



GOODNIGHT SH'MA

Written by Jacqueline Jules

Illustrated by Melanie Hall

In this rhyming board book, a child gets ready for bed, soothed by reciting the nighttime version of the traditional Jewish prayer, the Sh'ma.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Blanketed in just 70 words in this sweet board book for very young listeners are two very important messages. The first is the most fundamental of Jewish precepts as stated in the Sh'ma: the belief in only one God. This world-changing declaration replaced the various belief systems present in the ancient world, which held that there were multiple gods found in natural objects such as trees, or in animals or people (such as the Egyptian pharaoh). So important is the requirement to keep this belief in mind that the Sh'ma is recited by Jews at many times, including when the Torah scrolls are removed from the ark in the synagogue, during the closing service of Yom Kippur (the holy Day of Atonement), and each day, both in the morning and before going to bed at night.

A second message in this book comes when, at the very beginning of Goodnight Sh'ma, the little child climbs into bed with a book. This is the message of The PJ Library: that children are open to a great deal of wonderful learning through bedtime reading, and that at this perfect time loving adults can transmit gentle lessons of important truths and beliefs. May this book bless you with such precious moments with your little ones.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

The tiniest of babies take pleasure in the soothing tones of a loving adult just before falling asleep, whether that person is reading, humming or singing a lullaby. In seemingly small ways, you can add an increasingly Jewish context to the nightly bedtime customs you share with your children. Consider doing this by:

- playing soft music that may include Hebrew lyrics.
- including The Sh'ma, in Hebrew or English, as a regular part of the getting-ready-to-sleep routine, adding portions as your children mature.
- using the illustrations in Goodnight Sh'ma to personalize a slightly different story, sometimes replacing the book's words with your own.
- offering your children your personal blessing, mentioning attributes you cherish, such as kindness or generosity.
- making the moments before sleep a time to share thankfulness for the blessings in your family's life. As your children become better able to communicate verbally, they can join in with their own thoughts.