



ANNA & SOLOMON

Written by Elaine Snyder

Illustrated by Harry Bliss

Anna and Solomon, a young Russian couple, wanted to move to America – but they could only afford one ticket at a time. Solomon went first, and sent a ticket back for Anna – but then something unexpected happened.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Life was not easy for Jews in Russia and many European countries at the turn of the 20th century. Their homes and businesses were often in danger, and they feared for the safety of their families. As a result, many Jews bravely decided to leave their home country and set out for America, where they heard they could make better lives for themselves. It was a costly voyage and, as a result, it happened sometimes that one or two family members would make the journey first and, once in America, save their earnings to cover the rest of the family's fare.

Immigrants worked incredibly long and hard hours to make ends meet, taking whatever jobs they could get. Sometimes relatives would start a business together, and as more family members arrived in America, they would be provided with jobs. In this story, as Anna's relatives kept arriving, Solomon was able to provide them with work and help them make a fresh start in the United States.

Maimonides, a Jewish sage from the 12th and 13th centuries, wrote about eight levels of *zedakah* (the Hebrew word meaning "justice," often referred to as "charity"), the highest of which is providing a livelihood for another person: "The greatest level...is to support a fellow Jew by endowing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, or finding employment for him, in order to strengthen his hand until he need no longer be dependent upon others."

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Here are some topics to spark conversations in your family:

- In this story, Anna repeatedly puts the needs of her family members before her own. This value can be found in Leviticus (the third book of the *Torah*, the first five books of the Bible) 19:18: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself..." What does it mean to treat others this way? Can you think of a time when you cared for someone else like this, or when another person showed you such love?
- If you haven't experienced it yourself, try to imagine what it would be like to leave your home country for a new one. How do you think you would feel upon arriving in a new, unfamiliar country? What would be similar and what would be different? What challenges might you face?
- Have you ever been in a situation in which things did not turn out as you hoped or expected, as Solomon was with Anna's delayed arrival in America? How did you react? Were you able to turn the situation into something good, such as an opportunity to help others?