BOOKS

YOUNG CHILDREN

Abraham, Michelle Shapiro. *My Cousin Tamar Lives in Israel*. Illus. by Ann D. Koffsky. URJ Press, 2007. A boy talks about how he celebrates the Jewish holidays in America and how his cousin Tamar celebrates them in Israel. Attractively illustrated, this positive introduction to Israel for preschoolers emphasizes the normalcy of the Israeli child's life. Ages 4 - 6.

DaCosta, Deborah. *Hanukkah Moon*. Illus. by Gosia Mosz. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. The author of *Snow in Jerusalem* has written a Hanukkah story with a slight Sephardic flavor. The full-page illustrations that accompany the story are beguiling, with fluid lines, piquant stylized faces and figures, and glowing colors. They are full partners with a text that combines three subjects – Hanukkah, Rosh Hodesh, and kindness to animals – in a childlike and natural way. Ages 5 - 7.

Daleski, Gil. *Is God Sad?* Illus. by Debbie Weinstein. Translated by Shirley Kaufman. Gefen, 2007. Translated from the Hebrew, a joyful conversation between father and child takes place affirming God's goodness, empathy, loving kindness and generosity, while also confronting questions about death in a comforting way for a young child. Ages 4 - 6

Edwards, Michelle. *Chicken Man.* New South Books, 2007. A beloved but long out-of-print classic of Jewish children's literature, set on an Israeli kibbutz and imparting a message of contentment, has finally been reissued with the delightfully funny story and pictures intact. Don't miss it! Ages 6 - 9.

Fagan, Cary. *My New Shirt*. Illus. by Dusan Petricic. Tundra Books, 2007. Peppered with Yiddish, this is a funny story told by a boy whose bubbe gives him a stiff, white shirt every year for his birthday - the kind that makes him look "like a little gentleman." When - horrors - he drops the shirt out of the window, a chase ensues that whizzes past the Kuni Lemmel Bagel Shop, the Sisters Katz Hair Salon, and the outdoor cafe where Mr. Zangwill sits eating a bowl of borscht. After the shirt is retrieved and "falls" out of the window again, bubbe decides she'll get her grandson something different for his birthday next year. Delightful illustrations enhance a heartwarming story. Ages 6 - 9.

Gershman, Sarah. *The Bedtime Sh'ma: A Good Night Book.* Illus. by Kristina Swarner. EKS, 2007. Includes an audio CD. The "nighttime" or "bedtime" Sh'ma is a little known collection of liturgical passages that comfort the reader before sleep. Excerpts from these passages, selected and interpreted for children, are presented in full at the back of the book in Hebrew and English. The book itself is absolutely lovely with simple words and warm illustrations in yellows and blues. Perfect for bedtime reading, it is accompanied by a CD with portions of the prayer set to music. Toddlers - age 7.

Heller, Linda. *The Castle on Hester Street*. Illus. by Boris Kulikov. Simon and Schuster, 2007. The 25th anniversary edition of this Sydney Taylor Book Award winner replaces author Linda Heller's subdued pastel illustrations with Boris Kulikov's big, bright, and bouncy ones. They are a joy to behold, adding dashes of whimsy and humor that reflect both grandpa's fanciful reminiscences and grandma's more realistic ones. Ages 6 - 9.

Horowitz, Dave. *Five Little Gefiltes*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007. Colorful, animated illustrations enhance this fun-to-read rhymed counting book, which also includes a lesson in Yiddish, a brief tour of New York City, a survey of Jewish culinary habits and a moral: always try to be a mensch. Ages 4 - 6.

Jules, Jacqueline. *Abraham's Search for God.* Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. Softly colored but dramatic illustrations wash over all the pages of this midrashic tale of how Abraham found God. The little boy's search is portrayed within a natural world of moon and sun, wind and thunder, rain and rainbows and his realization that a single unseen divine presence rules over the world develops in a way that young children will understand. Ages 3 – 6.

