Continue activities following the story – Joseph's Wonderful Overcoat



By: **Simms Taback**
Illustrations
Publisher: כנרת
Age Group: **Preschool (3-5)**

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Activities:

- Tell your child a family story – one that is funny or special – that is worth preserving as family legend: for example, a story of your childhood. Include details that say something about the place and time when the story took place. Look in a family album together at places where your child's grandparents grew up and point out aspects of the past, such as: "Here is the bakery of your great grandfather that made the best challah in the world..."

- Travel back in time: To prepare for time travel back to Joseph's village, look together at the illustrations in the book and encourage your child to identify items in his world. You can ask leading questions, such as: What does Joseph have in his house? What animals roamed around his neighborhood? Were there any buses there? What did people wear? In short: Was his world similar to ours? No? In your child's opinion, why or why not?

- The fun of traditional sayings: The saying "When a coat is old, only its holes are new" is framed on the wall in Joseph's house (see the page which begins, "Joseph had an old vest..."). The saying reflects Yiddish humor. Make a similar wall hanging with a saying that comes from your family or from your heritage. Who used to say it and on what occasions? Write the saying out and let your child

make illustrations around it.

Eze'hu Ashir? Ha'sameach Be'chelko (Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.)

In the Ethics of the Fathers (chapter 4), it is written: "Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot." This proverb teaches that happiness is not measured in things or money, but rather in our ability to enjoy what we have. Although Joseph is poor, he is rich because he knows how to enjoy every "new" item of clothing he creates from what has worn out.

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Activities:

- Look at the pictures and follow Joseph's moods. When and why is he sad? When and why is he happy? What is his mood at the end of the book? How does your child explain these moods?
- Create two lists with your child: one of things that made him happy today and one of things that bothered him or made him sad. Look at the list of sad things and try to find something positive in the sad. In the evening just before your child goes to bed, you can make a habit of exchanging a list of the good things that happened to each of you that day.

Bal Tashchit (Respect for Existing Resources)

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The mitzvah of bal taschit which appears in the Torah (in Deuteronomy) prohibits destroying a fruit tree even during a siege on a city. Over time a broader interpretation has come to prevail, to avoid destroying anything which can still be useful. Joseph's Wonderful Overcoat takes place in a time when resources were scarce and people had to make good use of everything they could. Joseph found creative ways for re-using his coat. Today, in our era of abundance, there is an increasing tendency to try and re-use things to prevent harming the environment. This book provides a good opportunity to discuss with your child ways of limiting harm to the environment.

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Activities:

- Ask your child to identify items at home whose use has changed over time and are used for something different: for example, a cracked plate that is used under a plant, a cup that is used for flowers etc.
- Talk to your child about the concept of wasting: What does it mean to waste? Do we throw away things that we could still use? What can we do to limit wastefulness?

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