



# EMANUEL AND THE HANUKKAH RESCUE

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*Why won't Emanuel's father light the Hanukkah menorah? Frustrated, Emanuel stows away on a whaling ship! But when a storm hits, the only thing that might save him is a light from home – and not just any light.*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

Emanuel Aguilar lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts, with his *Sephardi* family. (Jews whose ancestors came from Spain, Portugal, or the Middle East are known as *Sephardim* and those from Eastern Europe are *Ashkenazim*.) Emanuel's family had emigrated from Portugal, where in 1497, Jews had been forced to convert to Christianity or leave the country. Many families, like Emanuel's, hid their true identity and practiced their Jewish traditions secretly for generation after generation. Forced to live this clandestine life, fears often lingered for years, even after moving to a place where they were free to practice as they wished.

Emanuel cannot understand why he can't tell his friends he is Jewish, and why his father won't follow *halacha* (traditional Jewish law) by placing their Hanukkah menorah in the window for all to see. Eventually, Emanuel's father "sees the light" and even convinces the neighbors to display their menorahs. The miracle of Hanukkah is publicized because a small boy, proud of his heritage, helps his father overcome centuries of fear.

In the 1490s approximately 80,000 Jewish people lived in Portugal. They were banned from living there until the 19th century. Today, there are about 600 Jews in Portugal, including some descendants of the *marranos*, those who publicly converted but secretly practiced Judaism at home.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Every holiday has its traditional foods, as does every culture. Hanukkah is the perfect time to eat foods fried in oil. In addition to *latkes* (potato pancakes), the well-known Ashkenazi treat, try making traditional Sephardic *bimuelos* (fried dough balls). You will need:

- 1 ½ cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 large bottle of grape seed or peanut oil for frying

Mix the dry ingredients together. Add the egg, milk, and stir until batter forms. In a frying pan, warm the oil to about 365 degrees. Drop the batter by tablespoons into the oil. Fry the *bimuelos* until they are golden on each side, about 2 to 3 minutes. Top with maple syrup, or make a sauce: Mix a cup of sugar and ¾ a cup of water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Add rose water or vanilla for flavor.

When you light Hanukkah candles, take a cue from Emanuel and his family. Place your menorah where people will see it. This could be in a window or even on the step outside. The point is to share the light with the world.