

**IN CELEBRATION OF
JEWISH BOOK MONTH
2008**



**A SELECTED LIST OF RECENT BOOKS
FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS
With a special section on Israel @ 60**

a Publication of the



Association of Jewish Libraries
Greater Cleveland Chapter

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Balsley, Tilda. *Let My People Go!* Illus. by Ilene Richard. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Passover picture book for Preschool – Gr. 2. Colorful, cartoon-like pictures and a humorous rhyming text tell the story of Passover and the Ten Plagues through five roles: the Narrator, Moses, Pharaoh, the Egyptians and the Chorus. Each role has its own text in a different color, so the story can be acted out as Readers Theater at Seders, and can also be used in classroom or library presentations.

Benefeld, Rikki. *I Go to a Wedding*. Toddler Experience Series. Hachai, 2008. Picture book for Preschool – Kdg. The round-faced, cheerful, and always well-behaved sister and brother who, in previous books in this series, have gone to shul, to school, to the doctor, shopping, and visiting, now attend their first wedding. Written for Orthodox children and using the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew words, it is a pleasant addition to the series.

Greene, Jacqueline Dembar. *Nathan's Hanukkah Bargain*. Illus. by Judith Hierstein. Pelican, 2008. Hanukkah picture book for Gr. 2 – 4. Nathan has five dollars and with it, he wants to buy a Hanukkah menorah. With Grandpa as a companion, he visits a number of shops, but can't find a menorah that he likes or can afford. Grandpa wistfully tells him about the old days when it was possible to bargain with peddlers for the goods they sold. When, in an old junk store, Nathan finds just the menorah he wants, he puts Grandpa's lessons in bargaining to work and finds that his five dollars is just enough.

Kimmel, Eric A. *The Mysterious Guests*. Illus. by Katya Krenina. Holiday House, 2008. Sukkot story for Kdg. – Gr. 4. A beautifully illustrated picture book, *The Mysterious Guests* introduces children to the traditional notion that our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob visit our succahs "as weary travelers" without revealing their identities every year on Sukkot. The book explains, "If they are welcomed as honored guests, they leave a blessing. If not, they teach a lesson that is not soon forgotten." This concept is then illustrated with the story of two brothers, Eben and Ezra, one rich and selfish, the other kind and generous.

Kroll, Steven. *The Hanukkah Mice*. Illus. by Michelle Shapiro. Marshall Cavendish, 2008. Hanukkah picture book for Kdg. – Gr. 2. Kippah-wearing mice find their way into the Jewish people's world. They live in a dollhouse, among the miniature furniture – all Hanukkah gifts for Rachel. Little do Rachel's parents – or the mice – know that she is providing the mouse family with small latkes, Hanukkah gelt, dreidels, a special Hanukkah tablecloth, and other holiday accoutrements. In the charming illustrations, we see Rachel peering into the dollhouse windows each night, clearly enjoying her opportunity to secretly offer hospitality to her tiny guests.

Jules, Jacqueline. *Goodnight Sh'ma*. Illus. by Melanie Hall. Very First Board Books. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Board book for Preschool – Kdg. A small boy climbs into bed with a book and a bear, the moon prominent through the window behind his bed. After his mother reads to him, the little boy hugs his bear, closes his eyes, and says the Sh'ma. "I pray to one God of the earth and the skies". Opposite the words of the Sh'ma, animals romp as the stars tumble in the sky, giving a sense of the many creatures inhabiting the universe. Pastel illustrations set an appropriate tone for bedtime.

Jules, Jacqueline. *Sarah Laughs*. Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Bible story for Preschool - Gr. 2. As the story of Sarah's life with Abraham unfolds, she ages from a young and

beautiful girl to a wrinkled old woman filled with joy for the child in her arms. In between, she and her husband are shown as followers of the one God who obey his commandment to leave their home and journey as nomads to the land of Canaan. The illustrations add a great deal to the story's appeal because they are graceful, flowing, and full of life.

Rouss, Sylvia. *Sammy Spider's First Shavuot*. Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Shavout picture book for Preschool - Gr. 1. As Sammy Spider and his mother watch Mrs. Shapiro make blintzes, Sammy learns what a recipe is. Later, when he learns from his loving mother that the blintzes are being prepared for the holiday of Shavuot, he sees Josh Shapiro carrying a little Torah scroll and finds out that the Torah is a recipe for life. As the latest in a popular series for Jewish preschoolers, its illustrations are some of the best, with bold shapes and colors using a variety of media. As an introduction to Shavuot, it is child-like and reverent, a holiday story to savor.