Meltzer, Amy. *A Mezuzah on the Door*. Illus. by Janice Fried. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. When a little boy named Noah moves with his family to a new home, he misses his old apartment and has a hard time adjusting. To celebrate the occasion, his mother takes him with her to buy a mezuzah, which Noah and his family, along with friends and neighbors, affix to the door in a Hannukkat Habayit ceremony. Pleasant, softly colored watercolor illustrations enhance the story, which contains information about how a mezuzah is made. For ages 5 - 8.

Leshem-Pelly, Miri. Lon-Lon's Big Night/Halaila Hagadol Shel Lon-Lon. Milk and Honey Press,

2007. In descriptive Hebrew and corresponding English, the author tells of the first nocturnal adventures of a sand fox cub in the Negev. The animals in their desert habitat are illustrated in soft pastels, and the pictures as well as the story have great child appeal. Part of a bilingual, Hebrew-English series by Milk and Honey Press for ages: 4 - 7.

Ricci, Regolo. *The Lord is My Shepherd*. Tundra Books, 2007. Watercolor paintings of farms and woodlands are the setting for this beautifully illustrated version of Psalm 23. The meaning of the psalm is reflected in scenes of farm animals grazing near the safety of a barn and wild animals living freely in the woods, sometimes within sight of their enemies. As the verses of the psalm glide by, so do the seasons of the year, from trees in blossom in the spring to bare branches covered with snow. Borders around each picture repeat the exquisite pictorial details that give new depth to the familiar words of comfort. Kdg. - Gr. 3.

Sheri, Shira. *Jonathan and the Waves/Yonatan V'Hagalim*. Milk and Honey Press, 2007. Jonathan is a little Israeli boy who is afraid to go into the ocean. To conquer his fears, he talks to God after he learns from his mother that God is present in nature and that God gives us strength when we are afraid. Attractively illustrated, it is part of a bilingual, Hebrew-English series from Milk and Honey Press for ages 4 - 7.

Tal, Eve. *The New Boy/Yeled Hadash*. Illus. by Ora Schwartz. Milk and Honey Press, 2007. After a rocky start, a Russian immigrant child in an Israeli nursery school is made to feel welcome by a caring teacher and his fellow students. The illustrations and format are handsome, with English on the left side and Hebrew on the right side of every double page spread. Jewish - and universal – values of understanding, sympathy, kindness, and inclusion are imparted through a story whose theme is not limited to Israel. Ages 4 - 7.

Ungar, Richard. *Even Higher*. Tundra Books, 2007. Reuven is put up to spying on the rabbi by his friends in this picture book retelling of "If Not Higher" by I. L. Peretz. They want to know if the rabbi really goes to heaven to plead for the village of Nemirov on the day before Rosh Hashanah as people say. Having witnessed the rabbi's acts of kindness towards someone in dire need, Reuven answers, "Even higher." Full color illustrations fill the pages with an autumn palette of blazing reds and blues, adding charming details, such as a cat curled into curves on top of the sleeping rabbi. Ages 5 - 8.

MIDDLE GRADES

Arato, Rona. *Ice Cream Town*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2007. Many of the challenges that Jewish immigrants faced in a new land are woven into this realistic story about a boy named Sammy, whose adaptation to America includes a taste for vanilla ice cream! The scenes of a polyglot New York with pushcarts, stickball games, and sweatshops paint a readable picture of immigrant life. Ages 8 - 11.

Codell, Esme Raji. *Viva la Paris!* Hyperion, 2006. Given a yellow star by her Holocaust survivor piano teacher, Paris takes it to school and is assigned to learn about the Holocaust, temporarily losing her faith in humanity. Her struggle with the burden of knowledge and her steps toward reembracing life are portrayed with sensitivity and even joy. Paris is black, but despite the lack of a Jewish protagonist, this is a book that will give Jewish readers, indeed, readers of all faiths, something to think about. Ages 8 - 11.

