



THE CANDLEWICK

Written by Jennifer Rosner
Illustrated by Kristina Swarner

Ruthie's friend Bayla is deaf, but Bayla has come up with ways to communicate with the hearing world. When Ruthie realizes Bayla can't hear her doorbell, Ruthie thinks of another idea to help Bayla stay connected to the world around her.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Hachnasat Orchim

The Candlewick is a story of friendship and kindness. The two main characters, Ruthie and Bayla, clearly care for each other. As they live some distance from one another, Ruthie travels to Bayla's home for an extended visit. As hosts, Bayla and her family are taking part in the *mitzvah* (commandment) of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests. Just as our ancestors Abraham and Sarah welcomed others to their tent, Bayla's family welcomes Ruthie into their home and provides her with food, a place to sleep, and kindness. Acts of *hachnasat orchim* show our readiness to treat others as we want to be treated, with respect, thoughtfulness, and a generous spirit.

There is another aspect to *hachnasat orchim*. What about the guest? What should a visitor do to show appreciation for hospitality? Ruthie's actions offer some answers to this question. She arrives for her visit with small gifts chosen specially to please each of her hosts. She continues to show consideration by helping with household chores, spending time with little Aaron, and working with Bayla as she dips candles. All of these things show Ruthie's gratitude for the way she is treated by her hosts.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

The Candlewick provides many wonderful reading moments. Here are several topics you might consider discussing as a family:

- Ruthie has made some of the gifts she brings for her hosts, while others she has gathered along the way to their home. What makes a gift valuable? Are expensive presents worth more than those that cost only a little? Can homemade gifts be even better than ones that are purchased?
- Bayla's deafness seems to impact her work. Ruthie comes up with a way for Bayla to know when someone is at her door. Do you think the new "doorbell" will have a big effect on Bayla's life?
- Every person faces challenges. What could you do for someone who isn't a strong runner, has difficulty reading, or seems to have a hard time making friends?

You can learn more about Bayla and Ruthie and their friendship! Author Jennifer Rosner and illustrator Kristina Swarner also created *The Mitten String*, another wonderful book about Ruthie and Bayla.