



A HOLIDAY FOR NOAH

Written by Susan Remick Topek

Illustrated by Sally Springer

Noah loves so many things about nursery school. He particularly looks forward to Fridays, when he shares a pre-Shabbat snack of challah with his classmates.

The Jewish Sabbath, Shabbat, begins just before sundown on Friday and continues until three stars appear in the sky on Saturday evening. Shabbat marks the time, just after the creation of the world, when God rested. In the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), we learn that there was recognition on God's part that human beings needed a time and space in which to rest, relax, and recuperate from the workweek—and Shabbat came to be. Shabbat has been compared to a jewel, a crown, a bride, a queen, and a flower, among many other beautiful things. For thousands of years,

Shabbat has provided the Jewish people an opportunity to care for themselves and each other. As the secular Jewish writer, Ahad Ha'am, said: "More than the Jewish people have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jewish people." Families with young children may have a unique understanding that it is critically important to slow down, take a breath, and recharge on a regular basis. This is the gift of Shabbat.

JEWISH EXPERIENCES

What a wonderful early school experience Noah has—with a gentle, loving teacher, friends with whom to play, activities from which to learn, and the opportunity to experience Judaism through games, language, song, dance, food, holiday celebrations, and the ebb and flow of the year. Jewish experiences are available in many varied forms, depending on where you live and your family's needs and choices. From Jewish preschool classes to Israeli dance groups to toddler playtimes and Tot Shabbat experiences, learn what is available in your community. Your local Jewish federation, community center and synagogue office make great places to begin your search.