Fleischman, Sid. *The Entertainer and the Dybbuk*. Greenwillow, 2007. The author of more than sixty books for children, adults, and magicians works his magic on a tale about the Holocaust, transforming a tragedy into a humorous and life-affirming story of possession and revenge. The dybbuk is the spirit of a boy who was a Holocaust victim. When he possesses a young magician called The Great Freddie, the tricks really begin. Ages 9 - 14.

Greenberger, Tehilla. *Gifts to Treasure*. Illus. by Eli Toron. Hachai, 2007. The family of Jewish immigrants portrayed here as homesteaders in North Dakota all willingly perform acts of charity, mutual aid, self-sacrifice, and other mitzvot as a natural part of being Jewish. This book will appeal to many as a Jewish "Little House on the Prairie." Ages 8 - 11.

Heiligman, Deborah. *Celebrate Passover with Matzah, Maror, and Memories*. National Geographic, 2007. Another excellent book in the Holidays Around the World series, this is by the same author as *Celebrate Hanukkah with Lights, Latkes, and Dreidels*. Engaging color photos of Jews observing Passover in different parts of the world accompany a concise text that conveys the meaning and history of the holiday, its customs, and the observance of the Seder. Ages 8 - 12.

Heiligman, Deborah. *Celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with Honey, Prayers and the Shofar.* National Geographic, 2007. Heiligman's lively writing style, coupled with arresting full-color photos. make this an excellent addition to National Geographic's "Holidays Around the

World" series. Readers will enjoy learning how Jews in the United States and in many other parts of the world observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with customs that celebrate the sweet new year. Ages 8 - 12.

Ionnides, Mara W. Cohen. *A Shout in the Sunshine*. Jewish Publication Society, 2007. Set in the vibrant, diverse Greek Jewish community of Thessaloniki in the fifteenth century, a special friendship develops between Miguel, a poor refugee from Inquisition Spain, and David, the son of a wealthy Greek fabric merchant, despite the concerns of both Greek and Spanish Jews that the other group is not truly Jewish. Ages 10 - 13.

Leeds, Constance. *The Silver Cup.* Viking, 2007. In Germany in 1096, a Catholic girl overcomes the era's rampant anti-Semitism to rescue and befriend a Jewish girl whose family has been murdered in a pogrom. The author's knowledge of everyday medieval life matched with an elegant writing style make this noteworthy. Ages 10 - 14.

O'Connell, Rebecca. *Penina Levine is a Hard-boiled Egg.* Illus. by Majella Lue Sue. Roaring Brook Press, 2007. As the only fully Jewish student in her sixth-grade class, Penina refuses to comply with her insensitive teacher's assignment to write a letter from the Easter bunny to a kindergartner. When she receives a zero, Penina's grandmother helps her to retain her self-esteem and to stand up for what she believes. Girls will enjoy reading about feisty Penina. Ages 10 - 12.

Peacock, Louise. *At Ellis Island: A History in Many Voices*. Illlus. by Walter Lyon Krudop. Atheneum, 2007. Combining voices of immigrants, documentary photos, and evocative illustrations, this well-designed book brings to life the experiences of those who entered the United States through Ellis Island. Ages 9-12.

Toksvig, Sandi. *Hitler's Canary*. Roaring Brook, 2007. Multi-dimensional characters and a humorous writing style bring eleven-year old Bamse, his theatrical family and friends to life, placing them in the position of unlikely heroes, in this exciting and off-beat story about the Danish rescue of Jews during World War II. Ages 10 - 14.

TEENS

Brown, Don. *The Notorious Izzy Fink*. Roaring Brook Press, 2006. A colorful story set on New York's mean streets in the early 1900's, this is about ethnic teenage gangs and grown up gangsters, some based on real people. A Jewish-Irish boy is the narrator who recounts a tale of struggling for nickels and dimes, facing down rivals, and working for a fearsome crook named Monk Eastman in tandem with his arch-enemy, Izzy Fink. Fast-paced and adventurous, it neither exalts street life nor condemns it, letting the characters, their motivation, and actions speak for themselves. Ages 12 - 15.

