

## WHAT IS A MENSCH?

### NINE CHALLENGES A GOOD PERSON MUST MEET

A mensch is a person who can be relied on to act with honour and integrity. But the Yiddish term means more than that: it also suggests someone who is kind and considerate.

Rabbi Neil Kurshan, author of the book *Raising Your Child to be a Mensch*, characterizes it as "responsibility fused with compassion, a sense that one's own personal needs and desires are limited by the needs and desires of other people. A mensch acts with self-restraint and humility, always sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of others".

Other characteristics include decency, wisdom, kindness, honesty, trustworthiness, respect, benevolence, compassion, and altruism

A mensch is driven by an innate decency, motivated perhaps by a sense of values to live up to but not out of regard for recognition. They will act as a mensch at times when it may be hard to be one.

- 1. Rabbi Hillel said: In a place where there are no men (mensches), strive to be a man (mensch) (Pirke Avot: 2:6)**
- 2. Do not stand by while your neighbor's blood is shed. (Literally: Do not stand upon your neighbor's blood) Lev. 19-16**
- 3. You shall neither side with the mighty to do wrong...nor shall you show deference to a poor man in his dispute. (Exodus 23. 2)**
- 4. You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old. (Lev. 19:32) P. 700**
- 5. Justice, Justice, you shall pursue. Deut. 16:20 P. 1088**
- 6. When you encounter your enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must take it back to him.**

- 7. When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him.**
  
- 8. When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 19.32)**
  
- 9. Love your fellow as yourself. (Lev. 19:18) P. 175**