

Program Notes for *Funky Dreidl (I Had a Little Dreidl)*

The four faces of the dreidl are inscribed with the Hebrew letters Nun (נ), Gimmel (ג), Hei (ה) and Shin (ש). In the game, each represents a particular gambling term related to Yiddish words.

Hebrew Letter	Yiddish	English
נ Nun	Nischt	nothing, i.e., take nothing from the pot
ג Gimmel	Gantz	all, i.e., take all of the pot
ה Hei	Halb	half, i.e., take half of the pot
ש Shin	Shtel	put in, i.e., put two objects into the pot

However, the letters have been reinterpreted in the context of Chanukah as “Neis Gadol Hayah Sham,” or “[a] great miracle happened here [in Jerusalem].” What was this miracle?

Historically, Chanukah marks the successful revolt of Judah and the Maccabees against the Hellenistic Syrian occupation forces around 165 B.C.E., and the subsequent rededication of the temple. A story associated with this rededication is that the temple owned only enough sacramental oil to burn for one day, but that, miraculously, the fire burned for eight days. One could suggest that the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrians was miracle enough.

However, the placement of Chanukah on the calendar during the time of the long, dark nights near the winter solstice, and the burning of oil, strongly suggests a far more ancient basis for this holiday, antecedents related to seasonal issues of darkness and light.

The Text*

Neis gadol hayah sham.

Get some raisins. Nuts are fine for filling up the pot. Put a couple in the pot and you spin the dreidl! What did you get? Nun or Gimmel, Hei or Shin will tell you if you win or if you lose.

I had a little dreidl, [I] made it out of clay, and when it's dry and ready, [my] dreidl I will play!

Dreidl, dreidl, dreidl, [with] leg so short and thin, spinning dreidl tires out, it drops and then you win!

Dreidl, dreidl, dreidl, [it] loves to dance and spin, dreidl dance and dreidl spin, come play, now let's begin!

Neis gadol hayah sham.

I had a little dreidl, I made it out of clay, and when it's dry and ready, [my] dreidl I will play!

Here's the dreidl; spin the dreidl! Come and play and spin the dreidl; let the game begin!

(Etc.)

* Because of the “funky” deployment of the lyric text, the words above contain only the most elemental phrases that appear in the setting.

Indented lines include text based on *My Dreidl*, words by S. S. Grossman from *The Songs We Sing*, edited by Harry Coopersmith, published by the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education in 1950. © Copyright 1950 by United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education. Used by permission of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

Pronunciation Guide

The system employed in this setting is as follows:

“a”	as in “papa”
“ah”	(at the ends of words) as in “father”
“e”	as in “get”
“eh”	(at the ends of words) as in “get”
“lei”	as in “vein”
“i”	as in “pin”
“o”	as in “pole”
“u”	as in “put”
“g”	as in “get” (hard “g”)

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(with Piano) | 8439 |

Robert Applebaum (b. 1941)

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www.bobapplebaum.com

The set *Three Pieces for Chanukah* was composed for Greg Skalinder and the Coriolis Ensemble, Evanston, IL.

Three Pieces for Chanukah

3. Funky Dreidl (I Had a Little Dreidl)

for SSATTB Chorus unaccompanied

Words by S. S. Grossman
R. A., alt.

Melody by S. E. Goldfarb
R. A., alt.
Robert Applebaum, arr.

Rhythmically, with straight ♩'s ♩ = 96

Soprano 1

Soprano 2

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Keyboard
(for rehearsal only)

mf

mf

mf

mf

Neis ga -

Neis ga-dol, neis ga-dol ha-yah sham. Neis ga-dol

Rhythmically, with straight ♩'s ♩ = 96

Words and melody based on *My Dreidl*, from *The Songs We Sing*, edited by Harry Coopersmith, published by the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education in 1950.

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4

- dol ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, neis ga - dol ha - yah
 ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol

8

sham. *mf* Get some rai - sins, put a cou - ple in the pot and you
mp Nuts are fine for fill - ing up the pot. You
 ha - yah sham. *mf* Rai - sins and nuts for fill - ing up the pot.

11

spin the drei-dl! Wha-dja get? Wha-dja get? Nun or Gim-mel?
 spin it, and, wha-dja get? Nun or
 Give it a spin! Spin the dreer-dl! Give it a spin!

