



THE RUNAWAY LATKES

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When three potato latkes escape from Rebecca Bloom's frying pan on the first night of Hanukkah, the cantor, the mayor, and the rabbi join in the chase to capture them.

The first night of Hanukkah was just a few hours away. Rebecca Bloom was at synagogue, making potato pancakes—latkes—for the big Hanukkah party. Everyone agreed that Rebecca made the crispiest, tastiest, perfectly roundest latkes in town.

Plop! Plop! She dropped each latke in a big pan of hot oil. Sizzle, flip. Sizzle, flip.

So begins an adapted tale, similar to the familiar gingerbread man story. This account gives young children a sense of excitement at the antics of the runaway latkes, as well as the pleasure of repetition that most young children love. If your children are familiar with the tale of the gingerbread man, help them to compare and contrast the two stories. What are the similarities and differences in the narratives? What makes this tale uniquely Jewish? Try replacing the latkes and the Applesauce River of this book with other Hanukkah foods: for example, retell the story with dreidel-shaped cookies and the Milk River. Create new words for the catchy lines of the refrain.

Latkes, on which this story hinges, can be purchased frozen in most supermarkets these days, especially during the Hanukkah season, but why not be adventurous? Use the recipe at the back of the book or ask a friend for his/her favorite method of making latkes. The smell that permeates your home will make the process worthwhile in itself! Be sure to encourage your children to help with

cooking these wonderful treats. Even little hands can crack eggs and mix the ingredients in a big bowl! Latkes are traditionally eaten with either applesauce or sour cream as an accompaniment.

THE HANUKKIAH

In many families each child has a *hanukkiyah*, a nine-branched Hanukkah candelabrum. *Hanukkiot* (the plural of *hanukkiyah*) can be made from clay, or by gluing empty thread spools or metal nuts (such as those used with bolts) on a wooden board. Younger children can also make pretend *hanukkiot* with toilet paper rolls for candleholders and brightly-colored tissue paper as flames.

HANUKKAH FOODS

In recognition of the importance of oil in the rededication of the Temple (see the note at the beginning of the book), it is traditional on Hanukkah to eat foods fried in oil. The most familiar Hanukkah delicacy are latkes, potato pancakes. *Sufganiot*, jelly-filled donuts, are also popular, particularly in Israel. *Hanukkah gelt*, chocolate coins wrapped in foil, are favorites as well. This chocolate money is symbolic of coins minted soon after the victory of the Maccabees; those coins symbolized Jewish freedom and were given as gifts in a custom dating to the Middle Ages. Pj