



ROOM FOR THE BABY

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The Jewish holidays mark the passage of time as a family prepares for a new baby to join their family. Just how will they make room in their already-crowded home?

Around the world, there is increasing awareness that Earth's resources are limited. In order for our children to inherit a sustainable world, we must be thoughtful consumers, considerate savers, and wise re-users—and teach the next generation to be the same. In Hebrew, this centuries-old Jewish value, an injunction against wastefulness, is called *bal tashchit*. In ancient times, it included bans against such things as chopping down fruit trees to help win a battle or using lamp oil indiscriminately. Today, many see *bal tashchit* as a precept intended to limit overuse and protect our environment.

THE PROGRESSION OF THE JEWISH YEAR

The family in this story happily prepares for their baby's birth while celebrating Passover (observing the Israelites' release from Egyptian slavery), *Rosh Hashanah* (the Jewish New Year), *Simchat Torah* (commemorating receiving the Torah) and *Chanukah* (celebrating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem). How are anticipation of the Jewish holidays and anticipation of the baby similar in this story?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

The unnamed family in *Room for the Baby* could, in some ways, be any of us. On the other hand, not all of us have

the ability to sew up a storm of diapers or knit warm clothes for all the neighbors. Talk with your children about the items in your house that could be recycled or reused in some way. Clear out closets and donate usable clothing, toys and books to local shelters. Consider having a garage sale and decide as a family where to donate a portion of the proceeds.

Whether it comes about biologically or through adoption, the welcoming of a child into a Jewish family is cause for great celebration. Preparations mean considering how the little one will fit into the family, figuratively and literally. This story offers a great time to dust off the family photo albums or warm up the DVD player and regale your children with stories about their first word, favorite board book, or the time they were teething and cried throughout the entire *Chanukah* party. It's certain they'll want to hear these stories again and again. Pj

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