



# ALEF IS FOR ABBA

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*The Hebrew letter alef is at the beginning of many important words – including abba and ima, father and mother. Read along as the young child in this sweet book points out few more alef words to you!*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

For a child, getting ready for *Shabbat* (the Jewish day of rest) is almost as much fun as the day itself! There are many things you can do to make the day distinct. Bake delicious *challah* (braided bread), go to the market for ingredients for special *Shabbat* recipes, clean the house, set the table -- and of course, get yourself ready! Children love to be involved every step of the way.

*Hiddur Mitzvah* is the Jewish concept of beautifying a *mitzvah* (commandment or good deed). *Hiddur mitzvah* helps transform something routine into something distinctive and wonderful. Many families set the table with a white tablecloth used only for *Shabbat* meals. Candlesticks are often polished before being lit. While jeans and t-shirts work for the rest of the week, special outfits help build anticipation and appreciation for *Shabbat*.

This story depicts the very tender moment when, after *Shabbat* dinner is over and guests have come and gone, *Abba* and *Ima* (mother and father) tuck their child in for the night. For generations, parents have turned bedtime into a Jewish moment as they share a central and defining prayer with their loved ones:

*Sh'ma Yis-ra-eil, A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad.*

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.”

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

This book comes alive when you and your child act it out. Point to the *aryeh* in the picture and then ask your child to become a lion (and look especially scared when he/she roars!). For *aruchah* (meal) your child can serve you something yummy. Go to the refrigerator together and select some tasty *ochel* (food) – you can do this as make-believe or for real. See what other words you can play with, pointing out as you go that all the words start with the letter *alef*, the very first letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

After reading through the book once, it might be fun to take a trip to the market and find some of the foods highlighted in the book. You could do this in preparation of *Shabbat* or a special family dinner. Let your child decide which fruits to pick. When you get home, look up the Hebrew words for each food on the Internet.

Another fun game is to help your child set up a pretend *shuk* (Israeli open-air market). Take turns being the shopkeeper and offer each other all sorts of things to buy. Occasionally you might pretend to drop something, giving you an excuse to dramatically shout out *oy!* (oh no!) and sound like you really live in Israel!