

Jewish Book Month 2003/5764

NOTEWORTHY BOOKS for CHILDREN AND TEENS

Adelman, Nechama Dina. ***Bedtime***. Illus. by Fayge Devorah Blau. Hachai, 2003. *Mother's comforting words, a favorite toy and a familiar lullaby help little Dovid temporarily - but it is only the message of G-d's presence that finally reassures him. The dreamy muted pastels, soft rhythms and cozy setting of this gentle story will soothe the fears of the young child who feels lonely at bedtime.* Preschool-kindergarten.

Baer, Julie. ***I Only Like What I Like***. Bollix Books, 2003. *Dewey Jackson Braintree-Berg is learning to try new things, like pizza on Shabbat and yellow and green apples dipped in honey for Rosh Hashanah. Striking collages illustrate this appealing and unusual book. A refreshing title from a new publisher.* Preschool-grade 1.

Blanc, Esther Silverstein and Godeane Eagle. ***Long Johns for a Small Chicken***. Illus. by Tennessee Dixon. Volcano Press, 2003. *After a hailstorm, a featherless chick is found caught in a wire fence. Mama rescues him, makes him his own little long johns to keep warm, and cares for him until he can return to the chicken yard. This charming vintage story, set on a Nebraska farm, makes the point that "even a chicken, to be successful, must have a mother."* Grades 1-5.

Blatt, Evelyn Mizrahi with Eve-Lynn J. Gardner. ***More Precious Than Gold***. Illus. by Eli Toron. Hachai, 2002. *A suspenseful adventure set during the Spanish Inquisition, this is the story of a family who chooses to leave a comfortable life behind and face an uncertain future rather than keep their faith a secret and live as hidden Jews. Young Sara proves to be a courageous heroine who stands up to the evil surrounding her. This novel fills an important need for good historical fiction at the mid-elementary level.* Grades 3-4.

Blumberg, Margie. ***Avram's Gift***. Illus. by Laurie McGaw. MB Publishing, 2003. *After learning about the special gift his great-great-grandfather Avram possessed for blowing the shofar, young Mark is inspired to master the shofar service himself. Based on a true story, this is noteworthy for its portrayal of a loving multigenerational family and for Mark's learning to appreciate his heritage.* Grades 3-5.

Broida, Marian. ***The Ancient Israelites and Their Neighbors: An Activity Guide***. Chicago Review Press, 2003. *This is an informative and fun-to-read guide to the cultures of the ancient Israelites, Phoenicians and Philistines. Each section includes crafts, activities and recipes. Available through Independent Publishers Group of Chicago.* Grades 5-8.

Crowley, Bridget. ***Feast of Fools***. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003. *A murder mystery set in medieval England, this has as its main character an orphan boy who struggles to overcome the anti-Semitism and the harshness of his surroundings.* Grades 7-9.

Davis, Aubrey. ***Bagels from Benny***. Illus. by Dusan Petricic. Kids Can Press, 2003. *Benny is disappointed to find that a poor man has been eating the bagels he left for G-d in the synagogue ark, until his grandfather points out that by feeding a hungry man he has helped make the world a little bit*

better. With its roots in an ancient Spanish folktale and jolly illustrations, this story teaches young children about having faith in a G-d they can't see. Kindergarten-grade 3.

Feinstein, Rabbi Edward. ***Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life.*** Jewish Lights, 2003. *Rabbi Feinstein explores questions he has been asked by students for over 20 years. Discussion of important topics makes this an excellent source for teachers and a useful Bar or Bat Mitzvah gift. Grades 6-10.*

Fowles, Shelley. ***The Bachelor and the Bean.*** Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. *An irritable imp, a grouchy old man and a rude old woman are the unlikely but lovable stars of this funny folktale from Morocco. Deeply colored, full-page illustrations reflect the setting and the characters' foibles. Grades 1-3.*

Ganz, Yaffa. ***The Adventures of Jeremy and Hedly Levy.*** Illus. by Avi Katz. Pitspopany Press, 2003. *Revised and updated from two older books, these are humorous stories about a brother and sister whose good intentions and great ideas often go awry. Grades 3-5.*

Geras, Adele. ***My Grandmother's Stories: a Collection of Jewish Folk Tales.*** Illus. by Anita Lobel. Knopf, 2003. *This new edition of the 1990 Sydney Taylor Award winner offers fresh, colorful pictures by a renowned illustrator. Excellent for reading aloud, these stories will span the generations as they, and the lessons they impart, are shared. Grades 3-6.*