Ziefert, Harriet. *Hanukkah Haiku*. Illus. by Karla Gudeon. Blue Apple Books, 2008. Hanukkah poetry for Preschool – Gr. 2.

Here is a delightful Hanukkah book with a new twist! The simplicity of the haiku poems (three lines with exactly 5, 7, and 5 syllables) contrasts with the lively, movement-filled, joyous illustrations. The book is designed in such a way that, when readers arrive at the fully-lit menorah, they can look back at a progression of beautiful borders in bold color and pattern, laid out aside each other. In addition, there are progressively revealed twisted candles to count, numbers for saying aloud, instructions for lighting the menorah, the Hanukkah blessings, words to the song Rock of Ages, and a special Hanukkah reading.

FOR MIDDLE GRADE READERS

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *The Truth About My Bat Mitzvah*. Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008. Contemporary story for Gr. 5 – 7. After the death of her beloved grandmother, young Caroline is at a crossroads. As her best friend prepares for her own Bat Mitzvah, Caroline wonders if this should be her path, as well. But her mother is opposed to the commercialization of the ceremony, and her father is not Jewish. Caroline must balance her own needs without rejecting her parents' values.

Drucker, Malka. *Portraits of Jewish-American Heroes*. Illus. by Elizabeth Rosen. Dutton, 2008. Collective biography for Gr. 3-6. Twenty-one Jewish men and women who have contributed to American society are profiled in this handsomely illustrated, succinctly written collective biography. Because conventional art is the norm in Jewish children's books, the illustrations in this one set it apart because they delve into the meaning of the subjects' lives through a variety of artistic styles and media.

Fireside, Bryna J. *Private Joel and the Sewell Mountain Seder*. Illus. by Shawn Costello. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Passover story for Gr. 3 - 5. In 1866, J. A. Joel published an account of a Seder he organized while serving with the Ohio 23rd Volunteer Regiment in West Virginia during the Civil War. As the preparations ensue, the ceremonial foods are assembled, and the Seder begins with Passover's blessings, symbols, and meaning extended to include the experiences of African-American soldiers and their hope for freedom.

Nobleman, Marc Tyler. *Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman*. Illus. by Ross McDonald. Alfred A. Knopf, 2008. Biography for Gr. 3 - 6. Energetic illustrations in flat, comic book colors

join a peppy text to tell the tale of two nerdy boys from Cleveland, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, who combined their writing and drawing talents to create the greatest comic book hero of all time - Superman. Lousy at sports, shy around girls, and not at all popular at Glenville High School, the two boys made Superman everything that they were not. Siegel and Shuster sold the rights to Superman for \$130 and an Afterword tells of the continuing legal battle by their heirs to win them the recognition they deserve. That the boys of steel were Jewish is only mentioned in the Afterword, which, unlike the story, is written on an adult level.

Parker-Rock, Michelle. *Sid Fleischman*. Enslow, 2008. Biography for Gr. 4 – 6. Combine a love of magic and a talent for storytelling with a strong dose of humor and you understand why Sid Fleischman's books are so appealing to children. This lively biography, generously illustrated and attractively designed, informs and entertains as it blends biographical facts with a succinct account of Fleischman's dual careers as magician and writer. *The Entertainer and the Dybbuk* by Sid Fleischman is the 2008 Sydney Taylor Award Winner for Older Readers.

Ruzansky, Rebeca Edid. *Celebrating with Jewish Crafts*. Self-published, 2008. To order: www.celebratingwithjewishcrafts.com Activity book for Gr. 3 – 8. Few Jewish craft books have as broad a scope and strong production values as this one. The photos are lavish and attractive, the instructions are clear, the techniques are varied, and, in particular, the introductory information about each holiday is extremely well written. In addition to holiday crafts, there are tzedakah boxes, yahrzeit candles, a mizrah, siddur covers, and a variety of other home or gift items.

Sfar, Joann. *Little Vampire*. Translated by Alexis Siegel and Edward Gauvin. First Second, 2008. Graphic novel for Gr. 3 and up. Fans of Joann Sfar's adult graphic novels *The Rabbi's Cat* and *Klezmer* have an obligation to the young readers in their lives: introduce them to Little Vampire and his world. Originally published in France beginning in 1999, this new compilation collects the first two stories published in English in 2003, adds a third story, and bundles them together in an affordable and handsome paperback that will be treasured by both children and adults.

Sheinkin, Steve. *Rabbi Harvey Rides Again: A Graphic Novel Of Jewish Folktales Let Loose In The Wild West*. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008. Graphic novel for Gr. 3 and up. The fictional town of Elk Spring, Colorado might have a small population, but it boasts Rabbi Harvey, the swiftest problem solver in the West. In this second helping of Jewish folktales gone wild, Rabbi Harvey continues to solve the thorniest dilemmas with his trademark thoughtfulness, patience, and humor.

