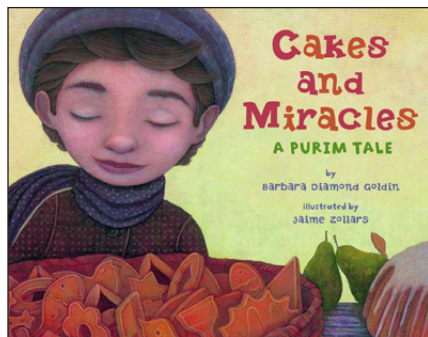


## CAKES AND MIRACLES

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*Hershel's blindness doesn't keep him from living life. He helps his mother by doing chores, but wishes he could do even more for her. When an angel appears in Hershel's dream and encourages him to make what he sees when he closes his eyes, the boy sneaks into the kitchen, transforming his mother's cookie dough into beautiful hamantaschen (three-cornered fruit-filled cookies) that can be sold to raise money for the family at Purim.*

As poor as Hershel's family and the entire village may be, the town becomes a cheerful place on *Purim*. Even today, a phrase heard just prior to *Purim* is "Be happy! It's *Adar!*"—*Adar* being the Hebrew month in which *Purim* is celebrated. This holiday is joyous in honor of both freedom and the bravery of Queen Esther, who spoke out in defense of the Jewish people, despite the obvious danger. Make *Purim* a festive family time by:

- baking *hamantaschen* pastries with your children and their friends, perhaps using a new, unusual filling (basic recipes are readily available on-line);
- preparing *mishloach manot* (*Purim* goodie baskets) – which generally include *hamantaschen*—to deliver to friends, neighbors, nursing home residents, hospital patients, etc.
- writing a family song or poem about *Purim* to share at home or send to relatives;
- using household items to create costumes, vowing to utilize only what you have available in your home;
- challenging family members to refer to each other by a *Purim* character's name for the entire holiday, with a token prize going to each one who succeeds.

### USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Jewish holidays are times to be especially aware of our blessings. Such occasions are ideal for remembering those who may not be as fortunate. Traditionally, *Purim* is a time to give *tzedakah* (from the Hebrew, meaning justice or righteousness). *Tzedakah* may take a variety of forms: while many people immediately think of *tzedakah* as financial giving, other gifts can be equally important. Talk with your children about what special talents you each possess and can be used to help others. Knitting a pair of warm mittens for a winter clothing collection, donating outgrown clothing or books to a shelter, contributing coins to a fuel assistance program, preparing a casserole to deliver to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter—the possibilities are endless. Even young children can contribute in some way to such valuable and much-needed actions, and what may seem like simple acts are models that set habits of mindfulness, kindness and sharing that last a lifetime. Pj