



BEAUTIFUL YETTA: THE YIDDISH CHICKEN

Written by Daniel Pinkwater

Illustrated by Jill Pinkwater

Yetta escapes from the chicken farmer's cage, but what is a country hen to do in big, unfamiliar Brooklyn?

From the displaced chicken named Yetta to the wild parrots of Brooklyn, *Beautiful Yetta* is inhabited by creatures who find themselves in a new and strange place. Moving from city to country or country to city, appearing different from others, or adjusting to change—these are things to which children and adults can relate. Jewish tradition teaches how we are to treat newcomers: with respect and understanding of the situation in which they find themselves. From the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), in Leviticus 19:34 we read: “The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” So important is this principle that the Torah repeats the injunction not once but thirty-five times!

With your children, consider ways of being kind and generous to new acquaintances in school, in after-school activities or at summer camp. An invitation to play in the local park or a willingness to show someone the location of the bathroom can make a real difference!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In *Beautiful Yetta*, Yetta makes her way to Brooklyn via a rancher's truck while her friends, the parrots, find them-

selves in New York City after an escape of a somewhat different sort. Metaphorically, this demonstrates how each of us comes to the place we call home in a unique way. From the time of the Exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people migrated from and to all corners of the world, making each new location into “home.” Sometimes these moves were by choice; often they were for survival. The greatest wave of Jewish immigration to the United States began in the early 1880's and lasted until 1924, during which time more than two million Jews arrived seeking safety, freedom, and opportunities for a rewarding and successful life.

Children are fascinated by where things (and people!) come from. Real-life stories *from* family members *about* family members *to* family members are sure to engage youngsters. Sharing such family background is sure to deepen connections between the generations, and it may inspire your children to take a special interest in family history and the places from which their relatives hailed. If family members with stories or memories of other times and places aren't available, try connecting with friends and neighbors who might have tales of a similar sort of story to tell. Sharing stories that might otherwise go untold is a gift to both the teller and the listener. Pj