



MRS. KATZ AND TUSH

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A long-lasting friendship develops between Larnel, a young African-American, and Mrs. Katz, a lonely Jewish widow, when Larnel presents Mrs. Katz with a scrawny kitten.

Known as *Pesach* in Hebrew, the Passover holiday begins on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nissan (generally in late March or April). The fascinating narrative of Passover is chronicled in Exodus, the second book of the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). Passover is a holiday with extensive home observance. The *seder* (Hebrew for “order”), a “talking feast,” is the key event of Passover. With a *haggadah*, the text and commentary that provides the ritual’s script and order, Jews navigate the highly symbolic story of our ancestors’ escape from slavery in Egypt. This re-telling fulfills the instruction in Exodus 13:8: “You shall tell your children on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what God did for me when I went out of the land of Egypt.’”

KADDISH

In Judaism, Kaddish is the prayer associated with mourning the loss of a loved one; interestingly, the Mourners’ Kaddish does not mention death or bereavement, but rather praises God’s many attributes. The prayer ends by requesting that God will grant peace to everyone, everywhere. That Larnel, at the conclusion of this book, takes his own children to recite the Mourners’ Kaddish at Mrs. Katz’s grave is a sign of the great love and respect that existed between the two.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

This book is so rich with possibilities for discussion! Consider focusing on a different aspect each time you read it with your children: intergenerational love and esteem, what constitutes “family,” and respect for other cultures and religions, to mention a few.