Shulevitz, Uri. *How I Learned Geography*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Autobiographical story for Gr. 2 – 6. The boy and his parents are refugees from war, exiled to a strange land where they endure deprivation and hunger. One day the boy's father goes out to buy bread, but returns instead with a map. The hungry boy is furious with his father but "The next day, Father hung the map...Our cheerless room was flooded with color." The boy's spirit and imagination are fed by the map, which allows him to escape his dreary existence for deserts, beaches, mountains, and fruit groves where "I drank fresh water and rested in the shade of palm trees...And so I spent enchanted hours far from our hunger and misery." This is the artist's experience that leads humans to find nourishment from within. The illustrations by Uri Shulevitz, the renowned artist who was once that hungry boy, testify to the fruitfulness of his creative imagination.

Siegel, Aranka. *Memories of Babi*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Historical fiction for Gr. 4 - 8. Piri, a city girl, spends vacations with her grandmother, Babi, who lives on a farm near a little Ukrainian village with few Jews and mostly Christians. Piri not only learns how to gather wild

mushrooms before dawn, but also the importance of honest hard work, caring for the less fortunate, and about having the courage to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. The nine stories are charming, wise and often witty. The one called "Yahrzeit" leads us into the final tragic sentence: "For Babi, my greatest hope is that her unquestioning faith in God sustained her through her own terrible last hour, when she was taken away from the home and land she loved so much by the Nazis. . . . "

Yolen, Jane. *Naming Liberty*. Illus. by Jim Burke. Philomel, 2008. Historical fiction for Gr. 2 - 6. *Naming Liberty* tells the story of an Eastern European Jewish family seeking a new life in America. Their story is cleverly balanced with the history of the Statue of Liberty. Told through the eyes of seven-year-old Gitl, readers gain a sense of the family's personal struggles as they give up the life they know to seek freedom in America. On alternating pages, the parallel story of the creation of the Statue of Liberty by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi comes to life. The two stories merge as Gitl's family reaches the shores of New York. When Gitl learns that Lady Liberty came to America "...in crates, by train, then by boat," she responds, "Just like me." Wanting to choose a new name in her new country, she declares, "Here in America ...my name is Liberty. But you can call me Libby."

FOR TEENS

Anton, Maggie. *Rashi's Daughter: Secret Scholar*. Jewish Publication Society, 2008. Historical fiction for Gr. 8 – 12. Did the great Jewish sage, Rashi, teach his daughters to become Talmudic scholars? Anton's story, adapted from her adult novel about Rashi's daughter, portrays how he defied the customs of the time and how much his intelligent daughters loved to learn. Along with hearty helpings of Torah and Talmud, the story serves up a rich menu of eleventh century Jewish communal attitudes, conventions, and superstitions - often centered around marriage and childbirth.

Grimberg, Tina. *Out of Line: Growing Up Soviet*. Tundra, 2007. Memoir for Gr. 6 – Adult. The author, now a rabbi, grew up in the Ukrainian city of Kiev. Although life there was grim, with endless shortages and endless lines, to a young child there was much to enjoy as well. Her close family life, lived in two rooms, was enriched by love and visits by the two babushkas (grandmas) who transmitted Jewish biblical tales and a love of literature. Eventually, the family left all their savings and possessions behind, and made the arduous journey to the United States under the guardianship of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). Wonderfully written, this series of biographical anecdotes is both entertaining and poignant. Illustrated with family photographs.

Hesse, Karen. *Brooklyn Bridge*. Feivel and Friends/Macmillan, 2008. Historical fiction for Gr. 6 - 8. Is fourteen year old Joseph as lucky as his friends say he is? He doesn't think so. It's 1903 and his hard-working immigrant parents have time for nothing but the stuffed Teddy bear business they've started. Joseph and his sister Emily are expected to help plus take care of their little brother, and worst of all, he's never been to Coney Island. The lives, hopes, and sorrows of Brooklyn's diverse immigrant population - the lucky, the unlucky, and those in between - are explored in a powerful historical novel by the author of *Letters from Rivka* and other memorable books.

Laskier, Rutka. *Rutka's Notebook: A Voice from the Holocaust*. Yad Vashem/Time, 2008. Holocaust diary for Gr. 7 – 12. A Jewish girl's diary was hidden under Polish floorboards in 1943, retrieved in 1945, and miraculously rediscovered only in 2006, allowing Zahava Laskier Scherz to explore the brief life of the half-sister she never knew. Like Anne Frank, Rutka Laskier did not survive the Holocaust, but her diary did. This gem of a book is a memorial to her keen intelligence.

