

Sara Finds a Mitzva

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When is it hard to do the right thing?

Good Deeds Indeed

The word *mitzvah* (or *mitzva*) means “commandment” in Hebrew. There are 613 *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*) named in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, and they cover all sorts of ground: food, holidays, ritual observance, the treatment of animals, and ways of caring for the Earth, among many other things. One way to think of *mitzvot* is that they provide guidelines for people to live by. Any kind or generous act can be referred to as a *mitzvah* — which is why the word is often understood to mean simply “a good deed.” To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/saramitzva.

Finders Keepers?

Returning lost objects — in Hebrew, *hashavat aveidah* (or in traditional Eastern and Central European pronunciation, *hashavas aveida*) — is an important *mitzvah*. When we come across a lost object, it’s our job to help reunite it with its owner, just as Bubby explains to Sara. (So much for “finders keepers, losers weepers.”) That can involve detective skills! In Jewish law, it’s usually up to the owners to prove that the object belongs to them, but in this story, Sara does all the work — even though she’d like to keep that duck. Sometimes doing the right thing can feel hard. Luckily for Sara, it turns out Bubby has a chance to do something kind and generous as well.

Group Project

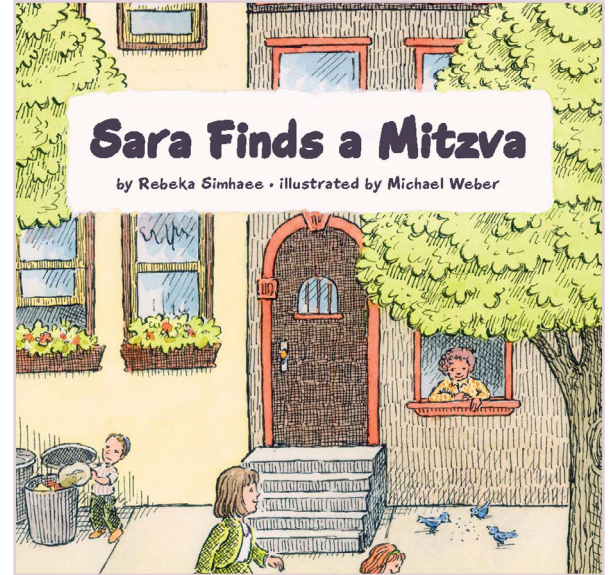
It’s important to do good deeds, but Jewish tradition also asks us to do them with the right attitude. The medieval philosopher Maimonides once described an imaginary “ladder of *tzedakah*” (charitable giving), and the very lowest rung of the ladder is when people give *tzedakah*, but do it unwillingly. Sara’s attitude improves as she learns how important *hashavat aveidah* is to everyone around her — her grandmother, the various shopkeepers, and of course, the child who wants her duck back! The whole community values this *mitzvah*, and that helps Sara feel good about performing it, even before Bubby surprises her granddaughter.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

At first Sara wants to keep the duck for herself. Why does she decide to find the duck’s owner?

How do you think Sara feels when it’s time to give the duck back?

Have you ever found something you wished you could keep? What did you do?



HANDS ON!

Make an ID Collar for Your Favorite Stuffy

Help someone fulfill the *mitzvah* of returning lost objects by making a cute ID collar for your favorite stuffed animal.

Supplies

Decorative duct tape
Permanent marker
Scissors



- 1 Cut a length of duct tape that’s long enough to wrap around your stuffy’s neck.
- 2 Fold the sides of the tape in on themselves lengthwise so that the sticky part is covered.
- 3 Use the marker to write “If lost, call:” with your phone number on the collar.
- 4 Wrap the collar around your stuffy’s neck and use a small piece of extra duct tape to secure it in place.



Now anyone who finds your stuffy can easily perform the *mitzvah* of returning lost objects — and you’ll be reunited with your pal.