

A Hen for Izzy Pippik

written by
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{ How do you know where you belong? }

A Place Called Home

No matter where we are born, we find our homes again and again throughout our lives — wherever we are loved and appreciated. This can be true for animals, too — just consider Yevka the Hen! When Shaina cares for Yevka she is fulfilling the *mitzvah* (Hebrew for “commandment” or good deed) of *tza’ar ba’alei chayim*, caring for animals, as she provides safety, security, and comfort for her dear feathered friend. Isn’t that what home is all about? Even Izzy Pippik sees that the right place for Yevka and her brood is with Shaina — her new home. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/izzypippik.

Community Watch

This story is inspired by a tale in the Talmud (the core collection of rabbinic writings) about Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, a first-century sage who famously carried out the *mitzvah* of *hashavat aveidah*, returning lost objects. When he finds a stray hen, Rabbi Chanina cares for it and its chicks until the flock grows too large. Then he sells them in exchange for goats, eventually returning the goats to the original owner (who is surprised to find he now has goats!). In a twist on that tale, Shaina goes beyond merely caring for her found pet — she inspires the townsfolk to care for Yevka’s offspring, which results in renewed prosperity for all. When we watch out for one another, everyone benefits — people and chickens alike.

A Belly Button by Any Other Name

The names in this book are lively and funny — and they all have a special meaning. *Izzy* is short for Yitzhak, which is Hebrew for Isaac, one of the patriarchs in the Bible. The Russian name *Yevka* is related to Rivka, Hebrew for Rebecca, one of the Jewish matriarchs (married to Isaac!). *Pippik* (sometimes pronounced *pupik*) means “belly button” — and is one of the funniest words in Yiddish, the mixture of German and Hebrew that Eastern European Jews spoke for generations. And Shaina? *Shaina* is Yiddish for “beautiful.” One way the story shows us how close Shaina is to her grandfather is through the suffix “la” that he adds to her name, a Yiddishism that expresses affection and love: Shainala.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

Have you ever found an animal or object that belonged to someone else? What did you do?

Have you ever waited a long time for someone to return? What happened when they finally arrived?

The illustrations show a lot of hustle and bustle in this town — what is everyone doing?

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Adapted from a story in the Babylonian Talmud



HANDS ON!

Make Vegetarian “Chicken” Soup

“Chicken soup?” asks Grandpa when Shaina brings Yevka home. Shaina won’t let anyone turn Yevka into lunch, but that doesn’t mean Grandpa has to go hungry. Try this easy-to-make recipe — it has the warm, cozy comfort of the original version, and no hens will be harmed.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
1-2 onions, chopped
3-4 cloves of garlic, pressed
1-2 stalks of celery, chopped
1-2 carrots, chopped
1 parsnip, chopped
2 quarts/1900 ml water
1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
(or 1/2 teaspoon dried dill weed)
Salt and pepper to taste
Chopped parsley to garnish



Heat oil over a medium flame. Saute onions until soft and translucent, about 3-4 minutes. Add garlic, celery, carrots, and parsnip, and saute until vegetables begin to soften, for about 3-4 more minutes. Add water and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about an hour. Add dill, salt, and pepper, then taste. Adjust seasonings as you wish. Sprinkle soup with a little chopped parsley when serving.