

The Sages of Chelm and the Moon

written by
Shlomo Abbas

illustrated by
Omer Hoffmann

{ What does it mean to be wise? }

City of Wise Fools

Chelm is a real town in Poland, but in Jewish folklore it is home to the most foolish bunch of people anyone's ever met. Not only that — they're fools who think they're wise! A large collection of stories about Chelm and its "sages" has been handed down over hundreds of years, this particular tale being among the most famous. When faced with a problem, Chelmites put their heads together and think...and think...and think some more...and then come up with a ridiculous (er, brilliant!) solution. Chelmites aren't the only fools around — many different cultures around the world have stories about the fools among them in their folktale canons. Maybe such stories are reminders to not take ourselves too seriously. To learn more visit pjlibrary.org/sagesofchelm.

Story Hour

If there's one thing almost every culture in the world can agree on, it's the importance of stories and folktales. Jewish culture is no exception. Stories don't just entertain; they give us insight and wisdom about life and help us see ourselves and the people around us a bit more clearly. There's a reason people refer to "the moral of the story" — many folktales and stories, even funny ones, speak to our moral compass. Think of how the crafty innkeeper in this story takes advantage of the oblivious Chelmites. There may be times when we find ourselves in a position where we have to choose: Do we mislead people for our own gain, or do we help guide them to avoid making costly mistakes? A story like this prompts us to think about how we might behave ourselves.

Moon Shadow

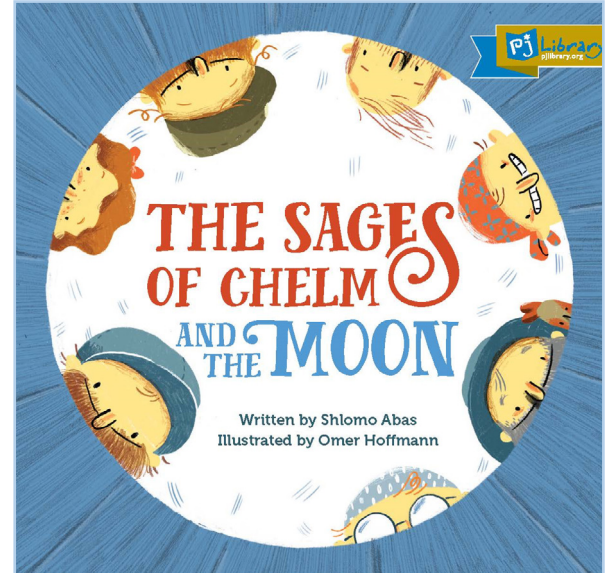
The sages in this story are fascinated by the moon because it's so bright and beautiful. The moon plays a pivotal role in Judaism, too. The Jewish calendar is mostly lunar-based, and the beginning of each Jewish month falls on the new moon, when the sky is dark and just a sliver of moon can be seen. Called *Rosh Hodesh* (literally, "head of the month"), this is a day to remind ourselves that just as the moon is capable of repeated renewal, we are capable of spiritual renewal, too — again and again, throughout our lives.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

Why is it good to laugh at ourselves sometimes?

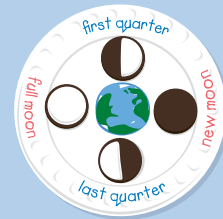
The Chelmites' plan doesn't work out. Have you ever had an idea that didn't work? What might you have done differently?

Can you see the moon tonight? What does it look like?



HANDS ON!

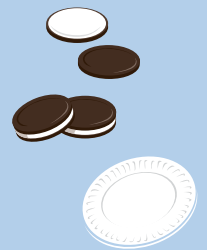
Make an Edible Moon Chart



Next snack time, take a moment for a delicious lesson about the phases of the moon.

Supplies

Chocolate sandwich cookies
with white filling
Paper plate
Markers
Spoon



Label a few major phases of the moon around the perimeter of the paper plate: new moon, first quarter, full moon, last quarter. Now carefully pull apart the cookies and use the spoon to scrape off some of the filling to match each label. (We won't tell if you sneak a taste of the filling.) Place each cookie by its appropriate label, and you've got a sweet representation of a moon's monthlong journey.