

BOARD OF JEWISH EDUCATION OF GREATER NEW YORK  
TEACHERS' CENTER

"BE A MENSCH" GAME

OBJECT: To collect letter cards to spell the words "BE A MENSCH", while discussing, inquiring, and learning what it means to be a mensch.

DIRECTIONS: For 4 players or teams. Each person or team chooses a different color marker, places it on the starting space marked \_\_\_\_\_, and rolls the die to determine order of play. Each person or team, in turn, throws the die and moves the appropriate number of spaces around the STOP sign game board.

If you land on a question mark, pick up the top question card from the pile, read the dilemma aloud, and choose one of the multiple-choice answers. Discuss your reasoning with the group. If the answer you chose is correct, you collect one letter card. (Correct answers can be found on the answer sheet.)

If you land on a space labeled "ACTION CARDS", pick up the top action card from the pile, read it aloud and follow the directions on the card.

If you land on a space labeled "EXCHANGE LETTERS", you may trade one "BE A MENSCH" card with another player who is willing to trade. For example, if you have an extra "B" card and another player has an extra "M" card, but needs a "B" card, you may trade at this time.

Players travel around the STOP sign game board collecting letter cards. The first person or team to correctly spell out the phrase "BE A MENSCH" is the winner.

22 THE RABBI WHO TAKES SPECIAL CARE TO WELCOME HIS GUESTS

My class visited our Chief Rabbi's Sukkah during the holiday of Sukkot. The Chief Rabbi shared with us some Torah thoughts, and we had a very good time.

But one thing puzzled us very much: the Chief Rabbi himself was the one who offered us seats, cookies and candy, and he went to great length to make us feel welcome.

Is it that:

- a) A Chief Rabbi is excused from having to bother with welcoming people.
- b) Even an important person - such as a Chief Rabbi - has to make sure that people feel welcome in his house.
- c) An important person is to make sure that his visitors feel welcome, only when they are his peers (equals).

3 DO THE POOR HAVE TO GIVE CHARITY?

Before Passover, many came to the Synagogue to contribute to a special fund for the needy - and to thus enable them to celebrate the holiday in a joyous and proper manner.

My father and I also went to the Synagogue and there, we were very surprised by the following: one of the poorest men in the community also came to contribute to the fund for the needy! I asked myself, does everyone have to contribute to charity, even the very poor?

Is it that:

- a) The poor too have to give charity.
- b) The poor are excused from giving charity.
- c) The poor have to contribute only to the Passover fund for the needy.

1 CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

I was first in line at the bus station, and behind me there were many people waiting. It was a very hot day, and it was very hard to wait in line.

Suddenly, I saw an elderly, distinguished-looking gentleman approaching the line. I wanted to ask him to step in front of me, but I didn't know whether that would have been proper behavior.

Is it that:

- a) No one should enter the bus without waiting in line.
- b) There are exceptions - an elderly or a distinguished person may enter the bus without waiting in line.
- c) Only if all the people lined-up agree, may the elderly person board the bus without waiting.
- d) All of the above.

4 STANDING IN LINE

When I came to the bus station, people were already lined up and waiting for the bus. Suddenly, a man came and started to push his way to the head of the line. "Sir, why aren't you waiting in line?" asked one of the people. "The man next to me called out: 'You're robbing me of my place!'"

The word "robbing" infuriated the man, and he said: "Call me whatever you wish, but don't call me a robber - a robber I am not!"

Is it that:

- a) To push one's way to the head of the line is synonymous with robbery.
- b) To push one's way to the head of the line is merely impolite.

## 6 A LOAN VS. CHARITY

Once, when we were studying Jewish law, we discussed loans and charity and some students became involved in an argument.

Rachel insisted that charity is superior to a loan, because charity is not returned. Leborah, on the other hand, insisted that a loan is superior, because it does not shame the poor man. But Moshe thought that both - a loan and charity - are equally important.

Is it that:

- a) Charity is superior to a loan.
- b) A loan is superior to charity.
- c) Both are equally important.

## 7 FEEDING THE ANIMALS

My father and I came back from the Synagogue, after the morning prayer, and my mother told us to eat breakfast.

"I cannot sit down and eat before the dog is fed", said my father. "But," protested my mother, "the food will get cold. Why don't you eat first, and then feed the dog?" "No" said my father, "I must feed the dog first."

Is it that:

- a) One must feed his animals before he himself sits down to eat.
- b) One does not have to feed his animals before he eats.
- c) One must feed the animals before he himself eats, only if the animals are very hungry.

