



Raisel's Riddle

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{ What is more precious than rubies? }

Learning and Loving It

Does this story have a familiar ring to it? It's inspired by two other famous tales: the folktale of Cinderella, and Megillat Esther (the Scroll of Esther), which is read on the holiday of Purim. But Raisel's story has something the others do not: lots of love for Jewish learning! Raisel learns from her grandfather that "rubies may be lost and gold stolen, but what you learn is yours forever." Her love of learning gives her a uniqueness and "rare intelligence" that captures the heart of the rabbi's son. Cinderella's prince and Esther's king could learn a thing or two from that young man: Outward beauty is all well and good, but a heart and mind that love to learn are priceless. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/raiselsriddle.

Talmudic Treasures

Raisel herself gives her suitor a gentle reminder about looking beyond the superficial: "Don't look at the container but at what's inside." She selects this powerful reminder straight from her rich learning in the Talmud, an ancient collection of rabbinic teachings. These days, many women study the Talmud, but such learning was off-limits to girls and women in Raisel's time. Imagine how surprised the rabbi's son must have been to hear this pearl of Jewish wisdom come from such an unlikely place. Was he impressed? Well, you know how the story goes . . . and even more impressive is the fact that the world of Jewish learning is now open to all.

Upside-Down Miracles

During the holiday of Purim, it's traditional for things to get a little crazy. In Hebrew, it's referred to as v'nahafoch hu, "flipping it around." This idea lies at the heart of both the Cinderella story and the Purim story. The powerful villains — Cinderella's stepmother and Haman — end up humiliated and defeated. Those who persevere through hardship — Cinderella, Esther, and Mordechai — prevail over their oppressors. This sort of miraculous flip of destiny isn't restricted to fairy tales. Raisel never gives up hope, and neither should we. (Even the dog in this book seems grateful!)

HANDS ON!

Make a Big Book of Learning

Supplies:

Blank paper

Markers/Crayons/Colored Pencils

Stapler

A mind ready to learn!

Think of things you want to learn more about (Outer space? Iguanas? Homemade ice cream? Ballet?). Draw a picture to represent each subject on a separate piece of paper. Arrange the drawings in a stack with a few blank pages in between each one and staple them together as a book. Then, go and learn! Use books, the internet, or friends and family as resources to find out more about your chosen subjects. Take notes or make drawings about your findings on the blank pages in your book. Enjoy looking back at everything you've learned . . . then, keep learning!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

HOW does this story remind you of fairy tales? What's unique about this story?

WHAT do you want people to see when they look at you?

HAVE you ever been in a bad situation that out well in the end? What happened?