



CHANUKAH IN CHELM

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The rabbi has given Mendel what should be a simple job: Find a table so he can the Chanukah menorah by the window. But this is Chelm, so nothing's as straightforward as you might think!

JEWISH CONCEPTS

There's no place quite like Chelm. Known in Jewish folklore as a village of fools (though the residents are sometimes facetiously called "clever" or "wise" or even "heroes") nothing is ever quite what it seems on the surface in the mythical, mystical town of Chelm. From the first page of *Chanukah in Chelm*, the stage is set. Words take on double meaning, simple sentences are easily misconstrued, and everything is much more complicated than it need be. Let the fun begin!

Each page of this delightful book lends itself to discussion and laughter. Some humor in the story will be evident immediately to your children, while some will need explanation, re-readings or additional time for them to understand. Happily, *Chanukah in Chelm* can be appreciated at many levels: there's something for everyone and, as we see on the final page, all roads lead to Chelm!

Chelm is, in fact, not only a place that appears in Jewish folklore, but an actual industrial town in eastern Poland near the border with Ukraine. The "real" Chelm has a sister city in the United States – Knoxville, Tennessee.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

How did Chelm become a village of *Schlemiels*? (Schlemiel is the Yiddish word for a bungler, an often likable but unlucky person who seems doomed to fail in everyday experiences.) There are many stories to explain how and why Chelm was "chosen" for this honor! Your children might be interested in:

- Exploring some of these stories at your local library
- Pretending for a few minutes to be a resident of Chelm, purposely misunderstanding what is said to them - and then pondering how to be considerate of friends and acquaintances who sometimes have difficulty in school or in social situations
- Creating a story that could take place only in Chelm!