



## THE BAGEL KING

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*Every Sunday, Eli's zaida picks up bagels at Merv's Bakery for his friends. But when Zaida hurts his tuches, he can't make the trip to Merv's. Will he and his friends still have Sunday bagels?*

### JEWISH CONCEPTS

In Jewish culture, to be called a *mensch* – Yiddish for “good person” – is a high compliment. A *mensch* might be someone who gives generously to charity, a person who provides loving care to an elderly relative, anyone fair and honest in business dealings...the list goes on and on. The word “*mensch*” conjures up an image of a person who is solid, dependable, considerate, and kind in practical, down-to-earth ways.

In *The Bagel King*, Eli is given the opportunity to be a *mensch* when his Zayda (Yiddish for “grandfather”) suffers an injury. Eli faithfully performs the *mitzvah* (Hebrew for “commandment” or “good deed”) of *bikkur cholim*, Hebrew for visiting the sick. Bringing food, company, and comfort to someone who is ill or injured is a deeply valued good deed in Jewish life. According to the Talmud (the core collection of rabbinic writings), by visiting the sick, we literally help them feel better: Every visit removes 1/60th of their illness! That may not be scientifically proven, but visiting sick friends certainly helps them feel valued and loved.

Eli also proves himself a *mensch* by taking on a special task that Zayda is unable to do during his recovery. His kind and thoughtful actions show us that being a *mensch* can be as simple as seeing a need and stepping in to fill it.

### USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

As parents, we deeply desire to see our children grow up to be *menschen*: good people. Start up a family conversation about what it means to be a good person. Make it a game at the dinner table and encourage each family member to share one way in which they acted like a *mensch* that day. You might also ask if anyone would like to share a situation in which they wish they had acted differently, and work out a plan together for a better experience next time. These consistent reminders of the endless opportunities to be good and do good in the world will help your kids to more readily see and act on them in their own daily lives.

Choosing to do good is always easier when you can do a task that you enjoy. Ask your family how they would most like to help others, and then look for opportunities for them to act. Does someone like to cheer up friends when they're not feeling well? Encourage him or her to make a get-well care package to take to a sick friend or relative. How about being kind to animals? Perhaps a friend's pet could use an extra walk. Giving *tzedakah* (charity)? Help your child to create a special *tzedakah* box and collect coins for a charity of his or her choice. Your children will love being *menschen* by helping others through these enjoyable activities!