



A HAT FOR MRS. GOLDMAN

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Mrs. Goldman is always knitting for everyone else in the neighborhood, and young Sophie helps her out by making pom-poms. But one day Sophie decides she wants to go beyond pom-poms and knit something for Mrs. Goldman, too. Who knew knitting could be so tricky? But Sophie gets an idea that ends up with a one-of-a-kind hat for her friend.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

In this delightful story, Mrs. Goldman introduces a Yiddish word and a Jewish concept to her young friend. Sophia's worry about Mrs. Goldman's cold keppie (head) is charming and natural, and her desire to make Mrs. Goldman a special hat embodies both the meaning and the spirit of the concept of *mitzvah*.

The literal meaning of the Hebrew word *mitzvah* is commandment, but the generally accepted sense is that of a good deed. The emphasis is on deeds—not on positive thoughts or wishes, but on conscious acts of empathy and kindness.

The term *mitzvah* comes from the root word *tzavta*, which means connection. Some would say that acting with kindness strengthens one's connection with God. For others, doing a *mitzvah* forges a deeper connection with other human beings. No matter what your spiritual beliefs, a *mitzvah* always requires action.

It is not a *mitzvah* simply to wish your friend's head were warmer. Nor is it a *mitzvah* to worry that she might be uncomfortable or catch a cold without a hat. It might be a *mitzvah* to purchase a hat for your bare-headed friend. But making her a special hat with twenty beautiful red pom-poms? Now **that's** a *mitzvah*!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In this story, Mrs. Goldman tells Sophia "Keeping keppies warm is our *mitzvah*." You might try knitting with your child, using the instructions at the end of the book. As you knit together, discuss the idea of having a special *mitzvah*. Ask, for example: "Do you think knitting is always a *mitzvah*? What makes it a *mitzvah* in the story? What could our family do as our *mitzvah*?"

At this age, children are beginning to focus less on themselves and starting to show more concern for others. Here are some *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*) your child could undertake, along with the commandment each act of kindness fulfills:

- Giving food or clothing to the homeless
(Respecting those in need)
- Passing along cherished toys or games
(Do not covet)
- Recycling or composting
(Do not destroy needlessly)
- Sharing toys with a friend or sibling
(Peace in the home)

You can find other examples by searching online, along with the words "mitzvah chart." Or create your own *mitzvah* chart by listing values that are important to your family and matching them with actions you and your child can take to exemplify those values.