DeSaix, Deborah Durland and Karen Gray Ruelle. *Hidden on the Mountain: Stories of Children Sheltered from the Nazis in Le Chambon.* Holiday House, 2007. The authors of this inspiring photo-essay tell an amazing rescue story about a Nazi-occupied Protestant community in south-central France who worked together to save several thousand Jewish children from the Holocaust, "because it was the right thing to do." Ages 12 - 15.

Hampton, Wilborn. War in the Middle East: A Reporter's Story: Black September and the Yom Kippur War. Candlewick Press, 2007. What is it like to report on a war? The experiences of the author in both Jordan (1970) and Israel (1973) are recounted with clarity and suspense. Hampton's book gives readers a very exciting view of the life of a foreign correspondent and an inside glimpse of how the news media in war zones works. Ages 12 - 15.

Konigsberg, E. L. *The Mysterious Edge of the Heroic World*. Simon and Schuster, 2007. The author of many popular books for young people, including *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, has written a novel that involves readers in a mystery about a stolen painting and reveals some of those often hidden "mysterious edges" of human nature. Ages 12 - 15.

Levitin, Sonia. *Strange Relations*. Random House, 2007. A teenage girl spends the summer in Hawaii with her religiously observant aunt and the aunt's large family. Not since *The Singing Mountain* has Levitin explored the varieties of Jewish practice in such depth. An absorbing story of good people striving for religious authenticity and learning to understand one another for ages 12 - 16.

Nicola, Christos and Peter Lane Taylor. *The Secret of Priest's Grotto*. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. A remarkable non-fiction Holocaust survival story that tells the true story of a group of thirty-two Ukrainian Jews who hid from the Nazis in a cave and managed to survive against incredible odds for almost one year. Stunning color photographs are spread throughout the book, which is written on a fairly adult level in the style of a National Geographic article. Ages 12 - 16.

Peacock, Shane. *The Eye of the Crow: The Boy Sherlock Holmes, His First Case*. Tundra Books, 2007. Sharp wits, a keen eye, and a strong ego are all aspects of a thirteen year old, half-Jewish misfit named Sherlock Holmes. His relentless tracking of a murderer foreshadows the daring and genius that will mark the legendary detective's future career. Ages 12 - 15.

Pressler, Mirjam. *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie.* Translated from the German by Erik J. Macki. Front Street, 2007. Memories of Nazi crimes loom heavily over this novel for mature teens, written by one of Germany's foremost writers for young people. Johanna returns from a school trip to Israel shaken by an encounter with a Holocaust survivor who accuses her grandfather of having stolen her parents' business. When she tries to pry the truth out of her father, he reacts with fury, insisting that the lucrative business was purchased and not stolen and ordering her to "let sleeping dogs lie." Ages 14 - 17.

Rabb, Margo. *Cures for Heartbreak*. Delacorte, 2007. Intense, poignant, but also at times very funny, 15-year-old Mia 's story of the year following the sudden death of her mother explores the nature of grief as she experienced it as a Jewish teenager. While containing some swearing, obscenities, and sex, it is based on the author's true experiences and is a highly moving, beautifully written look at death, illness, close family relationships, school, friendship and romance. Ages 14 and up including adults.

Welsh, T. K. *The Unresolved.* Dutton, 2006. The worst disaster in New York City's history before 9/11 was the fire aboard the General Slocum steamship in 1904, in which over one thousand people died. The narrator of this lyrically written novel is one of the dead: the ghost of a teenage girl who lingers in the world until she can bring those responsible for the fire to justice and clear the Jewish boy she loves from charges that he started it. Ages 14 - 17.

Wood, Angela Gluck *Holocaust: The Events and Their Impact on Real People*. DK, 2007. This stunning pictorial history combines insightful text, singular art, photographs of exceptional quality, and personal testimony. The inclusion of survivors' testimony and their photographs throughout the book and in the DVD that comes with it are gripping. Ages 12 and up including adults.

