

The Dreidel That Wouldn't Spin: A Toyshop Tale of Hanukkah

Martha Seif Simpson

Durga Yael Bernhard, Illustrator

Wisdom Tales (Oct 1, 2014)

Hardcover \$16.95 (32pp)

978-1-937786-28-1

This sweet story demonstrates the miracle of the holiday season—indeed, of every time of year: that giving truly is better than receiving.

A heartwarming tale of the triumph of generosity over greed and the true spirit of the holiday season, *The Dreidel That Wouldn't Spin: A Toyshop Tale of Hanukkah* has the makings of a children's classic. This sweet story of a glorious Hanukkah dreidel that spins only for children pure of heart includes charming illustrations sure to capture young children's interest.

"It was the most beautiful dreidel the shopkeeper had ever seen," the story begins. The merchant puts a high price on the top and displays it prominently in the toy shop window. A wealthy customer purchases the dreidel for his overindulged, pushy daughter, but when the toy won't spin for her, it's returned. A second customer buys the toy for her grabby little boy. But the dreidel won't spin for him either, so again it is returned. Finally, when a poor child "who saw beyond price or appearance, one who understood what was truly precious" requests to simply look at the toys his family cannot afford to own, the miracle of Hanukkah is made manifest.

Author Martha Seif Simpson wisely avoids the tendency of many picture book authors to preach to their young audiences. Instead, her unembellished tale allows the message of the transformative power of generosity to shine through. Simpson's experience as a children's librarian and author of five professional books for teachers and librarians, as well as her experiences growing up in a Jewish family, provide strong credentials for authoring *The Dreidel That Wouldn't Spin*.

In addition to being an award-winning illustrator, Durga Yael Bernhard teaches children Hebrew, Judaic Studies, and art. Her uncluttered illustrations are a perfect complement to the simplicity of the tale Simpson relates. Some of her artwork provides singular focus for scenes from the story; elsewhere, she includes multiple images per page that are sure to delight young children who enjoy perusing picture books on their own.

The Dreidel That Wouldn't Spin should have a place of honor next to the Hanukkah menorah in Jewish homes. But it also should have a treasured spot in the homes of non-Jewish families, as it demonstrates the miracle of the holiday season—indeed, of every time of year: that giving truly is better than receiving.

NANCY WALKER (April 22, 2015)

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