



THE SHABBAT BOX

Written by Lesley Simpson

Illustrated by Nicole in Den Bosch

When Ira loses his class's precious Shabbat Box in a snow-storm, he learns valuable lessons about honesty, trust, and eventual good outcomes.

Shabbat is a Jewish oasis in time that separates the past week from the coming one. Beginning at sundown on Friday and ending on Saturday evening (traditionally when the first three stars become visible), *Shabbat* makes all those who enjoy it feel like royalty, for people are not only permitted but encouraged to rest, relax, enjoy the blessings of life, and refrain from work!

There are countless, varied ways to observe the Jewish *Sabbath*. For some, it is marked by a festive meal on Friday evening, another special meal on Saturday afternoon, and services at the synagogue. For many, *Shabbat* is a time for being with friends, having guests at the dinner table, and taking part in relaxing activities such as reading, taking walks, catching up on the happenings of the week, and perhaps enjoying a nap! The means and degree of individual and family *Shabbat* observance often changes over time, just as people and families alter and grow.

HAVDALAH CELEBRATIONS

Havdalah symbolically differentiates *Shabbat* from the start of the upcoming week. During this short ceremony on Saturday evenings, prayers are recited over wine and a special braided candle with multiple wicks is lit. Spices of varying kinds are passed among the participants so that all may share the aroma. As *Havdalah* ends, the candle is extinguished as it is dipped in the remaining wine, and the new week begins.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Based on the instructions at the conclusion of this story, create a *Shabbat Box*. What things might you and your children include in order for the box to be unique to your family? What items might you include instead of purchase? With whom might you share your *Shabbat Box*? How might its contents alter as your family grows and changes?

As *Shabbat* marks the traditional end-time of the work of creation and God's rest after having fashioned the world, this is a perfect opportunity to turn to the Biblical book of *Bereshit* (Genesis) and read of the six wondrous days of creation followed by the very first *Shabbat*.

If you haven't already done so, consider baking *challah*! *Challah* is braided egg bread, traditionally eaten on the *Sabbath*. A myriad of recipes can be found in cookbooks and on-line, or perhaps borrowed from a friend who bakes. Braiding is an easily-learned skill for most, much like creating braids in a child's hair. Give it a try. The aroma alone will be worth the work!

The film "Fiddler on the Roof" has a number of scenes depicting *Shabbat* in a *shtetl* (a small pre-World War II Eastern or Central European community with a significant Jewish population). If you've never seen the movie—or if it's been a while—enjoy the moving story of a poor Jewish family's struggles and their love for each other, their community and their faith. Pj