



TEN OLD MEN AND A MOUSE

Written by Carl Fagan

Illustrated by Gary Clement

In this gentle tale, the ten elderly men who faithfully come together at their synagogue each day for prayer and friendship develop a fondness for a little mouse that appears one day.

Prayer is a central component of Jewish religious life. Great value is placed on individual and communal prayer, private prayers and written prayers found in a siddur (prayer book).

People pray for a myriad of reasons, among them communicating with God, connecting with community, seeking an inner sense of balance, and developing an appreciation for the sacred.

The gentlemen in *Ten Old Men and a Mouse* observe the Jewish tradition of praying multiple times each day. There are ten participants in this book's prayer service, and they are all males. Traditional Judaism taught that communal prayer could take place only with a minyan, a quorum of ten adults who were all males; in many congregations today, the required ten are made up of both men and women.

Encourage your children to create a "synagogue mouse" story and act out. Tell how the mouse came to live in the synagogue. What qualities did the ten old men possess that would make the mouse want to remain there? How might the mouse and the men celebrate various Jewish holidays?

TZA'AR BA'ALEI CHAIM

Judaism places great importance on caring for animals. In Proverbs 12:10 we read: "The righteous are concerned for the life of their beasts." Jewish tradition teaches that humans must feed their pets and farm animals before themselves. As Gabe, one of the gentlemen in this book said, "After all, every life is sacred."

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Questions to consider include:

- What jobs can be done by children to help care for animals?
- Remind your children about the importance of exercise, play and affection for animals.
- Plan a family visit to a local animal shelter. Discuss why such places exist and the importance of adopting pets from these organizations.