



EDUCATOR GUIDE

Mitzvah Hunt



'Interact with Judaism' is a collaboration between **Jewish Interactive** and **RE:ONLINE**, aimed at teachers and children in non-Jewish settings who want to find out more about Judaism. <http://jewishinteractive.org>

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OVERVIEW

The Hebrew word 'Mitzvah' – literally, 'commandment' – refers to any good deed or act of kindness. This means that each time we perform a positive act in the world, or refrain from a negative one, we do a 'Mitzvah'. Given the centrality of this word in Jewish literature, Jewish Interactive was inspired to produce their Mitzvah Hunt app.



Mitzvah Hunt inspires children to have a positive perspective on life and to look for the good in the world and in other people. Each time a player observes a Mitzvah, they are encouraged to choose a seed, record what they saw, and drag it into an empty pomegranate (or as the phrase goes, 'when you see a good deed, put in a seed'). By maintaining this positive perspective and looking for the good in others, the player fulfils the Mitzvah of "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), or in Hebrew, *v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho*. This concept is so central to Jewish living that the great Rabbi Akiva taught that it was a *klal gadol batorah* – meaning 'a great principle in the Torah' (Bible).

WHY A POMEGRANATE?

The reason why a pomegranate was chosen as the main symbol of Mitzvah Hunt is because this fruit is packed with seeds, which led the ancient Rabbis to consider the pomegranate as a good representation of a person who fills their life with good deeds.



Over time, the pomegranate becomes filled up with the good deeds that the players record, and once full, the player hears a song with the words: "*v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho zeh klal gadol batorah* (literally, 'love your neighbour like yourself, this is a great principle in the Torah') - Always do to others as you like them do to you; it says so in the Torah and yes its true!"¹

DEVELOPING THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE

Since the purpose of Mitzvah Hunt is to get into the habit of seeing the good that is done in the world, the game begins with the request to find the special glasses for the pomegranate, so s/he can see the mitzvot that are being done.

¹ 'What is hateful to you do not do to your fellow; this is the whole of the Torah and the rest is commentary, go and learn' (Hillel in Shabbat 31a).



KEY BIBLICAL REFERENCES IN MITZVAH HUNT

At the bottom of the Mitzvah Hunt screen are four icons, the first of which is a Torah scroll. In this section players are introduced to the four biblical verses related to Mitzvah Hunt:

The first verse is “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), which was explained by Rabbi Akiva to be a great principle in the Torah.

The following verses reference where pomegranates are mentioned in the Torah. For example, we find reference to pomegranates in Numbers 13:23 when describing the fruit found by the twelve spies who scouted out the Land of Israel. Pomegranates are also listed in Deuteronomy 8:8 among the seven species for which the Land of Israel is praised. Finally, Exodus 28:33 teaches us that on the hem of the clothes of the Kohen Hagadol (high priest) were small pomegranate-shaped tassels.



DEEPER EXPLORATIONS ABOUT THE SYMBOLISM OF THE POMEGRANATE

The second icon - a question mark – takes the player to a series of screens where they learn more about the symbolism of the pomegranate in the Jewish tradition. As noted above, the ancient Rabbis considered the pomegranate to represent a person who fills their life with good deeds, and based on the idea that a Jew must fulfil the 613 commandments of the Torah, some Rabbis even went as far as the claim that the largest pomegranates may contain 613 seeds.

In fact, based on the connection between the pomegranate and the performance of good deeds, it is customary for Jews to eat pomegranate on Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year – to reflect the hope that the year will be filled with good deeds. In addition to these facts, we also read that a pomegranate was used as a symbol on ancient Jewish coins, and that in modern Israel, pomegranates have been used on stamps.



BASELESS HATRED AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

The third icon is a sign for a movie, which takes the player for a brief tour of the second Temple in Jerusalem. Rabbinic sources explain that while the Romans destroyed the second Temple, God allowed this event to occur because Jewish people were not treating each other with respect, and rather than being kind to each other, they expressed *sinat chinam* (unwarranted hatred) towards one another. This idea has led some Jews to the belief that the more good they do in the world, the greater the likelihood of being able to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus the player is told that ‘if we want to rebuild the Temple, we need to love our neighbours and see only the good that they do.’



SETTINGS

Amongst the different settings in Mitzvah Hunt are language settings. This means that players can be given instructions in either English, Hebrew or Spanish. Moreover, when selecting the English option, there are two options: 'Sephardi' or 'Ashkenazi'. This refers to the accent in which the Hebrew words are said. By selecting 'English Sephardi', it means that the instructions will be given in English while the Hebrew words used in the game will be pronounced with a modern Israeli/Sephardi accent, while by selecting 'English Ashkenazi', it means that those same Hebrew words will be pronounced with a north European accent.

MITZVAH HUNT IN THE CLASSROOM

Mitzvah Hunt is an opportunity for educators and parents of children in aged 4-7 to encourage positive reinforcement of good behaviour and help instil the character trait of looking for good in others. Within the classroom environment educators can use Mitzvah Hunt on the interactive whiteboard (IWB) or on personal devices. The app will ask you to name each new pomegranate before it can be filled in. The educator can fill in a name for the pomegranate e.g.: Year 1.

When a mitzvah is spotted, the educator can encourage the children to fill in a seed and drag it to the pomegranate. When the pomegranate is filled, a list of all the people doing mitzvot and who spotted them will be provided for you to download and print for a bulletin board or to give to individuals.

MITZVAH HUNT DICTIONARY

Transliteration	Literal translation	Meaning
<i>Ahava</i>	Love	According to the Jewish tradition, love is expressed by the good you do to another.
<i>Beit Hamikdash</i>	The sanctified house	This is the name for the two Temples that stood in Jerusalem.
<i>Bul Doar</i>	Postage Stamp	
<i>Kohen Hagadol</i>	Literally: The Great Priest or High Priest	This person would need to be a descendant of the first High Priest of the Jewish people who was Aaron, the older brother of Moses.
<i>Matbeah</i>	Coin	
<i>Meraglim</i>	Spies	Numbers Ch. 13 describes the story of the spies who were sent to Israel to scout out the land.
<i>Mitzvah</i>	Commandment	According to tradition, the Torah contains 613 commandments.

<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Literally 'The Head of the Year'	This is the name for the Jewish New Year.
<i>Sinat Chinam</i>	Unwarranted hatred	According to tradition, it was <i>sinat chinam</i> which created the negative atmosphere during the second Temple period, and subsequently led to its destruction by the Romans.
<i>Shivat Haminim</i>	The seven species	These are the seven species for which the land of Israel is praised (see Deuteronomy 8:8)
<i>Torah</i>	Literally, 'Teaching'.	This term is generally used to refer to the five books of Moses, although it is sometimes used with reference to other Jewish sources such as the Talmud, which inform Jewish law.
<i>v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho zeh klal gadol batorah</i>	love your neighbour like yourself, this is a great principle in the Torah	This is a well-known saying of Rabbi Akiva, commenting on the importance of Leviticus 19:18.