14

mf
 I had
mf
 I had
 Gim-mel, Hei or Nun will tell you if you win or if you lose. Wha-dja get?
 Gim-mel, Hei or Shin will tell you if you win. Wha-dja get?
 Hei, Gim-mel, Shin will tell, what did you win? What did you get?

17

— a lit - tle drei - dl, ————— made it out of clay, —————

— a lit - tle drei - dl, ————— made it out of clay, —————

mp Lit - tle drei - dl, hey, my drei - dl, made a drei - dl, made it, made it, drei -

mp Drei - dl, hey, my drei - dl, made a drei - dl out of clay,

mp Hey, drei - dl, hey, my drei - dl, made it, hey! Hey, drei - dl, hey!

20

— and when it's dry and rea - dy, —————

— and when it's dry and rea - dy, —————

dl, drei - dl, when it's rea - dy, when it's dry and when it's rea - dy,

drei - dl, read - y, when it's dry and when it's rea - dy,

Hey, my drei - dl, drei - dl is dry, it's dry and set to go!

23

f

drei - dl I _____ will play! _____ For it is drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - dl, leg -

f

drei - dl I _____ will play! _____ For it is drei - dl, drei - dl drei - dl, leg -

mf

drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - dl! Drei - dl, drei - dl,

mf

I will play drei - dl! Drei - dl's

Play, drei - dl, play! Hey, my drei - dl! Hey, drei - dl, hey!

26

mf f

— so short and thin, spin - ning drei - dl tires - out, it drops and then you win. Drei -

mf f

— so short and thin, spin - ning drei - dl tires - out, it drops and then you win. Drei -

leg so short and thin, my drei - dl, spin - ning, tires, drei - dl drop. Did you win?

leg so short and thin, my drei - dl, drei - dl, out, Did you win?

The leg is short and thin. Spin, drei - dl, spin! Drop and you win!

29

- dl, drei-dl, drei-dl, loves — to dance and spin, drei-dl dance and drei-dl spin, come

- dl, drei-dl, drei-dl, loves — to dance and spin, drei-dl dance and drei-dl spin, come

(mf) Drei-dl, drei-dl, loves to dance and loves to spin, drei-dl, drei-dl, let's be-

(mf) Drei-dl, loves to dance and loves to spin. dance and spin,

Hey, drei - dl, hey! Hey, drei - dl, dance and spin! Spin, drei - dl, spin!

32

play; now let's be - gin!

play; now let's be - gin!

gin, let's be - gin! Neis — ga - dol, neis ga - dol — ha - yah sham, —

let's be - gin! Neis, — neis ga - dol — ha - yah sham, —

now let's be - gin! Neis — ga - dol, neis ga - dol ha - yah sham.

35

f Neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. — Neis — ga -
f Neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. — Neis — ga -
 ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, neis ga - dol, neis — ga - dol.
 ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, neis, —
 Neis — ga - dol ha - yah sham. — Neis — ga - dol,
 ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, neis, —

38

dol, — neis — ga - dol ha - yah sham. — *mf*
 dol, — neis — ga - dol ha - yah sham. *mf*
 neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. — ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, neis ga - dol. *mf*
 neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. — ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol. Had
 neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. Neis — ga - dol ha - yah sham. —

41

mf Had a lit - tle drei - dl, _____ *mp* made it out of,

mf Had a lit - tle drei - dl, _____ *mp* made it out of,

mp Drei - dl, drei - dl, had a ti - ny lit - tle drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - dl, spin a -

mf _____ a lit - tle drei - dl, _____ made it out of clay,

mp Hey, drei - dl, hey! A lit - tle drei - dl, hey! Hey, drei - dl, hey!

44

mf made it out of, made it out of clay, _____ *mf* when it's dry and rea - dy, _____

mf made it out of, made it out of clay, _____ *mf* when it's dry and rea - dy, _____

round, spin a-round, *mf* drei - dl, drei - dl, had a ti - ny lit - tle drei - dl,

mf _____ and when it's dry and rea - dy, _____

Hey, my drei - dl! Hey, drei - dl, hey! A lit - tle drei - dl, hey!

47

f

Here's the drei - dl; spin the drei-dl! Drei-dl, drei-dl, drei-dl, leg -

f

Here's the drei - dl; spin the drei-dl! Drei-dl, drei-dl, drei-dl, leg -

mf

drei-dl, drei-dl, spin a-round, spin a-round! Drei-dl, drei-dl,

mf

drei - dl I _____ will play! _____ Spin, lit-tle drei-dl, -

mf

Hey, drei - dl, hey! Hey, my drei - dl! Hey, drei - dl, hey!