Wolfman, Marv, Mario Ruiz, and Willian J. Rubin. *Homeland: The Illustrated History of the State of Israel*. Nachshon Press, 2007. Using an innovative method of illustration that combines photographs and full-color digital art, *Homeland* is high quality graphic nonfiction. It is chock full of notable figures in Israel's history, from Abraham and Sarah to Ariel Sharon and Ilan Ramon. Worldwide events that have affected Israel, such as the Holocaust, the Gulf Wars, and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 are covered, as are the contributions of Israelis to the arts, sciences, and technology. Ages 12 and up including adults.

Wulf, Linda Press. *The Night of the Burning*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006. A 12- year- old Jewish orphan tells the poignant story of how she and her younger sister survived the death of their parents and a pogrom that destroyed their town to become part of a group of Jewish children taken to South Africa to be cared for by the Jewish community there. Based on actual events and with some real people, such as the philanthropist Isaac Ochsberg, as characters, the narrative swings between Devorah's feelings of sadness and her relief at finally feeling safe. Ages 12 - 16.

ALL AGES

Roth, Rita. *The Power of Song and Other Sephardic Tales*. Illus. by Alexa Ginsburg. Jewish Publication Society, 2007. When Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, they carried their stories to many different parts of the world. The thirteen stories in this collection of Sephardic tales are perfect for telling or reading aloud. Children will enjoy recognizing different versions of stories they already know, such as Cinderella, in some of the tales.

VIDEOS AND DVDs

A Hero in Heaven: Michael Levin. Philadelphia, Sally Mitlas Film Productions, 2007. DVD, 45 minutes. Michael Levin was the first American-Israeli killed by Hezbollah snipers in the war in Lebanon in 2006. He is remembered as a hero by his friends, family and fellow soldiers. A study guide is included. Grades 6 and up.

Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School. Keshet, 2007. DVD, 62 minutes. This documentary chronicles the story of one student's courageous fight to establish a gay-straight alliance at a Jewish high school in the Boston area, and of the transformative impact of her campaign on everyone involved. Beyond the struggle to create a supportive environment for gay and lesbian students and teachers at the school, it tells the story of a community wrestling with the very definition of pluralism and diversity in a Jewish context. Grades 6 and up.

Israel up Close, Vol. 1-20. Israel Up Close, Los Angeles, 2007. DVD, 12 minutes. A video news magazine format that features behind the headlines stories. A DVD collection that centers around contemporary life in Israel. Grades 4 and up, depending on subject area.

Keeping Up with the Steins, Miramax Films, 2006. DVD, 99 minutes.

There are many teachable moments in this comedy about a family in discordance while planning a Bar Mitzvah. Conspicuous consumption is the order of the day. Issues of divorce, Jewish identity, Bar Mitzvah, and family are raised. Grades 6 and up.

Moskowitz, Rabbi Moshe. *Out of Egypt.* Shazak Productions, 2007. DVD, 92 minutes, color animation. The story of the Exodus humorously told in a colorful comic strip format. All ages.

The Power of Good: The Nicholas Winton Story. Gelman Educational Foundation, 2006. DVD, 64 minutes plus 70 minutes additional material. In 1939, Nicholas Winton, personally and by his own initiative, saved the lives of 669 children, most of them Jewish, from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. He brought them to his native England, where they were placed with families, and kept his rescue of these children a secret for nearly 50 years. Grades 6 and up.

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COMPILED BY

Andrea Davidson, *The Temple-Tifereth Israel*Bonnie Shapiro, *Jewish Education Center of Cleveland*Linda R. Silver, *The Jewish Valuesfinder*

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IN CELEBRATION OF JEWISH BOOK MONTH 2007



A SELECTED LIST OF RECENT BOOKS, DVDS, AND WEBSITES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

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