeed
Mr. Tempkin and Marky are pretty wise guys. Says who? Says Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Ancestors, an ancient collection of rabbinic wisdom). Right in the very first chapter, readers are encouraged to “acquire for yourself a friend.” Mr. Tempkin and Marky talk, enjoy the outdoors, have adventures, and show up when they need each other most. There’s nothing better than knowing that someone understands you and is there for you. In Jewish tradition, it’s even customary to pair up when studying religious texts. These study buddies are called hevruta, which is Hebrew for “friendship.” Friendship enhances everything! To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/mrtempkin.

Ages and Stages
Do you have a friend who is much older or much younger than you? We can learn a lot from people at different stages in life. The Mishnah (a collection of rabbinic law and debate) has a road map of appropriate activities for each age. For example, 13 years old is the age of a bar mitzvah, when kids assume responsibility for keeping mitzvot (plural of mitzvah, Hebrew for “commandment” or good deed). Marky isn’t 13 yet, but as his dad points out, he’s performing a mitzvah by helping his friend. Fun fact: The Mishnah also says that by age 80, one can be fearless. Maybe that’s why Mr. Tempkin climbs that tree!

Body and Soul
Mr. Tempkin knows what he needs to stay happy and healthy. He tells Marky that there are four things that keep him going in his old age: walking to synagogue every day, smelling roses, listening to the birds, and spending time with his young friend. It’s a good reminder that being healthy is not just a matter of taking care of the body. We have to feed and exercise the soul, too. Feeling connected to the people around us actually improves our physical health. When community, nature, and friendship feed our spirits, the rest usually falls into place.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS
Do your friends help you feel happy? How?
What can you do to help a friend or family member?
Why is it important to learn from other people?