



IT'S A...IT'S A...IT'S A MITZVAH

Written by Liz Suneby & Diane Heiman

Illustrated by Laurel Molk

While literally translated as commandment, mitzvah is often interpreted as good deed. Mitzvah is a commandment, it underscores that working to make the world a better place is something all Jewish people are required to do. That it makes us feel good to help is simply a bonus.

SHOMREI ADAMA

While “being green” seems a fairly recent trend, there are age-old Jewish teachings about caring for our earth. Human beings are considered to be *shomrei adamah*, guardians of the earth. One interpretation of the book of Ecclesiastes reads: God said to Adam, “All that I created I created for you. Consider that, and do not corrupt or desolate My world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you” (Kohelet Rabbah I).

OFFERING FORGIVENESS

The Mitzvah Meerkat identifies the good deed of the beaver, who forgives his friend for having made a mistake. Each year before the Yom Kippur service begins, we ask for forgiveness from others and extend forgiveness to all who may have wronged us. This can be challenging for children and adults alike.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Of all the *mitzvot* (plural of mitzvah) shown in the book, which ones do members of your family already do? Talk about specific examples.

- Which of the mitzvot seem to be the easiest to perform? The hardest?
- What efforts does your family make to care for the earth?
- Ask your child to describe a time he or she was able to forgive a friend or sibling for a mistake made.

Make a mitzvah challenge! How many and which mitzvot can your family perform in a week? a month? Can you find an open space on your refrigerator to list the mitzvot accomplished by your family?