



# THE MITZVAH MAGICIAN

Written by Linda Elovitz Marshall

Illustrated by Christine Engel

*In this clever and instructive story, Gabriel's mother suggests to her son that he redirect his naughty behavior toward doing mitzvot (plural of mitzvah). Literally translated as a commandment, a mitzvah is often defined as a good deed. It is a uniquely Jewish way of conceptualizing deeds that show that we care.*

Is there anything sweeter than the bright-eyed look of a preschooler fully immersed in imaginative play? Stuffed animals come to life! Masterpieces are created! The magic wand and top hat emerge from the toy chest and voila, the home is transformed into a world where miracles happen! We delight in this. On occasion, however, the stuffed animals bite, the masterpieces are fashioned with permanent marker on newly painted walls and the magic wand mysteriously ends up making solid contact with a sibling's belly. What then?

The will to create is as fundamental to young children as walking and talking. When their creativity takes a negative turn, parents have the honor and the challenge of redirecting them with love and respect. Our ability to creatively parent is indeed a magical process. After the 5th (or 10th, or 100th) reminder, when our little ones look at us with a glimmer of understanding, then together with our children, we become "mitzvah magicians."

Believe it or not, the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, lists 613 mitzvot. Find some suggestions for exploring a few of them here.

## Play mitzvah make-believe:

- Comfort an "ill" doll or action figure (Mitzvah: Healing the Sick)
- Feed a hungry teddy bear who can't find enough berries to eat (Mitzvah: Feeding the Hungry/ Kindness to Animals)

## Do a mitzvah!

- Call or visit a grandparent or elderly friend (Mitzvah: Caring for the Elderly)
- Invite a new neighbor or friend to come over and play (Mitzvah: Hospitality)

## Opportunities for Discussion:

- Was it fair that Gabriel was sent on a time-out? Explain.
- Did Gabriel really have magical powers? Why or why not?
- Have you ever done a mitzvah? (If your child can't remember, be prepared to remind him/her when he/she performed a loving and kind deed.)