

## Chapter 1

# Welcome to A Kid's Mensch Handbook

Student text:  
pages 8–13

## Overview

Chapter One introduces the book's theme: Like a stone on a lake, our actions affect the world around us. A mensch is someone who takes action and affects the world in positive ways. Chapter One also outlines the book's content and structure.

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how our actions “ripple out” and affect others.
- Define “mensch” and articulate qualities that characterize a mensch.
- Explain the book's contents and basic structure.

## Vocabulary

*mensch* “person”; someone of integrity and respect

## Set Induction

Have your students brainstorm a list of qualities that describe a good person. Write the list on the board. Start the exercise by writing *kindness*, *honesty*, and *respect*.

Ask each student choose the three qualities he or she considers most important. Invite volunteers to share their choices, including reasons why they consider their qualities important.

## Making Waves (pages 9–10)

Have volunteers read the two paragraphs on page 9. Ask: What are some examples of actions that affect others? You may wish to have students share examples of the ways they have affected others in a positive way and explain what they learned from the experience.



## Expand the Conversation

Have a student read the “Quick Quote” on page 9 aloud. Ask: What is the difference between wisdom and kindness? (Wisdom has to do with what *knowledge* and *judgment*; kindness has to do with *action*.)



## Photo Op (page 9)

Point to the photo of the ripple on page 9. Have a student read the legend around the ripple (“The Stone,” “Your Family,” etc.). Explain that we’ll see this image recur throughout *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* as a reminder that like a

stone on a lake, our actions affect the world around us.

### **That's Fine and Dandy** (page 10)

Ask a volunteer to read the first paragraph of “That’s Fine and Dandy” aloud. Students can alternate reading the bulleted items and then add definitions of their own.

### **Too Many to Menschen** (page 11)

As your students complete this exercise, direct them to include kind and generous *actions* taken by their *menschen*.

Invite the class to share their personal *menschen* with the class.

### **Baby Mensch** (page 12)

Have a volunteer read “Baby Mensch” aloud. Following is the full talmudic legend to share with the class:

*While a child is still in its mother’s womb, it learns the entire Torah by the light of a special lamp that allows the baby to see everything on earth. When the baby is born, an angel appears and requires the baby to take an oath that he or she will live a life of righteousness. The angel then tweaks the baby’s nose, causing it to forget everything it has learned. It then spends its life not learning new information, but “remembering” what it once knew.*

Explain that this legend also provides a creative explanation for the furrow beneath our nostrils!



### **As a Family**

Copy and distribute “Too Many to Menschen: Family Version” on the following page. Ask students to complete the chart with their families.

During the next class session, have students present their charts with the class. Or, invite your students’ parents to class to share their charts as a family. It’s a great way to bring your students’ families together.



## Family Worksheet 1

# Too Many to Menschen: Family Version

Dear Parent:

This year, we will be studying Jewish values with our new textbook, *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*. Periodically we will send home a Family Worksheet based on lessons from the book for your family to complete together.

This week we learned that a *mensch* is a good person—a person of kindness, integrity, and respect. As a family, think of three people you consider *menschen* (plural of *mensch*): a family friend or neighbor, a teacher or community leader, and someone who is famous. Write their names on the lines below, then write down the reasons why each one is a *mensch*.

Names:		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend or Neighbor	Teacher or Community Leader	Someone Who Is Famous
Reasons each one is a mensch:		