



THAT'S A MITZVAH

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Doing good deeds and mitzvot is fun! Join this energetic meerkat as he describes everyday kindnesses that even the youngest among us can perform.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

The Hebrew word *mitzvah* is often understood as a good deed, but it literally means “commandment.” The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) lists 613 *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*) that include a wide variety of things Jews are expected to do (for example, observe the Sabbath) and not do (for example, not steal). Many of the *mitzvot* in the Torah are religious laws, but the 613 commandments also include social obligations that detail the ways people take care of each other in a community -- feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, caring for the earth, welcoming guests into the home, and giving *tzedakah* (charity) to those in need. Many of these are referred to as *gemilut chasadim*, acts of lovingkindness, and are often activities young children can take part in.

Many of the things we encourage children to do every day – share their toys, be kind to a new playmate, even say “bless you” when someone sneezes – are based in *mitzvot*! As you read about the *mitzvot* in this book, you and your children will think of other ways to “do a *mitzvah*” for people you care about. Performing even the smallest acts of kindness can make a big difference to those around us – and can inspire others to do the same. Now *that’s* a *mitzvah*.