HANUKKAH!
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Illustrated by Marilyn Hafner

As we watch one close family warmly celebrate the eight days of Hanukkah, little Moe tries again and again to pronounce the name of the holiday. Will he succeed?

This book beautifully combines poetry and prose to give us a view of one family’s celebration of Hanukkah. The family shares the fun of the holiday as well as all of the preparations, amidst an atmosphere of joy and love. The detailed illustrations add to the feeling of boisterous celebration. Grandma, parents, and children sing, light candles, eat traditional foods, and make gifts for one another, while younger brother Sam tries to teach baby Moe to say “Hanukkah!”

JEWISH HERITAGE
According to Jewish tradition, the family dinner table is sacred space. In ancient times, after the destruction of the Holy Temple, the Jewish home became the central place for sharing thoughts, celebrations, and learning. In Hanukkah! the dinner table is a place for joy and connection.

The first teaching in Pirkei Avot (a book of rabbinic teachings sometimes translated as Ethics of Our Ancestors) says: “Moses got the Torah from Sinai; he passed [the tradition] to Joshua who passed it to the elders...” and so on to the current day. Transmitting tradition is vital to all cultures, and the family in this book is actively passing on Hanukkah traditions.

PLAYING DREIDEL
Hanukkah provides appealing activities for children of all ages, one of which is playing dreidel, a game involving a four-sided spinning top. Hebrew letters on the four sides of the dreidel are nun, gimel, hay, and shin, standing for the words “Nes gadol haya shani”—“A great miracle happened there.” Dreidel can be played with any number of items, such as peanuts, candy, or pennies.

In this book Sam makes a dreidel of clay. Maybe your family would like to make a giant dreidel from a cardboard box, a wrapping paper tube, and lots of duct tape. For decorations let your children’s imaginations take flight!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Questions to consider when reading:

• What are the various ways the family in this book prepares for Hanukkah?
• Can you tell which night of Hanukkah is shown in this book? (Hint: find the menorah and count each candle except the shamshe, or helper candle.)
• What are the ways this family shows how much they love one another?