## 5 A LOAN

"Let's cross to the other side of the street", said my father, as we were on our way to one of the stores in our neighborhood. "Why do you want to cross?", I asked, "the store we are going to is on this side!"

"But Jacob is coming toward us", said my father, "and he owes me some money for a very long time, and I don't want to shame him." "Why won't you ask him for the money", I asked "if he owes it to you for a long time?" "Because he doesn't have it", answered my father, "how then can I ask for it?"

Is it that:

- a) One must never request the return of a loan; rather, one should wait for the debt to be returned voluntarily.
- b) It is perfectly proper to request the return of a loan.
- c) If you know that the borrower has no money, you should wait until he is able to return the loan.

## 8 RESCUING A FELLOW MAN

On my way to school, I witnessed the following incident: many people were standing and watching, while one man was being beaten up by someone who was obviously much stronger. "Why don't you do something?", I asked the people around me. "Can't you see that he is dangerous? I'm not willing to endanger my life!" Such were the responses from the by-standers. But it didn't seem right to me.

Is it that:

- a) You are to get involved in helping someone, only when your personal safety is not at risk.
- b) The police is in charge of such matters, not the passers-by.
- c) If one can help, he is obliged to get involved and do so.

9 RESPECT FOR THE TEACHER

Not too long ago, I met a boy who came from a kibbutz in Israel. The boy told me many things about life in the kibbutz, and I liked most of them. But one custom seemed strange to me: the boy told me that in the kibbutz all students address their teachers by their first names; by so doing, aren't they being disrespectful to the teacher?

Is it that:

- a) It is all right to call a teacher by his or her first name.
- b) It is wrong to call teachers by their first names.
- c) It is all right to do so, but only with the teacher's permission.

11 MY SON, THE DOCTOR

The doctors in our community meet once every two weeks in our rabbi's house, in order to discuss halachic laws pertaining to medicine.

The following question was once raised by one of the doctors: his father was to be operated on in about two weeks or so - should he perform the surgery, or should he ask one of his colleagues to do so?

Is it that:

- a) An N.D. may operate on his father.
- b) Under no circumstances should a son perform surgery on his father, for he is causing him pain.
- c) If the son is considered the expert in his field, then he must perform the operation himself.

10 SHALL I WAKE UP FATHER?

My father came home from work and he lay down to rest a while. I went to play outside so as not to disturb him. Around Mincha time, I was told that in our neighborhood Synagogue they were missing one man for the Minyan? I didn't know what to do: should I wake up my father?

Is it that:

- a) It is forbidden to wake up a father, under any circumstances.
- b) A father may be awakened at any time.
- c) A father should be awakened only when the fulfillment of a Mitzvah is at stake.

12 FATHER'S SEAT

"How many times did I tell you not to sit in your father's seat?" said the mother to her son Samuel. "Even 'But father isn't home!'", protested Samuel. "But father isn't home!", responded the so, you are not to sit in his seat", responded the mother.

He did, of course, as his mother told him to, but he researched the problem in order to clarify things.

Is it that:

- a) You may not sit in your father's chair only when guests are present.
- b) You may sit in your father's chair when he is not home.
- c) You may never sit in your father's chair.

13 THE RETURN OF A LOSS TO A GENTILE

My parents and I went to Europe during the summer vacation, and as we came to the airport, I found a wallet with \$150.- in it. I immediately remembered what I had learned about the return of a loss - but the wallet belonged to a gentile, and it seemed to me that that particular Mitzvah was intended for Jews only.

Is it that:

- a) The return of a loss pertains to Jews and non-Jews alike.
- b) By returning a loss to a gentile, we are sanctifying God's name.
- c) A loss is returned to a gentile only when there are obvious clues as to its rightful owner.
- d) All of the above.

16 LENDING MONEY

A friend came to me about a month ago and asked for a loan in order to buy a book; he said he would return the loan shortly.

A number of weeks have passed since, and the money is yet to be returned. I don't know what to do now: should I ask my friend for the money, or should I wait till he will return it? I see my friend spending money daily on candy and such, and I ask myself: 'if he has money to buy candy, why won't he return the loan?'

Is it that:

- a) The borrower should return the loan when he feels like it.
- b) It is wrong to ask for the return of a loan, even when you know that the borrower has the money.
- c) If you know that the borrower has the money, then it is all right to ask for the return of the loan.

14 RESPECT THE ELDERLY ONLY?

Moshe and David were seated in the train when Rabbi Jacob, a young rabbi in their community, entered. David got up and offered his seat to Rabbi Jacob.

