



## THE GOLEM'S LATKES

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*When a rabbi leaves his housemaid in charge while he visits the emperor, a golem, a creature made from clay, comes to life and creates more latkes than the city can contain.*

The legendary *golem*—from the Hebrew word meaning “lump”—was created from clay and dust to serve and protect people. The first reference to the *golem* occurs in the Bible, in the book of Psalms. The *golem* is mentioned again much later when Rabbi Judah makes the creature to help the endangered Jews of Prague. Since then, the *golem* has become a popular literary figure—Nobel-Prize-laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer’s Yiddish novel, *The Golem*, includes a *golem*, while Mary Shelley’s classic *Frankenstein* contains a *golem*-like figure.

You might discuss these ideas with your children:

- Does the golem in this story seem funny or comforting or scary?
- At first, Rabbi Judah didn’t want the *golem* to help Basha with her work. Why did he change his mind?
- How would you create a *golem*? Would you color it, give it clothing, or allow it to talk? If you put a word on your *golem*’s head, what important word would you choose? Try your ideas on paper or with clay.
- Would you like to have a *golem*? If you had a *golem*, what would you have it do to help people?

### MAKING LATKES

On Passover we have *matzah* to remind us of the hurried escape of the Israelites from Egypt, and *Rosh Hashanah* has its apples and honey to ring in a sweet new year. Mention *Hanukkah* and you’ll likely hear the word *latkes*. Served plain, with apple sauce or with sour cream, fried *latkes* bring to mind the ancient miracle of the oil that lasted eight days in the recaptured Temple.

While traditional *latkes* are wonderful just as they are, there are also many ways you can vary the recipe to suit your own personal taste. Get creative! Check out cookbooks, online sources or friends’ recipes. Experiment! Make *latkes* with sweet potatoes or zucchini. Bake them. Give them a Cajun or Asian flair. Top them with powdered sugar. Have fun—and remember to involve the children! PJ

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