



JEREMY'S DREIDEL

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At a dreidel-making workshop, Jeremy's friends think he's molding a secret code on his clay dreidel. But he's really making a special gift for his father, who is blind. How will he get his friends to appreciate his special dreidel?

In 165 BCE, the Greek King of Syria, Antiochus IV, imposed laws on the Jewish people, forcing them to worship Greek gods and forbidding the practice of Judaism. In the community of Modi'in, a Jewish priest named Mattathias refused to comply. He and his five sons rallied a small Jewish army to rebel against the Greeks. Years later, when they were victorious in spite of the Greek's greater numbers, the Jewish people discovered their holy Temple had been desecrated. To rededicate the Temple after cleaning it, they needed sacred oil: finding enough to burn for only one day, the oil miraculously burned for eight! *Hanukkah* (which in Hebrew means "dedication") refers to this event.

PLAYING DREIDEL

A dreidel is a 4-sided top with a different Hebrew letter on each side. The letters (*nun, gimmel, hay, shin*) represent the first letter of each word in the Hebrew sentence "*Nes gadol haya sham*," which means "A great miracle happened there." (See the instructions at the conclusion of this book for playing the dreidel game.) Legend tells us that during ancient times, the Jews met in hiding to study Torah. They kept a spinning top at hand; if discovered by Greek soldiers, they could pretend to be gathered for the game.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Here are some conversation-starters and ideas for activities associated with *Jeremy's Dreidel*:

- Why do you think Jeremy's friends asked him so many questions about blindness, Braille, and his father?
- Jeremy seemed used to explaining about blindness and Braille. Why do you think that, after a while, he started feeling uncomfortable with his friends' questions?
- What questions do you have about blindness or Braille reading? As a family, you can search for answers at your local library or on-line.
- Which of the dreidels made by the children in this story was your favorite? Why?
- What materials do you have at home that could be reused for art? What *Hanukkah* objects would you enjoy making?
- With the Braille alphabet at the back of this book as a guide, create a Happy *Hanukkah* sign for your refrigerator or to share at school. Try making the raised Braille dots by using non-toxic paste or glue sprinkled with table salt on a piece of cardboard.
- Think about this quote from the book: "Blind isn't how you look, it's how you see." What does this mean to you? Pj