Hautzig, Esther. ***A Picture of Grandmother.*** Illus. by Beth Peck. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002. *Set in pre-war Vilna, Lithuania and told through the eyes of young Sara, this 2002 Sydney Taylor Award Honor Book portrays a cultured Jewish family that was part of a thriving community on the eve of unthinkable disaster. Grades 4-7.*

Hesse, Karen. ***The Stone Lamp: Eight Stories of Hanukkah Through History.*** Illus. by Brian Pinkney. Hyperion, 2003. *Beginning with the Crusades and ending with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, this Sydney Taylor Award winning author tells eight tragic stories in free verse. A stone lamp is lit in each poem, symbolizing the endurance and courage of the Jewish people. Grades 5-8.*

Kropf, Latifa Berry. ***It's Sukkah Time!*** Photographs by Tod Cohen. Kar-Ben, 2004. *Colorful photographs bring the holiday to life as they depict young children helping to build and decorate a sukkah and then celebrate by singing and dancing during Sukkot. Also included are instructions for creating a mini-sukkah and the holiday blessings. Preschool-grade 2.*

Kushner, Tony. ***Brundibar.*** Illus. by Maurice Sendak. Hyperion, 2003. *Performed many times by children imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camp of Terezin, Brundibar is a children's opera with a fairy tale-like story. A prize-winning playwright and a celebrated artist (creator of *Where the Wild Things Are*) combine talents to create a memorable book for all ages.*

Levitin, Sonia. ***Room in the Heart.*** Dutton, 2003. *Based on the true story of how thousands of Denmark's Jews were saved from the Nazis, this riveting novel explores the effect of the Nazi occupation on two young teens, one Jewish and one Christian. Grades 8-11.*

McCann, Michelle R. ***Luba: The Angel of Bergen-Belsen***. Illus. by Ann Marshall. Tricycle Press, 2003. *This is the true story of heroine Luba Trysznska, who, having lost her young son and husband to the Nazis, miraculously saved over 50 children in Bergen-Belsen.* Grades 4-6.

Miklowitz, Gloria. ***The Enemy Has a Face***. Eerdmans, 2003. *This suspenseful story about a missing Israeli teen brings the Arab-Israeli conflict to Los Angeles as it explores a prickly subject in a way that will engross middle school readers while increasing their understanding.* Grades 6-8.

Patz, Nancy. ***Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat?*** Dutton, 2003. *This quiet jewel is an unusual Holocaust reflection: personal, subtle, and historical. Author/illustrator Patz powerfully underlines the Shoah's senseless cruelty.* All ages.

Pinkney, Jerry. ***Noah's Ark***. SeaStar Books, 2002. *This traditional retelling of the popular bible story is enhanced by majestic full-page watercolor and pencil illustrations. This book is both a Caldecott Honor Book and Sydney Taylor Honor Book. Also available in video and DVD.* Kindergarten-grade 4.

Piven, Hanoch. ***The Perfect Purple Feather***. Little Brown, 2002. *Jacob plucks a purple feather from his pillow, imagining it as parts of many different animals. When a mischievous tick interferes, the feather finally rests with the reader and a real purple feather is found on the last page. Cleverly illustrated! Originally written in Hebrew and published in Israel.* Preschool-grade 1.

Podwal, Mark. ***A Sweet Year: A Taste of the Jewish Holidays***. Doubleday, 2003. *Podwal traces the Jewish year through creative interpretations of the foods associated with each holiday. His lovely gouache and acrylic paintings and poetic explanations joyfully celebrate the connection between the "sacred and the sumptuous" in Jewish tradition.* Grades 3-6.

Pressler, Mirjam. ***Malka***. Philomel, 2003. *This novel is based on the true story of a Polish physician and her older daughter, who make a dangerous and arduous trek to Hungary while seven year-old Malka, whom they are forced to leave behind when she becomes ill, fends for herself in a ghetto.* High school.

Rifa'i, Amal and Odelia Ainbinder with Sylke Tempel. ***We Just Want to Live Here: A Palestinian Teenager, an Israeli Teenager - An Unlikely Friendship***. St. Martin's Griffin, 2003. *Journalist Sylke Tempel facilitated an exchange of letters between two girls living in Jerusalem - Amal, a Palestinian and Odelia, an Israeli. They reveal their feelings about their families, their futures and the intractable political conflict in Israel today.* Grades 7-12

Rose, Or N. ***Abraham Joshua Heschel: Man of Spirit, Man of Action***. The Jewish Publication Society, 2003. *This well-written biography is a wonderful introduction for young readers to the life and thought of a great rabbi. Black and white photographs offer insight into his remarkable life.* Grades 6-9.