When Moshe and David got off the train, Moshe asked: "It says in the Torah 'you shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old'. Why did you give your seat to young Rabbi Jacob?"

Is it that:

- a) One is to rise only before the aged.
- b) One is to rise before anyone older.
- c) One is to rise before a scholar, even if he is young.

17 PREVENTING POTENTIAL DAMAGE

As I was walking to school, I saw a dog enter the garden of a house in our neighborhood, and I was convinced that the dog will cause some damage to the garden. It was late, though, and I was rushing to school, and I didn't stop to chase the dog away. I later asked the teacher whether I did the right thing.

Is it that:

- a) It is obligatory to chase the dog away, so as to stop him from damaging the garden.
- b) One is responsible for the return of a loss, but not for the prevention of damage.
- c) If one is in a hurry, he may be excused for not getting involved in matters pertaining to potential damage.

18 THE ABSORPTION OF IMMIGRANTS

We emigrated to Israel a few months ago, and the representative from the absorption center was most helpful; we blessed him and thanked him profusely for making us feel so welcome and for fulfilling the commandment of welcoming the stranger.

"I didn't fulfill any commandment", said the man, "it is my job, and I am supposed to do all that I have done for you."

Is it that:

- a) The commandment of welcoming the stranger pertains only to one's own home.
- b) Only when going beyond the call of duty do we fulfill the commandment of welcoming the stranger.
- c) Fulfilling one's responsibility is synonymous with fulfilling the commandment of welcoming the stranger.

21 VISITING THE SICK OR COMFORTING THE BEREAVED

I always try to fulfill both commandments: visiting the sick and comforting the bereaved. But I was once caught in a dilemma: one of my friends was sick in the hospital and another friend lost his father and was sitting "Shivah". It was impossible for me to visit that week both friends, and I did not know which of the two commandments is the more important one: visiting the sick or comforting the bereaved.

Is it that:

- a) It is more important to visit the sick than the bereaved.
- b) Comforting the bereaved is more important than visiting the sick.
- c) The two commandments are of equal importance.

19 GOSSIP

We often transgress where gossip is concerned, and I often remind my friends when they do so - but they pay no attention.

I myself try not to gossip, but I often hear some from my friends.

Is it that:

- a) Only the person who is doing the gossiping is committing a transgression.
- b) Only the person who is listening to gossip is committing a transgression.
- c) Both - the teller and the listener - are committing a transgression.

20 VISITING THE SERIOUSLY ILL

We played kick-ball during recess, and as Chanan kicked the ball, it hit Shmuel in both eyes and he did not come to school the next day.

We asked the teacher whether we could visit Shmuel, but he said that it is better not to visit the seriously ill, because the visit might add to their discomfort.

What does one do in such a case?

- a) Not visit the injured boy, who is in great discomfort, and would rather not see anyone.
- b) It is proper to visit the sick in any circumstances.
- c) Were the boy injured in one eye only, then a visit would have been the proper thing.

5) Your best friend moved to California. You miss your friend very much, would like to talk to him, but the call would be very expensive. You just found out that you can call long distance to a public phone in L.A. without paying. You can call collect to a certain pay-phone with your friend accepting the charges, without the phone company finding out.

Should you:

- a) Take advantage of the situation, since it's not your fault that there is something wrong with the phone company.
- b) Calling on that phone is cheating and stealing; you should not do it.

13) After having a long argument with your mother, it is clear that she is very much against, and clearly forbids you to watch the X-rated video your friend has in his home. You have been invited again to go to your friend's with some friends. What should you do?

Should you:

- a) Tell your friend that you can't go, you have other plans.
- b) Go to your friend's house, since you are sure your mother will never find out.
- c) Watch the video, tell your mother you did, and accept the consequences.

26) You stand in line to see a movie. The price for children over 10 years old is double the price for those under 10. All of you are 11½, but can get away with saying you are 10. You are all really broke. What should you do?

Should you:

- a) Say you are 10, pay ½ price and when you'll get your next allowance, you'll give to 'zedaka.
- b) Pay the right price, since doing otherwise will be cheating and stealing.
- c) Just pay half price, as if you were 10 and forget about it. If you can get away with it, don't make a big deal.

24) You know that one of your friends in the class is using drugs. This friend has even tried to convince you to try it. You refused. Now there is an inquiry in the school about another kid that died as a result of using drugs. The school counselor has discussed the danger of using drugs with your class and told you to report anyone that you know is using drugs.

Should you:

- a) Tell someone responsible about your friend, in order to protect him from possible danger.
- b) Mind your own business and just forget about it.
- c) Try to convince your friend to go for help.

