Rabbi Harvey vs. The Wisdom Kid by Steve Sheinkin is about a Rabbi named Harvey. In the beginning of the book, he is fishing and he sees a man in the river who is struggling to swim, and is about to fall over a waterfall. The Rabbi wades in and saves this man. To show his gratitude, this man tells Rabbi Harvey to name a gift and he will give it to the Rabbi. The Rabbi doesn’t want anything. Eventually, a new Rabbi comes to the town, Elk Springs. The Rabbi’s are quick on their feet with Talmudic teaching. Throughout the book, many Jewish stories are told as the Rabbis fight for the right to be the Rabbi of the town. This was a book about Jewish folktales being recreated and in modernish world, as it takes place in the days of the wild west.

I can relate to some topics in the book. I want to help others in any way I can. I can’t relate to studying the Talmud as the Rabbi does, but I do study Jewish values and culture in other ways. Also, I do mitzvot and I (unlike some characters in the book) don’t take advantage of people. For example, if a classmate wants help with a question on their math homework, I’m happy to do it, without asking for something in return.

As this is a book containing many Jewish folktales and stories, it contains more Jewish values than I’ve ever written about. Some include reading the Talmud and doing mitzvot. Rabbis are mentioned. They also mention the Prophet Elijah meeting Rabbi Harvey in the World to Come. At another point in the book, Rabbi Harvey is given a choice: give up your belief in God or die. Rabbi Harvey chooses the latter, even though there are two people near him who have guns pointed at him. This shows a HUGE belief in God. It reminded me of the tradition to start saying the words of Shema on your deathbed, as a final statement, even if you don’t finish it. The book’s main (and non-religious) theme is to fight for what you believe in. On many occasions, Rabbi Harvey fought for righteousness and equality. One example is when someone paid this new Rabbi to cure their pet bird, and the Rabbi didn’t do anything. So, Rabbi Harvey ended up convincing the newcomer to give this person their money back.

When I first got this book and saw it was a graphic novel, I was a little skeptical. I’d never read one before, nor did I want to. I will say that I thoroughly enjoyed it. I also enjoyed reading about all the folk tales, and how they can teach me to live a moral life, such as giving tzedaka to a family member or anyone in need. I also appreciated the value it told of keeping my original word. For all these reasons, I recommend it. I also recommend reading the first two, The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey and Rabbi Harvey Rides Again before this one, as they build upon each other. I hope you enjoy the book as much as I did when you get to it!