50

_____ is short and thin, spin a-round, spin a-round, spin a-round, then

_____ is short and thin, spin a-round, spin a-round, spin a-round, then

had a ti - ny lit - tle drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - dl, spin a -

lit - tle drei - dl, spin a-round, spin a-round, spin a-round, then

A lit - tle drei - dl, hey! Hey, drei - dl, hey!

drop and then you win! Drei - dl, drei-dl, drei-dl, loves — to dance and spin,
 drop and then you win! Drei - dl, drei-dl, drei-dl, loves — to dance and spin,
 round, spin a-round! Drei-dl, drei-dl, had a ti - ny lit - tle drei - dl,
 drop and then you win! Drei-dl, had a ti - ny lit - tle drei - dl,
 Hey, my drei - dl! Hey, drei - dl, hey! A lit - tle drei-dl, hey!

come and play and spin the drei-dl; let the game be-gin! *mf*
 come and play and spin the drei-dl; let the game be-gin! *mf*
 drei - dl, drei-dl, spin a-round, spin a-round! *mp* Neis — ga-dol,
 drei-dl, spin, spin a-round! *mp* Neis, —
 Hey, drei - dl, hey! Hey, my drei - dl! Neis — ga-dol,

58

mf

Neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. _

Neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. _

neis ga - dol, _ ha - yah sham, _ ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, _ neis ga - dol, _

neis ga - dol, _ ha - yah sham, _ ha - yah sham. Neis ga - dol, _

neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. Neis _ ga - dol ha - yah sham. _

61

Neis _ ga - dol, _ neis _ ga - dol ha - yah _

Neis _ ga - dol, _ neis _ ga - dol _ ha - yah _

neis _ ga - dol, _ neis ga - dol _ ha - yah sham, _ ha - yah sham. Neis ga -

neis, _ neis ga - dol _ ha - yah sham, _ ha - yah sham.

Neis _ ga - dol, _ neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. Neis _ ga - dol

64 *mp, mf*

sham. Drei - dl, drei-dl, drei-dl,

sham. *mf* Lit - tle drei - dl, hey, drei-dl, drei-dl, hey!

dol, neis ga - dol. Had a lit - tle drei - dl,

mf Neis ga - dol. Drei - dl, drei-dl, drei-dl,

mf ha - yah sham. — Neis ga - dol. Hey, drei-dl drei-dl, hey!

67 *f* (cue-sized notes = ossia)

drei - (hey) - dl! Drei - dl,

Hey, lit - tle drei... lit - tle drei-dl, my drei - dl, lit - tle drei-dl.

made it out of clay, when it's dry and read - y,

f (cue-sized notes = ossia)

8 drei - (hey) - dl! Drei - dl,

Hey, drei - dl, hey! Hey, my drei - dl! Hey, drei - dl, hey!

70 *mf*

— drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - (hey) - dl! —————

— Hey, lit - tle drei - dl, hey! Hey, ————— lit - tle drei... lit - tle drei - dl, my drei - dl!

— drei - dl I will play! ————— *mf*

— drei - dl, drei - dl, drei - (hey) - dl! ————— *mf*

Hey, drei - dl, drei - dl, hey! Hey drei - dl, hey! Hey, my drei - dl!

73 *mp*

B Neis — ga - dol, neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. Neis — ga - dol ha - yah sham. —

77 *mp*

A Neis — ga - dol, ————— *mp* neis — ga - dol

T ————— Ha - yah sham, ha - yah sham,

B Neis — ga - dol, neis ga - dol ha - yah sham. Neis — ga - dol

80

ha - yah sham. Spin the drei - dl,

ha - yah sham. Spin a - round!

ha - yah sham. — Hey, drei - dl, hey! My drei - dl, drei - dl, hey!

83

S1 ha - yah sham! *f*

S2 ha - yah sham! *f*

A Spin the drei - dl! *mf* Neis ga - dol *f* ha - yah sham!

T Spin a - round! *mf* Neis ga - dol *f* ha - yah sham!

B Hey, drei - dl, hey! *mf* Neis ga - dol *f* ha - yah sham!

1999
3:30