27

You are planning a party in your house. You would like to invite your entire class. Four of your closest friends say they will not come if you invite one particular kid, whom many others do not like. You would not like to lose these friends, since they are the life of the party. You also feel bad about not inviting this particular kid. What should you do?

Should you:

- a) Listen to those four friends and not invite this kid.
- b) Keep the party secret, so this kid will not find out about it and would never know that you didn't invite him.
- c) Tell your friends that you invite everyone, and that you hope that they would not stay away.

28

Your friend's parents had built a beautiful new home. It is an expensive home with a lovely terrace on the third floor, which is part of the large roof. Your friend invited you and some friends to the new home. You went up to the roof, played on the new terrace and suddenly, while playing (and not noticing that there was no fence), you fell off the terrace-roof, broke your leg and arm. You have been through two operations and have been away from school for two months. Your friend's parents are responsible for what happened, mainly because:

- a) It was their obligation to put a fence around the roof.
- b) It's their property, and anything that happens on their property, is their responsibility.
- c) The parents were home at the time the accident happened.

"AVOID THE BAD AND DO THE GOOD"

(Answer sheet)

1. (d) - all of the above.
3. (a) - Yes, the poor person is also obliged to give charity  
- and as much as he can afford.
4. (a) - Yes, the one who pushes his way to the head of the line is akin  
to a robber - it's not merely impolite, but outright robbery.
5. (a) - If we don't know the borrowers financial situation, then we must  
not ask for the money; we may ask for it only if we know that he,  
indeed, has the money.
6. (a) - Charity is important, but a loan is more so - for it helps a per-  
son when he is in real difficulty (a rich man, too, may need a  
loan for a short while.)
7. (a) - Yes, one is obliged to feed the animals before he sits down to  
eat, even if the animals are not particularly hungry, for it is  
written: "I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle  
and thus you (only after the cattle) shall eat your fill."  
(Deut. 11:15).
8. (c) - Yes, if at all possible, its imperative to do so..
9. (c) - If the teacher consents, then it's all right to address him by  
his first name.
10. (c) - It's allowed to wake up father in order to go to the Synagogue -  
or in order to fulfill any other Mitzvah (commandment).
11. (c) - Yes, if the son is considered the expert in his field, he then is  
permitted to perform the surgery.
12. (c) - It is never permitted to sit in father's seat.
13. (d) - All of the above.
14. (c) - Yes, we must rise before the scholar, even if he is young.
16. (c) - If the lender knows that the borrower has the money, he may then  
ask that the loan be repaid.
17. (a) - Yes, the dog must be chased away so as to prevent potential damage  
to the garden.
18. (c) - Even if one is merely doing his job, he nevertheless is thus ful-  
filling the commandment of welcoming people.
19. (c) - Both, the one who is gossiping and the one who is listening to the  
gossip, are guilty of a transgression.
20. (a) - To visit the sick is an act of loving-kindness, but we do not visit  
those who are very uncomfortable and in pain (a phone call would  
ascertain the pateint's condition).

21. (c) - Both commandments are of equal importance, but if we must choose between the two, then we should visit the sick, for we may be able to help him in some way.
22. (b) - Even a person as important as the Chief Rabbi must make sure that he welcomes his visitors. The Rabbi is to go out of his way, even for the common man - and here he is to follow the example of Abraham, who did so in a most generous and magnanimous way.
23. (a) or (c) - Honor and respect parents. Watching this kind of programs is harmful - it can harm future relationships.
24. Try first (c), when it doesn't work, do (a). See Leviticus 19: "Do not stand by the blood of your friend", "And you should protect yourself and those near you."
25. - (b)
26. - (b)
27. - (c) - Shaming a person is like committing a murder).
28. - (a) - See Deuteronomy 22:8.

Action Cards  
"Be A Mensch" Game  
from: BJE of Greater New York

YOU SAW TWO LITTLE KIDS FIGHTING.  
THE STRONGER ONE KNOCKED THE OTHER  
ONE TO THE GROUND AND WAS BEATING  
HIM UP. YOU SEPARATED THEM AND  
YOU HELPED THE INJURED BOY GET  
CLEANED UP.

TAKE AN ADDITIONAL TURN.

WHEN YOUR FRIENDS STARTED TO SAY  
NASTY THINGS ABOUT SOMEONE, YOU  
STOPPED THEM.

TAKE AN ADDITIONAL TURN.

