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{ How do we come through for each other? }
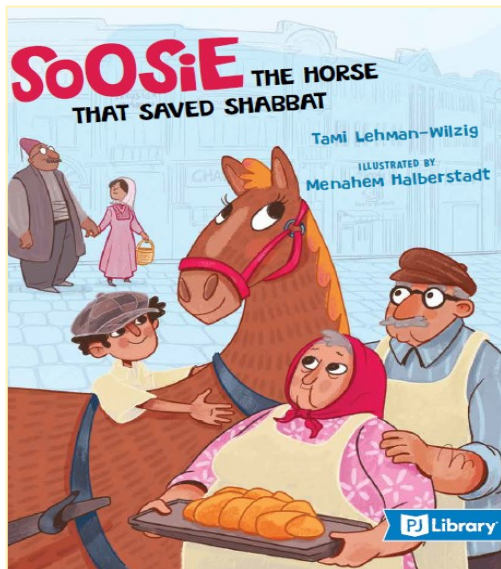
Shabbat Is in the Air

This story takes place in Jerusalem – and there's nothing quite like the experience of preparing for Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) in Jerusalem. On Friday, the open-air Machane Yehuda Market, which has been around since the days of horse-drawn carts, swarms with people buying fruits, vegetables, and baked goods for Shabbat. The smell of challah is everywhere! Then in the late afternoon, as people are finishing their cooking and cleaning, all the stores close and the streets grow empty of cars and buses. Finally, at sunset, a faint siren is heard, announcing the beginning of the day of rest. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/soosie.

A Nurturing Relationship

Jacob treats Soosie the way a parent treats a child. The time comes when you know your children can do it on their own – whether "it" is walking to school, doing homework, or helping mind other siblings. How do we know when that time has arrived? It's different for every child – and parent – but when Jacob is too sick to deliver challah, he trusts that Soosie can manage the route on her own. Jacob's trust is warranted. Soosie comes through with flying colors – and a swishing tail!

Give That Horse a Break

The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) details many laws protecting the well-being of animals. The value of caring for animals (in Hebrew, tza'ar ba'alei chayim) is something that Jacob and his community seem to understand instinctively. By Jewish law, Jacob should feed Soosie before he feeds himself. Soosie can work hard, but it's not right for Jacob to push Soosie too hard. (The Torah gives an example: Don't tie a weaker animal with a stronger animal – it's not fair to the weaker one.) If Soosie gets hurt or lost, Jacob's neighbors need to let Jacob know immediately. And most of all: Soosie gets a break on Shabbat, too! Shabbat is a day of rest for people and animals.

Under the Weather, Together

When Jacob doesn't feel well, Ezra and Esther spring into action. They bring him water, wipe his brow with a wet cloth, and make sure he doesn't overdo it by going on his usual delivery rounds. In Jewish tradition, caring for the sick is a fundamental value. In Hebrew it's referred to as bikkur cholim, which literally means visiting the sick – but in this case, Jacob comes to Ezra and Esther's house! Still, once there, he is met with care and attention.

HANDS ON!

Make Play-Dough Challah

In this story, we see Ezra and Esther making loaf after loaf of challah, the traditional braided bread eaten on Shabbat. There are many recipes for baking challah (visit pjlibrary.org/challah for a few of our favorites). A big part of the fun is braiding the loaves! Make play-dough challah to practice. You can use store-bought play dough or make your own (with a grown-up's help).

To make your own play dough:

Mix 3 cups flour and 1½ cups salt in a large bowl. Gradually stir in 1½ cups of water. Once it's mixed in, knead it with your hands. If it's too dry, add a little water; if it's too sticky, add a little flour. Once you have kneaded it into a smooth dough, you're reading to make a "challah."

To braid:

Separate the dough into three equal chunks. Roll each chunk out so that they look like long snakes.
Connect the three snakes at the top.
Put the left snake over the center snake. Then put the right snake over the new center snake. Continue until you reach the bottom. Voila – challah! If you like, you can "deliver" it to someone in your home. Shabbat shalom!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

LOOK at the illustrations of Jacob and Soosie together. Can you tell that they love each other? How?

ESTHER and Ezra are worried when Soosie doesn't return home after several hours. Why do you think it took Soosie so long to complete her deliveries?

WHAT do you think Jacob whispers to Soosie before Soosie sets off on her delivery route?