Rosenfeld, Dina. ***Five Alive! My Yom Tov Five Senses***. Illus. by Tova Leff. Hachai, 2003. *Five children use their five senses to experience and identify Jewish holidays throughout the year. The bright colors, snappy rhymes and lively illustrations convey a refreshing enthusiasm for Yom Tov observance.* Preschool.

Rouss, Sylvia. ***Tali's Jerusalem Scrapbook***. Illus. by Nancy Oppenheimer. Pitspopany Press, 2003. *Sincerely told from the perspective of a Jewish girl living in turbulent Jerusalem, this moving story presents an Israeli child's feelings, fears and faith in the future. There is nothing else like it for this age group. Large, colorful illustrations enhance the story.* Grades 3-5.

Shalant, Phyllis. ***When Pirates Came to Brooklyn***. Dutton/Penguin Putnam, 2002. *Set in a multicultural neighborhood in the 1960s, this story of a madcap friendship between two "wild, pirate-fighting girls" - one Jewish and one Christian - explores themes of prejudice and tolerance.* Grades 3-5.

Silverman, Erika. ***When the Chickens Went On Strike: a Rosh Hashanah Tale***. Illus. by Matthew Trueman. Dutton, 2003. *When the shtetl's chickens rebel against "kapores" and the villagers retaliate to save their cherished custom, a young boy ponders which side is right. Wittily retold from a Sholom Aleichem story and strikingly illustrated, this is for Rosh Hashanah or any time of year.* Grades 2-4.

Slavicek, Louise Chipley. ***Israel***. Chelsea House, Creation of the Modern Middle East Series, 2003. *At a time when many biased books about Israel are being published for children and young people, this factual and objective account of the Jewish state from its ancient history to the present day is very welcome. A good choice for school reports or personal reading.* Grades 6-10.

Spinner, Stephanie. ***It's a Miracle! A Hanukkah Storybook***. Illus. by Jill McElmurry. Atheneum, 2003. *When Owen's grandma tells him a bedtime story during every night of Hanukkah, each one reminds the little boy of someone in his family. This charmingly written and illustrated book explores recent family history and a warm, intergenerational relationship. Not just for Hanukkah.* Kindergarten-grade 3.

Stampler, Ann Redisch. ***Something for Nothing***. Illus. by Jacqueline M. Cohen. Clarion, 2003. *In a witty and original version of the trickster tale, a peace-loving dog outwits three hooligan cats by playing to their greed. Vivid, fanciful illustrations add to its appeal.* Grades 2-4.

Stone, Tanya Lee. ***Ilan Ramon: Israel's First Astronaut***. Milbrook Press, 2003. *This brief and readable biography imparts a sense of Ramon's appealing personality, his leadership qualities and his status as an Israeli hero. There are captioned photographs on nearly every page, including several poignant ones of Ramon with his family.* Grades 4-7.

VIDEOS

Families of Israel. Master Communication, Families of the World Series, 2001, 30 minutes, color. *This live-action video follows two Israeli children - Inbar, who lives on a kibbutz and Yoad, who lives in Jerusalem - and their families through an ordinary day.* Grades 1-4.

Judaism: Bar Mitzvah Boys. Cambridge Educational, 15 minutes, color. *Several young Israelis explain the significance of becoming a Bar Mitzvah and the responsibilities they have assumed.* Grades 4-6.

Kotel: Jewish Teens on Gender and Tradition. Stuart Charm, 2003, 28 minutes, color. *Explores the issue of prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem with 19 Jewish-American teenagers, in light of Jewish gender roles, the importance of tradition, and the conflict between forms of modern Judaism.* Middle and high school.

WEBSITES

Association of Jewish Libraries' New Jewish Valuesfinder. The only site on the web where Jewish children's books are analyzed for the Jewish values they contain. A must for Judaic librarians, teachers, clergy and parents. Visit www.ajljewishvalues.org.

An award-winning website that includes lists of recommended children's books and videos and a link to the library's online catalog. Visit www.jecc.org.

Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple. See this site to link to *The Arthur J. Lelyveld Center for Jewish Learning* and its online catalog. Visit www.fairmounttemple.org and select "Library" under departments.

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