

JEWISH HEIRLOOM STORIES

LOTTY'S LACE TABLECLOTH
by Tami Lehman-Wilzig



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Written by Tami Lehman-Wilzig

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The Talmud says, "The Sabbath is a Queen whose coming changes even the humblest home into a palace." Jewish tradition treats Shabbat as an honored guest, just as Lotty does in this book. To add a sense of joyous anticipation for Shabbat's arrival, many Jewish families prepare their home and table as if royalty is coming to visit.

Jewish tradition places great importance on storytelling and learning from the past. An heirloom is one way we pass along our family history and values. The objects we use to celebrate holidays help us experience the spirituality of these moments while binding us to our ancestors. Vanessa Ochs, a modern Jewish scholar and anthropologist, asserts that stories about an object's birth (how it came to be part of your home) are as important as human birth stories in transmitting cultural identity.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING:

- Did any of your ancestors come from a country other than the United States?
- Are there objects in your home that, like Lotty's tablecloth, have been passed from one generation to the next?
- How does sharing the tablecloth meet Lotty's and the empress's needs?
- What is one special thing your family does or might do in the future to make Shabbat feel special?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Nina is proud of her heritage and looks forward to receiving the family tablecloth. Which items in your home reflect your culture and ancestry? This story could be an impetus to add to your family's lore. Can you create your own rituals or objects for Shabbat? You might fill a special flower vase each Friday for a Shabbat table centerpiece, decoupage a challah plate, or make a tray for Shabbat candles. Someday these might be your family's precious heirlooms!

Whether your family hails from across the street or across the ocean, children love to hear their unique history. Perhaps you could start a family tree or trace your family's journey from one place and time to another. Include grandparents when sharing family history, in person, by phone, or Skype! Discuss the choices your ancestors made, look for old family photographs, and keep a map nearby to locate places that trace your family's story.