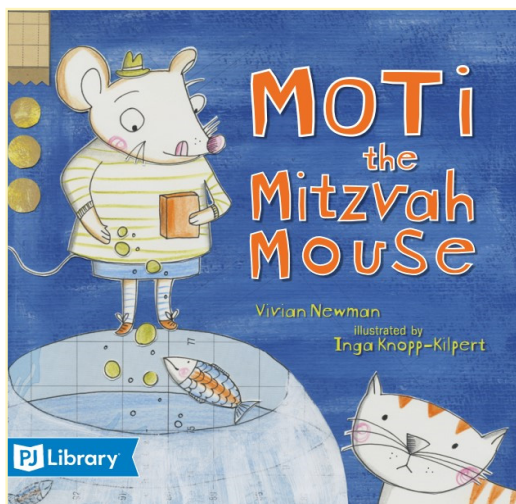


Moti the Mitzvah Mouse

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{ Who inspires you to do good? }

Good Deeds, Indeed

The Hebrew word mitzvah literally means “commandment,” but is often understood as any good deed. The Torah (first five books of the Bible) is filled with mitzvot (plural of mitzvah), including many that Moti performs in this book – caring for animals (tza’ar ba’alei chayim), not wasting resources (bal tashchit), returning lost objects (hashavat aveida), giving money to good causes (tzedakah), and keeping Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. Little wonder that Moti’s so busy! To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/moti.

Just Do It

According to the Torah, the most important part of any mitzvah is actually doing it. Jewish practice is very action oriented. At the same time, the spirit you bring to these actions – a desire to help others, a concern for others’ well-being, joy in making a difference, a focus on doing a good job – counts, too. That’s called kavanah, or intention. Moti seems to be good at both the action part and the intention part.

Surprise!

Moti clearly enjoys the element of surprise. The Bermans will wake up in the morning to discover that someone has been busy during the night. Often, doing a mitzvah in secret is praised -- the medieval scholar Maimonides encouraged people to give charity anonymously, because it preserves recipients’ dignity. But doing a mitzvah in plain sight is also fine, because when we see someone doing a mitzvah, we may want to do one, too. That’s called mitzvah goreret mitzvah – one good mitzvah inspires another.

HANDS ON!

Make a Placemat for Shabbat

You can make a placement for Shabbat like Moti does. Moti uses crayons to decorate his placemat, but how about cutting up old magazines and making a collage? This is an example of hiddur mitzvah -- making a mitzvah more beautiful.

Supplies:
paper
scissors
old magazines
glue stick
crayons and/or stickers (optional)
clear packaging tape

Cut pictures out from old magazines (adults can help with this job). Use the glue stick to create a collage. Pictures can be spaced out or overlap -- there’s no wrong way to do it. Fill in white space with crayon and stickers if you like, then cover the entire placemat with packaging tape to waterproof it. Shabbat Shalom!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHAT helpful things does Moti do when everyone else is asleep?

WHY do you think Pepper, the cat, leaves a piece of cheese outside Moti’s mouse hole?

WOULD you like to have a mitzvah mouse in your house? How do you think he or she would help your family?