

# The Peddler's Gift

By Maxine Rose Schur



## VOCABULARY

**Shtetl** - *The Peddler's Gift* is a story that takes place in a shtetl. A shtetl is a village in Poland or Russia where Jews lived until World War II.

**Other Shtetl Stories**-Many authors have written stories that take place in a shtetl. Perhaps the most famous is Isaac Bashevis Singer who won the Nobel prize for his books for both adults and young people. You may want to check out his stories for children: in *Zlateh the Goat*, *When Shlemiel went to Warsaw*, *Naftali The Storyteller and his Horse*, and *The Parakeet named Dreidel*. For a powerful Ukrainian shtetl story for middle grade readers, check out Lawley Publishing's award-winning historical novel, *The Circlemaker* by Maxine Rose Schur.

**Dreidel:** (pronounced dray-dell) A dreidel is a four-sided top. A game of dreidel is typically played at Hanukkah time. To play, you put in some coins on the table or floor with your family or friends and then each person takes a turn spinning the dreidel. What side the dreidel shows when it stops tells you what portion of the coins you can take. Each side of the dreidel has a Hebrew letter and each letter means something different.

## START PLAYING!

Everyone puts one coin into the pot.

Then each player begins with an equal number of game pieces, about 10 to 15.

Each player puts one coin in the pot after every turn and each player spins the dreidel once during their turn. Depending on which side is facing up when the dreidel stops spinning, the player either gives or takes coins from the pot.

- If NUN - נ is facing up, you do nothing. The person to the left spins.
- If it lands on GIMMEL - ג, you get you get to take the whole pot!
- If it lands on HEY - ה- you get half of the pieces in the pot but if there are an odd number of coins, you take half the pot rounded up to the nearest whole number.
- If it lands on SHIN - ש- Sorry! You now have to put another coin into the pot.

When you play dreidel, you don't have to use coins. You can use little candies, marbles. Tokens, raisins or nuts.

Playing dreidel is a lot of fun. If you want to see how the game is played, watch: [How to Play Dreidel](#).

Dreidels are so popular at Hanukkah time, there's even a song about dreidels! Listen to: [The Dreidel Song](#).



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**Shabbos:** The Shabbos, (also called Shabbat) is the Hebrew name for the Sabbath which Jews observe on Saturday. Shabbos is a day of no work. On this day people rest, pray and enjoy being with their family.

**Synagogue:** The word “synagogue” is Greek and it means “a place to gather.” A synagogue is the building in which Jews gather to pray.

**Torah:** The torah is made up of the first five books of the Bible. It is written in Hebrew on a large parchment scroll and portions of the Torah are read aloud each week in the synagogue.

**Hanukkah:** Hanukkah is the Hebrew word for dedication. It is also the name the Jewish holiday, sometimes called, The Festival of Lights. About two thousand years ago the Jews were overjoyed for they had won a great victory in Jerusalem over their Greek-Syrian oppressors. The Jews reclaimed their temple. As they cleansed the holy building only one jug of oil, was left to light the lamp. But to their surprise, the oil lasted for eight days! So today, every winter at Hanukkah time, families celebrate this miracle by lighting a candelholder that holds eight candles, by frying delicious potato pancakes in oil, exchanging gifts, and playing dreidel.



Czar Nicholas II  
1894-1917

**Czar:** Before 1917, the title of the emperor of Russia

**Cossacks:** Peasants in Poland and especially in the Russian Ukraine who, until the late 19th century, served in the Czar’s cavalry. Cossacks were known to be fierce fighters.

**Featherbed:** A soft, fluffy comforter filled with duck or goose feathers.

**Ruble:** The name of the money that’s used in Russia.

**Sleep on a Stove?:** In *The Peddler’s Gift*, Yankel sleeps atop a stove. *Why does he do this?* To keep warm! The stoves in Russia were wood burning and because they were made of clay or stone or brick, they stayed warm a good long time after the fire was out. They held a wide ledge upon which blankets and pillows were placed to make a bed that would stay toasty warm, even in winter.





## RIGHTING A WRONG — SAYING I'M SORRY

In *The Peddler's Gift*, Yankel knows he has done something wrong by stealing the dreidel. He decides to make it right by apologizing to the peddler and returning the dreidel. When you do something wrong, you also need to make it right.

רעטצמ'נא

Here are some ways to help you do it:

1. Know that you may have hurt someone's feelings.
2. Understand *your* feelings at the time that led you to do something that wasn't nice.
3. Take responsibility for what you did. It's OK to say, "I was wrong." Saying you're wrong doesn't mean you're bad. It means you know that you made a mistake.
4. Promise the person you hurt that it won't happen again.
5. Ask the person how you could make them feel better or correct what you did.
6. Say, "I'm sorry."

