

# Even Higher

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## Who inspires you?

### A Fresh Start

It's no accident that the rabbi of Nemirov disappears in the days just prior to Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. This is a time to begin the difficult work of reflection and of repairing what's broken in our lives. We do this work so that when Rosh Hashanah and then Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) arrives—when the “gates” close and the “book” is sealed, as it says in this story—we can make a fresh start. To learn more, visit [pjlibrary.org/evenhigher](http://pjlibrary.org/evenhigher).

### A Heavenly Folktale

Where is the rabbi of Nemirov *really* going? This is the puzzle posed by the great Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz, who originally wrote this folktale. When the skeptical Litvak secretly follows the rabbi, he's trying to disprove the idea that rabbi is visiting heaven. But here's the irony: When the young man discovers that the rabbi doesn't literally go to heaven, he turns into a believer—a believer in the power of *chesed*, Hebrew for “loving-kindness.” What could be more heavenly?

### Shtetl Superheroes

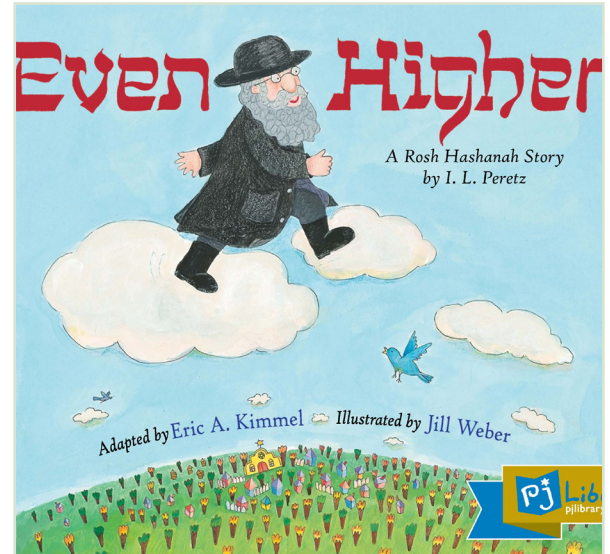
The townsfolk of Nemirov think their rabbi is such “a great and holy man,” they even believe he can visit heaven. Rabbis were the superheroes of the *shtetl* (Yiddish for “small village”), but one couldn't expect the rabbi to do everything! The phrase *kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* (Hebrew for “all of Israel is responsible for each other”) definitely held true in the *shtetl*: Everyone looked out for one another. When we take care of others in our community, we are all superheroes—then and now.

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**T**he people of Nemirov think their rabbi visits heaven. What do they think heaven is like?

**W**hy do you think the Litvak doesn't believe the townsfolk?

**W**hat acts of kindness can you do as you prepare for a new year?



## HANDS ON!

### Visit a Senior Center

The days of the *shtetl* may be over, but we still live in communities and we still depend on one another—sometimes more than we think. Follow the example of the rabbi of Nemirov and visit a senior center, where residents sometimes feel lonely and isolated. (You don't have to do it in disguise, the way the rabbi does!) Here are ideas of things to do:

- 1 Perform a short show. Many retirement homes have pianos; rehearse a few songs and put on a revue.
- 2 Bring a board game or a deck of cards and invite someone to play.
- 3 Offer to read some of your favorite picture books with a resident. (This book would be a great choice!)



Whatever you decide to do, have fun. As this story says: “Fetch a bottle! Bring a glass! Life is well worth living.”

