

Mitzvot in the Movies



An important goal of education at OST is to teach children and families Jewish values that they will incorporate into their everyday lives. We are Jewish *every day* – not just for 2 hours on Sunday mornings, not just when we celebrate the holidays, not just when we are in synagogue; but *all* of the time.

Since we are all limited in activities we can do during this period of isolation, many families are entertaining themselves by watching movies, TV programs, and reading together.

Here is a list of Jewish values (*Mitzvot*) that you may find (or may find to be missing) in the characters and plots of the movies that you view, the TV programs that you watch, and the books that you read. After you have seen a movie or TV program, or finished reading a book together, review these values and discuss them in relation to the story. Talk together about how they apply or do not apply to your life.

Peace, *Shalom* - In Judaism, peace at home, *shalom bayit*, is very important. When we live in peace with those we love it helps us learn to spread peace to other areas of our lives. We say that Shabbat is a day of peace. Together as a family help to keep Shabbat as a day of peace by greeting each other with the traditional Sabbath blessing, ***Shabbat Shalom***.

Hospitality, *Hachnasat orchim* - Did you find evidence of characters making people feel welcome and comfortable?

Community, *k'helah* - A sense of community-where everyone lives together as friends with caring and concern - is a value that is very important to Jews. Did you find a sense of community in this work?

Friendship, *Y'deedut* - a very important value in Judaism. The Hebrew word for friends is *chaverim*. Are there characters that seem to be really good friends? What things show this?

Leadership, *Hanhagah* - the rabbis wrote that major qualities of a Jewish leader must be compassion and caring for those under his/her leadership. Which characters show that they are good leaders according to the Jewish interpretation?

Kindness to animals, *Tzaar baalei chayim* - we are taught that compassion must be extended to all creatures and that we should not hate or destroy any of them. Are there parts of the movie that make you think about being kind to animals?

Saving a life, *Piku-ach nefesh*. Did anyone save or help to save someone's life or keep someone from getting hurt?

Ecology, *Tikkun olam* - Can you find some examples of repairing the world or making it a better place in the book or movie?

Compassion, *Rachamim* - Compassion means really caring about someone who needs help. Did you see times when the characters were compassionate in this movie?

Courtesy and respect, *Derekh eretz* - Are there different aspects of courtesy or respect shown by the characters that made a difference in the story?

Truth, *Emet* - Did telling the truth enter into the story's development?

Study, *Torah* - Could you find any examples of academic or scholastic achievement in the story?

Worship, *Avodah* - Did the story contain any aspects of religious devotion?

Deeds of Loving Kindness, *G'milut Chasadim* - Did any characters display special acts of kindness that affected the story line?

Joy, *Simchah* - As Jews we know how important it is for us to enjoy the blessings of life. What are some of the happy times in the story?

Justice, *Tzedakah* - from the root "*tzedek*," meaning Justice and Righteousness. In Torah we are taught, "*Tzedek, tzedek tirdof*" / "Justice, justice shall you pursue." (Deuteronomy 16:20) Although *Tzedakah* is often translated as "charity," it has the wider connotation of giving back, or doing justice.

Goodness, *Tovah* - Who are the “good guys”? What Jewish values do they possess that make them good?

Respect, Honor, *Kavod* - The fifth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12) is *Kibbud Av v' Aym* (Honor Your Father and Mother). Basic human relations are based on *Kavod*, showing respect to the people with whom we interact. By honoring other people, we honor God.

Helping those in need, *Ozer Dalim* - Were there helpers in the story? How did they help? How can you help those in need?

In many stories we also see the following *negative* value:

Needless destruction, *Bal tashchit* - Are there any instances of unnecessary harm to people or property? What was done to prevent or fix this? What would you do?

Did you read or see anything else in the book or movie that reminded you about a Jewish value or something you learned in religious school?

Bonus Links:

- [A List of the 50 Greatest Jewish Movies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_50_Greatest_Jewish_Movies) (as ranked by book author Kathryn Bernheimer)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_50_Greatest_Jewish_Movies
- [Jewish Film](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/category/study/jewish-culture/jewish-film/) (My Jewish Learning)
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/category/study/jewish-culture/jewish-film/>