



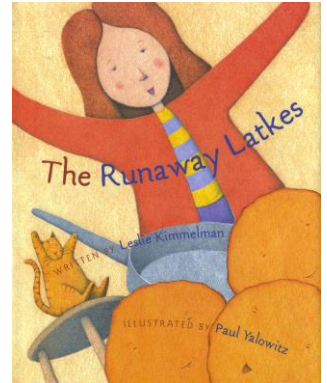
Read the PJ Library Book

The Runaway Latkes (3's)

By Leslie Kimmelman

Illustrated by Paul Yalowitz

Published by Albert Whitman and Company



Synopsis

In this clever parody of *The Gingerbread Boy*, three latkes escape from a pan and roll through the town, taunting “You can’t catch us” as they attempt to flee from their pursuers. An ever-growing line of community helpers joins the synagogue’s talented latke chef, Rebecca Bloom, in pursuit of the latkes. The rabbi, the cantor, the mayor, and police officers chase the runaway latkes to their journey’s end at the river. You won’t believe the Hanukkah miracle that happens there!

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Hanukkah - *Cha-nu-kah* - חַנוּכָּה

Community - *Ke-hi-la* - קְהִילָה

Synagogue - *Beit k'ne-set* - בֵּית כְּנֶסֶת

Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a holiday that celebrates miracles. Interestingly, historic and rabbinic sources disagree over what served as the major miracle behind the Hanukkah story. The Jewish historian Josephus related the miracle of Hanukkah as a military victory. A small group of ill-equipped Jews were able to defeat the powerful Assyrian army and regain their religious freedom. According to legend, the dreidel played a role in protecting religious freedom. Jews gathered to study their forbidden texts. When soldiers approached, the scholars played with dreidels and fooled their observers into thinking the gathering was for gambling purposes – another minor miracle. The rabbis of the Talmud, however, make no mention of these miraculous victories. Instead, they trace the celebration of Hanukkah back to the miracle of one small jar of oil for the Temple’s menorah, barely enough to burn for one day, lasting for eight days. Today, many view Hanukkah as a time for expressing gratitude for miracles of long ago as well as for the miracles that bless our everyday lives, such as the birth of a child or a beautiful sunrise.

Community/Kehilla. Judaism values community. Jewish texts repeatedly remind us that every individual is part of a larger group and is responsible for the wellbeing of others. In *Pirkei Avot*, a compilation of rabbinical writings translated as *Ethics of Our Ancestors*, we read, “Do not separate yourself from the community” (2:5). The rabbis explain that we should be attuned to the needs of others. Judaism also teaches that when we work together, we are stronger and able to accomplish more than when we work alone. In *Ecclesiastes*, we find another way to put it: “A three ply cord is not easily broken” (4:12).



Synagogue in Pilsen, Czech Republic – 3rd largest in the world.

Synagogue/Beit k’nesset. The synagogue serves many functions. It is a center for study, a house of prayer and a place for the community to gather. The Hebrew phrase *beit k’nesset* translates as “house of assembly,” and the word synagogue comes from the Greek for “assembly.” Community is clearly an important part of synagogue life. Although synagogues differ in architectural style and design, they traditionally contain the same major elements: an *aron kodesh* (lit: holy ark), a cabinet that holds the Torah; a *ner tamid* (eternal light), a decorative light fixture that remains lit at all times; and a *bimah*, a raised platform for the public reading of the Torah.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

**How will your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

In the Classroom / Centers

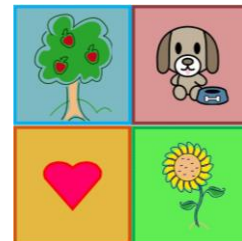
- ✧ **Hanukkah:** Place props in the **dramatic play area** which might help children recreate the story of Hanukkah, such as mops for cleaning the Temple or a small jar of oil for hiding and finding. Supply dreidels for playing and tricking pesky soldiers. Perhaps the children will want to turn the area into a cave for studying books.
- ✧ **Hanukkah:** Can you find a miracle? Support children’s inherent tendency to be awed by God’s world. Go on a nature walk or explore your **outdoor space**. Ask the children to point out wondrous things they find.
- ✧ **Community:** Rename your **job chart** “Kehilla Helpers.” Help children understand their classroom jobs are an important part of maintaining your classroom community.
- ✧ **Community:** Create a tools-of-the-trade matching challenge for your **game center**. Use a combination of magazines, photos, and props. Ask the children to pair the community helper with his or her tool. For example, a doctor and stethoscope; a letter carrier and mailbox or truck, etc.
- ✧ **Synagogue:** Invite a rabbi or cantor to join your classroom for **morning meeting**. Help the children prepare for interview their guests. Ask the rabbi or cantor to tell a story, sing a song, or bring along a small item from the synagogue to explore and discuss.
- ✧ **Synagogue:** Create a **classroom synagogue** or space for quiet contemplation. Examine pictures of synagogue sanctuaries and visit one if possible. How will children recommend you make an *aron kodesh*? A box? A repurposed cabinet? What should the *ner tamid* look like? Create a classroom Torah filled with children’s drawings of biblical figures and their stories. Add photographs of synagogue buildings to your **blocks corner**.



Bridging Home and School

Thank You for the Miracles Quilt

Each family will decorate one or several paper squares that depict a miracle for which the family is grateful. Families can work on their squares during drop-off or pick-up time or at home. Tape the individual squares together to create a quilt. Emphasize that while each square is lovely by itself, when the squares are taped together they create a truly stunning piece of art.



Synagogue Family Scavenger Hunt

Invite families to meet at a local synagogue for dessert and a synagogue scavenger hunt. Hand out worksheets or bingo-type cards that encourage families to find items such as a mezuzah on a door, *siddurim* (prayer books) in three different places, something that looks like a crown, a star of David, etc. Invite the clergy to participate.

Family Engagement at Home

Fifth Night

The fifth night of Hanukkah is the darkest night of the holiday because it is at the end of Kislev when there is no moon – and because, by some trick of the Jewish calendar, it can never fall on Shabbat. Many communities choose to add brightness to this night by creating community events and opportunities to give gifts, rather than receive them. Provide your school families with information on public celebrations, or send home some ideas to do on their own, such as cooking soup for a neighbor, doing the grocery shopping for an over-worked friend, or bringing a lively game of dreidel to a senior center.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about your classroom community

Grab your camera when you see children helping one another. Assemble a community book or wall collage that develops along with your students' understanding of community. Write a narrative that highlights how the children work together. For example: *Mark was determined to build a house with waffle blocks, but he ran into construction problems. David knows that sometimes it takes two people to get a job done, so he offered his assistance. I wonder who will live there when the house is done.*



More resources and websites for inspiration

Classroom jobs (some advanced) Scholastic.com/jobs

Connecting kids and nature <https://www.nwf.org/What-We-Do/Kids-and-Nature.aspx>

Hanukkah Pinterest <http://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/hanukkah-books-and-activities>