Little, Melanie. *The Apprentice's Masterpiece*. Annick Press, 2008. Historical fiction for Gr. 9-12. Ramon, 15, works with his father as an apprentice scribe in 15th century Spain. Aware of his Jewish roots (his great-great grandparents were baptized by force), he is fearful of being turned in to the Inquisition as a heretic. Like Ramon's family, their young Muslim slave, Amir, is also threatened by the Inquisition. *The Apprentice's Masterpiece* tells the story of the boys' jealousy, adventures, compromises, sacrifices, and narrow escapes in this horrific and violent era.

FOR ALL AGES

Bloomfield, Joan Colella. *Jewish Holidays Cookbook*. Photographs by Angela Coppola. DK, 2008. Cookbook for Gr. 4 – 8. Blend 45 taste-tempting recipes with clear instructions, notes on kitchen safety, superb color photographs, and fascinating lore about Jewish food by Rabbi Janet Ozur-Bass and the result is a cookbook that the whole family can enjoy.

Feinstein, Rabbi Edward M. *Capturing the Moon: Classic and Modern Jewish Tales*. Behrman House, 2008. Folklore for Gr. 5 – Adult. The author of *Tough Questions Jews Ask* has rewritten and compiled a collection of 36 stories organized under the topics of "What Really Matters in Life?," "Doing What's Right," "It's Up to You," "Teachers and Friends," "Hidden Truths," and "The Miracle of Jewish Life." As these inspirational sounding headings suggest, the stories are meant to enlighten the listener or reader in the application of Torah and other Jewish teaching to everyday life.

Schram, Peninnah. *The Hungry Clothes and Other Jewish Folktales*. Illus. by Gianni De Conno. Sterling Publishing, 2008. Folklore for Gr. 4-Adult. Listen. A famous storyteller spins tales about people and places long ago and far away; about kings and rabbis, clever tricksters and wise women. And as she weaves her stories, you learn so much about Jewish values and morals. With the occasional colored border that looks like ancient fabric, as well as muted, slightly surrealistic paintings, this book is not only a pleasure to read, but also a delight to look at again and again.

ISRAEL @ 60

The Bat-Chen Diaries. Translated by Diana Rubanenko. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Gr. 6 – 10. Bat-Chen Shahak's collected journal entries, letters, poems, and photos introduce us to a charming and gifted Israeli girl, as she grew from age ten to fourteen. Her sensitivity, innocence, and her ultimate fate evoke an earlier diarist who wrote "despite everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Most American youngsters will identify with Bat-Chen's writings, wherein she describes her first schoolgirl crush, feelings of love yet annoyance with her parents, and sadness at the death of beloved grandparents. Of course, there are a few experiences that American children might *not* identify with so readily, like struggling to learn to don a gas mask, and repeated childhood poems expressing a longing for peace. Bat-Chen and two friends were among 15 people killed by a suicide bomber in Tel Aviv in March 1996 on the day of her 15th birthday.

Cohen, Deborah Bodin. *Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride*. Illus. by Shahar Kober. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Preschool - Gr. 2. The first train in Israel steamed into Jerusalem from Jaffa in 1892. In this picture book, Engineer Ari picks up Rosh Hashanah treats along the train's route, taking them to the children of Jerusalem. He leaves his friends back at the station without so much as a good bye and then begins to feel twinges of guilt as each holiday treat reminds him in some way

of Jessie and Nathaniel and of his unkind treatment of them. As the train pulls into Jerusalem and children surround it, Engineer Ari regrets having hurt his friends' feelings and remembers that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, " 'we do teshuvah ... which means turning ourselves around and promising to do better.'" Gathering an apple, a jar of honey, a challah, and a shofar for Jessie and Nathaniel, he turns his train around with a "Toot, Toot!" and heads back to Jaffa, ready to say "I'm sorry." A bit of Israeli history is entwined with a charmingly told and illustrated story for the High Holidays.

Dietrick, Ellen. *It's Israel's Birthday!* Photographs by Tod Cohen. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Preschool – Gr. 1. A winsome group of preschoolers take an imaginary trip to Israel to celebrate its birthday on Yom Ha'atzmaut. Cohen's clear color photographs show the children pretending to have their passports stamped at Ben Gurion Airport, sampling a variety of tasty Israeli foods, floating in the Dead Sea, praying at the Kotel, learning to read and count in Hebrew, marching in a birthday parade, and then returning home. All of the play-acting is set in a preschool classroom, so readers will join the children in the book as they engage in creative fun. Like similar books by Cohen and Latifa Berry Kropf, the photographs show stimulating educational environments and developmentally appropriate practices in the teaching of young children.