WHEN YITZHAK WAS SICK, NONE OF  
HIS FRIENDS WENT TO VISIT HIM.  
YOU THOUGHT ABOUT VISITING HIM  
BUT YOU FORGOT.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

YOU WANTED TO SHOW OFF FOR YOUR  
FRIENDS, SO YOU TRIPPED ONATHAN,  
WHO FELL FLAT ON HIS FACE.

LOSE ONE TURN.

DURING RECESS, SARAH WANTED TO  
TAKE PART IN THE GAME THAT YOU AND  
YOUR FRIENDS WERE PLAYING, BUT YOU  
WOULDN'T LET HER. AS A RESULT,  
SARAH SAT ON THE SIDE, ALONE.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

JOSEPH FORGOT TO BRING 20 CENTS  
FOR A NEW NOTEBOOK, AND YOU  
LOANED HIM THE MONEY.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

DURING RECESS, WHEN THE TEACHER  
WASN'T IN CLASS, YOU OPENED THE  
DRAWER OF THE TEACHER'S DESK,  
TOOK A PAGE OF STICKERS AND PUT  
IT IN YOUR SCHOOL BAG.

LOSE ONE TURN.

WHEN THE TEACHER ASKED THE CLASS TO  
TAKE PARTNERS, NO ONE WANTED TO BE  
JUDY'S PARTNER. YOU FELT SORRY FOR  
HER AND YOU ASKED HER TO BE YOUR  
PARTNER.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

WHEN THE TEACHER ASKED A QUESTION,  
CHAIM RAISED HIS HAND AND GAVE THE  
WRONG ANSWER. "STUPID" YOU CALLED  
OUT, "IT'S SO EASY." CHAIM WAS  
VERY INSULTED.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

YOU SAW YOUR TEACHER CARRYING A LOT  
OF HEAVY BOOKS, AND YOU HELD THE  
DOOR FOR HER.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

THERE WAS A LINE AT THE WATER  
FOUNTAIN. YOU CUT IN FRONT OF  
THE LINE.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

RACHEL FORGOT HER PENCIL, AND YOU  
LET HER USE YOURS.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

## Action Cards

# "Be A Mensch" Game

from: BJE of Greater New York

YOU SAW MRS. LEVY COMING FROM THE CAR CARRYING TWO HEAVY BAGS OF GROCERIES. YOU RAN, TOOK THE BAGS FROM MRS LEVY AND BROUGHT THEM ALL THE WAY TO HER DOOR.

TAKE AN ADDITIONAL TURN.

GILA ALWAYS MAKES FUN OF EVERYONE, AND SHE EMBARRASSES THEM IN PUBLIC. YESTERDAY, YOU WROTE GILA A NOTE: IN IT YOU ASKED HER, POLITELY, TO STOP ACTING THAT WAY.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

JOSHUA LEFT HIS PENCIL-CASE ON HIS DESK WHEN HE WENT HOME. YOU PUT THE PENCIL CASE IN THE CLOSET TO MAKE SURE THAT IT WOULDN'T GET LOST.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

THERE IS A NEW STUDENT IN YOUR CLASS WHO DOESN'T SPEAK ENGLISH WELL. YOU HELPED HIM WITH HIS HOMEWORK.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

YOU BORROWED 30 CENTS FROM SARAH A WEEK AGO, AND EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE THE MONEY, YOU HAVEN'T PAID HER BACK.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

CHANA TOLD YOU SOME BAD THINGS ABOUT YOHANAN, AND YOU LISTENED WITHOUT DEFENDING HIM.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

YOU WEREN'T ALLOWED TO VISIT MIRIAM BECAUSE HER SICKNESS WAS CONTAGIOUS. INSTEAD, YOU CALLED HER UP ALMOST DAILY.

Take one letter.

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY VISITED YOUR AUNT SHE PUT A PLATE OF COOKIES ON THE TABLE FOR EVERYONE AND YOU ATE ALMOST <sup>ALL</sup> OF THEM YOURSELF. THERE WERE ONLY TWO LEFT FOR EVERYONE ELSE.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

YOU SAW DANNY'S BOOKS FALL DOWN, BUT YOU CONTINUED WALKING WITHOUT EVEN OFFERING TO HELP.

RETURN ONE LETTER.

YOU FOUND A BEAUTIFUL PEN IN THE SCHOOL YARD, SO YOU PUT IT IN THE LOST AND FOUND, AND PLACED A NOTE ON THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE HALLWAY.

TAKE ONE LETTER.

YOU WERE SITTING IN YOUR FATHER'S FAVORITE CHAIR. WHEN HE CAME HOME HE WANTED TO SIT THERE AND YOU TOLD HIM YOU WERE THERE FIRST.

RETURN ONE LETTER.