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)