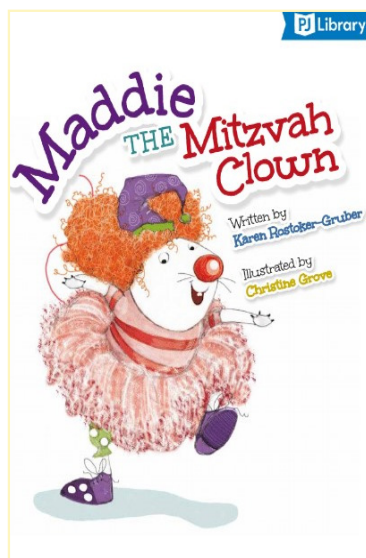


## Maddie the Mitzvah Clown

written by  
Karen Rostoker-Gruber

illustrated by  
Christine Grove



### What's your special mitzvah?

#### Always Happy

Most of us have good days and bad days. But Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, a famous 19th-century Hasidic teacher, famously said, "It's a great mitzvah (commandment, or good deed) to be happy always." Happy always? That would take serious inner work, but there's nothing wrong with getting a little happiness help along the way. That's where mitzvah clowns come in! If it's a great mitzvah to be happy, it must be an equally great mitzvah to make people happy. Maddie (aka Squeakers) and Giggles enthusiastically take on this mitzvah by bringing joy, laughter, and genuine caring to those who are in need of it: hospital patients and senior home residents. Really, who can be sad while wearing a balloon hat?

### HANDS ON!

#### Make a Mitzvah Clown Snack

When someone needs cheering up, sometimes a healthy snack is just the thing.

##### Ingredients:

- Half a bagel or English muffin
- Cream cheese
- Cut-up veggies

Spread cream cheese on the bagel or muffin. Now create a happy face using the veggies. You can use carrot slices or olives for eyes, broccoli or green beans as hair, a tomato wedge or slice of red pepper for a mouth -- get creative. Now that's a mitzvah!

#### Incognito Do-Gooders

Costumes are such fun! But for shy Maddie, becoming a mitzvah clown isn't just about the fun of it; dressing up also provides her with a safe way to express herself at first. While Maddie builds her social confidence, she also carries on the longstanding Jewish tradition of doing good deeds anonymously. The Jewish philosopher Maimonides taught that giving anonymously is tzedakah (charity) in its highest form. When we give to good causes without attaching our name to the deed, the focus is on the goodness rather than ourselves. The next time you're looking to help someone, see what you can do undercover ... and experience the pure mitzvah joy.

#### Pass it On

Giggles mentors Maddie in the ways of being a mitzvah clown, which is a fun and meaningful experience for Maddie. But the impact doesn't stop there — Maddie goes on to bring happiness to so many hospital patients and senior residents through what Giggles teaches her. This is what the Jewish value of *I'dor vador* — Hebrew for "from generation to generation," handing down knowledge and traditions — is all about. We can think about this idea with all our interactions, too: What goodness can I share with the person in front of me, in the hope that they'll pass it on to someone else? Let's take advantage of our highly connected world and pass the goodness on and on.

### TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**DO** you notice how color is used in this book? Why do you think the illustrator used color in this way?

**HAVE** you ever felt shy or scared to talk to others? What did you do?

**WHAT** can you do to make someone smile or laugh?