

The Parakeet Named Dreidel

written by
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{ Why do we take care of others? }

An Underdog Holiday

A parakeet on a snowy night? That's not something you see every day. But it's the kind of thing that happens in the world of Isaac Bashevis Singer, the most famous Yiddish writer of the 20th century. This story begins in the darkest time of winter, during the holiday of Hanukkah. Hanukkah celebrates the possibility of light in dark times, and the victory of the minority in the face of the majority. It is a holiday that celebrates those who are less powerful.

The Bird Who Came in From the Cold

Jewish texts have a lot of advice about how to treat other people. They also have advice about how to treat animals. Caring for animals — in Hebrew, *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* — is an important part of Judaism, both for our own pets and animals we happen to run into (or, in Dreidel's case, those who run into us!). This *mitzvah* — Hebrew for "commandment" or good deed — can be as big as helping a donkey who's schlepping a heavy burden or as simple as inviting a bird inside on a cold winter night. This story also highlights another *mitzvah*: *hashavat aveidah*, which is Hebrew for "returning lost objects." When Dreidel's (or Tsip-Tsip's?) original owners finally turn up, David's family offers to return Dreidel, even though they're very attached to him. Luckily, another solution is available.

A Lucky Spin

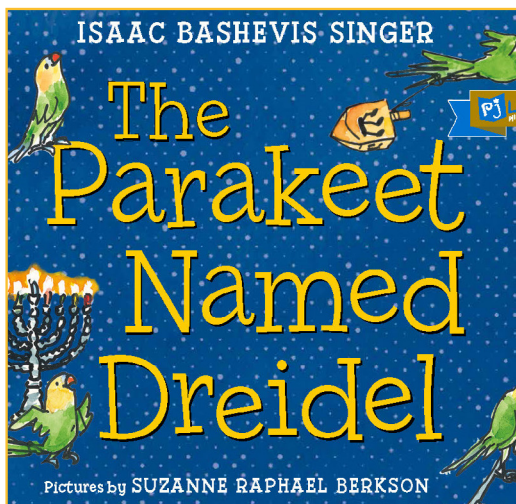
Maybe it makes sense that the parakeet in this story is named Dreidel, after the classic Hanukkah game of chance. He is truly fortuitous, after all — he brings together a young couple. The game of dreidel is played by spinning a wooden top and hoping you'll get lucky, whether the winnings are chocolate coins, nuts, pennies, or love. Win or lose, it's like anything else in life: You never know what you'll get if you don't play! To learn more about this classic game, and to find the Hanukkah story and some well-oiled (ahem) recipes, visit pjlibrary.org/parakeetnameddreidel.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHAT are the different ways David's family takes care of their parakeet visitor?

HOW do you help take care of the animals in your life?

HOW does it feel to lose something you really care about? What does it feel like if it's returned to you?



HANDS ON!

Make a Pinecone Bird Feeder

Maybe a parakeet hasn't shown up on your windowsill, but plenty of other birds could use a wintertime treat.



Supplies

- Pinecone
- Peanut butter (or any nut or seed butter)
- Birdseed
- String



- 1 Firmly tie a piece of string around a pinecone.
- 2 Mix peanut butter and birdseed together.
- 3 Press the mixture into the spaces of the pinecone.
- 4 Tie the pinecone outside for birds to snack on!