Saluting Innovation @ Mensch on a Bench

by Ami Mizell-Flint

Saluting innovation at Mensch on a Bench, for giving Jewish families a new tradition for the Hanukkah holiday. Similar to the popular “Elf on a Shelf”, Mensch on a Bench comes with a plush toy and accompanying book that tells the story of Moshe, a friendly mensch who helps the Maccabees by watching over the oil in the synagogue as it burns for eight days and eight nights. Families are encouraged to move the mensch while the kids are sleeping to urge good behavior during Hanukkah.

For interfaith couples, the "December Dilemma" can become an issue as families celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas simultaneously. A Jewish man married to a Catholic woman, Mensch on a Bench creator Neal Hoffman iterated the concept after his son asked him to buy an Elf on the Shelf. Instead of creating something that blended the two holidays, as families often feel pushed to do, Mensch on a Bench takes an already popular tradition in Christian families and makes it uniquely Jewish. We congratulate Mensch on a Bench, and salute them for bringing a new tradition to a holiday that is more than 5,000 years old.

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