Levine, Anna. *Freefall*. Greenwillow Books, 2008. Gr. 7 – 10. As war between Israel and the terrorist group Hezbollah breaks out in 2006 and her compulsory military service draws near, Aggie tests herself by trying out for a women's combat unit despite her parents' opposition. Her training in the desert tests her to the limit but she makes the grade, learning not only endurance but the meaning of loyalty to comrades. Aggie's life and the set of believable characters with whom she interacts will impress readers with their similarity to those of American teens – except for the monumental decisions about duty to one's country that give the lives of Israeli young people a unique gravitas.

Levine, Anna. *Jodie's Hanukkah Dig*. Illus. by Ksenia Topaz. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Kdg. - Gr. 3. Like *Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride*, this picture book is set in Israel but has very little Israeli content. Rather, it focuses on a little girl who wants to be an archaeologist like her father and who gets her chance when he takes her during the Hanukkah vacation on a dig to Mod'in, the home of the Maccabees. Jodie alone is small enough to be lowered into a cave the archaeologists have discovered and in doing so, she conquers her fear of spiders and uses her sharp eyes to find an arrow that may once have belonged to the heroes of old. Having proved that she is as brave as a Maccabee, Jodie returns home with dad just in time to light the first Hanukkah candle. A pleasant story that emphasizes a young child's competence is enhanced with expressive illustrations.

Luxenberg, Alan. *The Palestine Mandate and the Creation of Israel, 1920-1949*. The Making of the Middle East Series. Mason Crest, 2008. Gr. 7 – 12. Readers of *The Palestine Mandate and the Creation of Israel* will be treated to a clarity of writing rarely seen in social studies series books for pre-college age students. They will also meet with a striving for objectivity that is the hallmark of the discipline of historical writing. From the Ottoman background to World War II's aftermath, from modern Zionism's origins to the development of Arab nationalism, the author chronicles the attempts, successes, and setbacks in the effort to satisfy the nationalistic drives of the two nations-- Arab and Jewish-- of Palestine. Trivia is excluded while the essentials of the historical record are told; the glossary and timeline entries are concise and devoid of propaganda. Includes an index, glossary, timeline, short bibliography and list of Internet resources plus maps and archival photographs.

Saul, Laya. *Meet Our New Student from Israel*. Mitchell Lane, 2009. Grades 2-5. The good news is that here is a book without an axe to grind against Israel. Its author makes clear the 3,000-year-long

connection between the State of Israel of today and the ancient history of the area. Also, there is recognition that guarding against terrorism is a part of daily life for Israelis. Written as a first-person account by a third grader in Colorado whose class is learning about Israel in preparation for the arrival of a new student from Tiberias, the last chapter shows Ziv's arrival. His new classmates, having studied up on Israel, greet him with "shalom" and "boker tov." He feels welcome and tells them a bit about himself. This is a satisfying conclusion to a book with enough information about Israeli life and culture to make it a serviceable source for "country" reports.

Sofer, Barbara. *Keeping Israel Safe: Serving in the Israel Defense Forces*. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. Pbk. Gr. 6-12. *Keeping Israel Safe* will appeal to those readers who hunger for information on Israel's armed forces and military history. It deftly combines facts about the IDF's various branches, ranking system, and famous operations with the stories of four Israeli friends—all teens deciding which branch of the service to enter. At only 56 pages, with photographs on every page, this book provides a sketchy treatment of its topic and could be stronger in explaining the threats faced by the IDF, but is recommended as an introduction to the subject of the Israeli military today.

Zenatti, Valérie. *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2008. Gr. 8 – 12. *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* begins wrenchingly with the September 9, 2003, Jerusalem cafe bombing when a bride-to-be is killed ten years to the day after the Rabin-Arafat-Clinton Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. Tal, an Israeli teen, decides peace must come from such tragedy. To reach this goal, each side must know and understand the other; to know, one must "talk". She asks her medic-soldier brother to place her dialog-seeking note in a bottle in Gaza. It is found by Naim, the only son of middle-class, Palestinian parents who live in a city, not a refugee camp. Their email messages to one another put a human face on Middle Eastern despair. Although Tal's hope is passionate, the novel contains much graphic violence, as well as strong emotional depictions of grief and shock.

COMPILED BY

Andrea Davidson, *The Temple-Tifereth Israel*
Aimee Lurie, *Fairmount Temple and The Temple-Tifereth Israel*
Linda R. Silver, *The Jewish Valuesfinder*, www.ajljewishvalues.org