



# WHEN ZAYDEH DANCED ON ELDRIDGE STREET

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*Zeesie is a little afraid of Zeydeh, her grandfather. He's always so serious and stern. But when Simchat Torah rolls around, Zeesie sees a different side of him. Something about this holiday brings out joy in everyone – even Zaydeh!*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

*Simchat Torah* (Hebrew for “rejoicing of the Torah”) is the exuberant conclusion to the fall holiday season in the Jewish calendar. It is an unforgettable outpouring of joy and celebration, all about one thing: the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. As Zaydeh explains to his granddaughter Zeesie in this story, the Torah is a gift from God to the Jewish people; it “tell[s] us how to live as Jews in this world.” A portion of the Torah is read every week during the Shabbat (Sabbath) synagogue service, so that the entire Torah is read once a year.

On *Simchat Torah*, Torah scrolls are taken out in synagogues all over the world, and the singing and dancing begins! The celebration includes a reading of the final portion in the Torah. When reading the Torah is completed, it is immediately begun again. The first chapters of the book of Genesis are read aloud, kicking off a new yearly Torah cycle. One of the highlights of the service, which Zeesie experiences herself, is when all the children present are called up for an *aliyah*, the blessing that precedes a Torah reading.

Zaydeh calls the Torah a “kiss from God to the Jewish people to show His love.” Just as one would read a love letter over and over, so the Jewish people read and treasure the Torah every year, again and again.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

*Simchat Torah* is filled with joyous activity – dancing, singing, parading. In many synagogues, part of the fun is seeing the Torah scrolls being “rewound” from end to beginning. The use of scrolls dates back to ancient Egypt, and today’s Torah scrolls are virtually the same as the ones used thousands of years ago. You can make a mini scroll at home to bring to a *Simchat Torah* celebration.

### Supplies

- Paper
- Tape
- Paper towel tubes
- Markers, stickers, glitter, etc.
- Strip of cloth (about two feet long)

Tape pieces of paper together – the more you use, the longer your scroll will be. Use this space to write a story, draw pictures, create a map – whatever you’d like.

Torah scrolls are meant to be beautiful, so using markers, stickers, and glitter, decorate your paper towel tubes however you’d like. Now tape one end of the scroll to one paper towel tube, and the other end to the other tube, and roll ‘em up. Tie the strip of cloth around the closed scrolls. You’ve got your own mini “Torah”!