



# MAYA PRAYS FOR RAIN

Written by Susan Tarcov

Illustrated by Ana Ochoa

*It's a beautiful day in Maya's neighborhood – and her neighbors have sunny-day activities planned. But it's Shemini Atzeret, and that means Jews the world over will pray for rain. Maya is worried – will this ruin the day for her friends?*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

*Shemini Atzeret*, the “Eighth Day of Assembly,” is a holiday that takes place immediately following the seven-day fall festival of Sukkot. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, the people of Israel made pilgrimage there for Sukkot to observe the joyous holiday together. They would remain there for one last day of special celebration on *Shemini Atzeret* before returning home.

*Shemini Atzeret* also marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel, and thus, is the day when a prayer for rain is first included in the prayer service. In *Maya Prays for Rain*, we can identify with Maya's worries about rain; we often fear that it will interrupt our plans. Not so in the Land of Israel! In the hot, Middle Eastern climate, rainfall is critical to the growth of plants and the drinking water supply, and so its arrival is received with great joy and relief.

In the book of Deuteronomy (fifth book of the Hebrew Bible), the Jewish people are told about the supernatural qualities of the Land of Israel: “...it is not like the land of Egypt that you left, where you would plant your seed and water it on foot like a vegetable garden. But the Land to which you cross over to possess it...from the rain of heaven it will drink water (Deut. 11: 10-11).” How amazing that *Shemini Atzeret* prayers for rain in Israel help to open up this ancient, heavenly connection!

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

**Make your own rain stick** – Find a long cardboard tube, such as a paper towel roll. Form caps for each end from aluminum foil; attach one of them using glue or a rubber band. Cut two more large pieces of aluminum foil, roll them into long “snake” shapes, and then form them into coils. Insert the coils in the tube. Put a small amount of rice or beans into the tube, and attach the other end cap. Use art supplies to decorate the outside of the tube. Now close your eyes, tip the rain stick back and forth, and imagine the rain falling over the Land of Israel!

## Family discussion questions

- How do you feel when it rains, and why?
- Sometimes we feel that rain spoils our fun, but it actually does many important jobs. What are some of the good things rain does?
- Rain nourishes the earth and helps plants to grow. What things do you need to help you grow big and strong?

**Rainy Day Book** - Draw pictures of rain doing all of the important jobs you thought of, and bind the pages together to create a book. The next time it rains, take out your Rainy Day Book to help you remember all the reasons we have to feel happy about the rain!