Association of Jewish Libraries - Greater Cleveland Chapter

NEW AND NOTABLE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

SPRING 2010 PREVIEW

YOUNG CHILDREN

Beautiful Yetta, the Yiddish Chicken by Daniel Pinkwater. Illus. by Jill Pinkwater. Feiwel and Friends, 2010. Preschool-Gr. 2. Beautiful Yetta escapes from the kosher butcher shop and is lost in Brooklyn. Rude rats and dangerous buses daunt her but when she chases a cat ("Gay ahVEK, du fahrSHTUNKehneh kahtz!") that is stalking a parakeet, she is befriended by the entire flock of Spanish-speaking parakeets and is never lonely in Brooklyn again. Yes, there are flocks of wild parakeets in Brooklyn, according to the author. And he knows of one Yiddish-speaking chicken. Pinkwater's well-known humor is captured by his wife's winsome illustrations and by dialogue written in English, Yiddish, and Spanish. Pure fun!

Before We Eat: A Thank You Prayer by Jacqueline Jules. Illus. by Melissa Iwai. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. Preschool. Jules uses simple rhyming text to teach young children about the Hamotzi prayer, a blessing we say before we eat. Preparing to eat their family meal, a sister and brother pause to say "these words, which seem just right." Their words explain the prayer simply, as the children thank God for good food, their family, and their home. The prayer, "Thank you God, for the blessing of bread and for the meal which we will now enjoy," is written in transliteration and English, as we see the small boy ready to take his first bite of bread. As with other titles in the Very First Board Book series, text and illustrations are perfectly suited to preschool collections.

First Rain by Charlotte Herman. Illus. by Kathryn Mitter. Albert Whitman, 2010. Preschool - Gr. 2. Abby and her parents move to Israel, leaving a tearful Grandma behind in America. They keep in touch through letters and emails and when the rains begin in Israel, who should show up in person but Grandma? Clad in a yellow slicker, she's ready for a walk in the rain with Abby. Their loving relationship is at the heart of this story, which also projects a very positive picture of normal Israeli life. The cheerful illustrations reflect the story and show some of Israel's diversity.

Emma's Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty by Linda Glaser. Illus. by Claire A. Nivola. Houghton, 2010. Gr. 1-4. A picture book about Emma Lazarus and how she was inspired to write the poem "The New Colossus," whose famous lines "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." are inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. Showing both Emma's strong personality and how her passion for social justice emerged out of a life of privilege, this fascinating story is elegantly illustrated.

Feivel's Flying Horses by Heidi Smith Hyde. Illus by Johanna van der Sterre. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. Gr. 1-3. Around the turn of the 20th century, immigrant Jewish woodcarvers who learned their craft in Europe carving synagogue ornaments were among the foremost creators of carousels. This engaging story about one of them is enhanced by strong, flowing illustrations that portray both the Coney Island milieu in which the story is set and the beauty of the splendid carved horses. An historical note follows.

Going on a Chometz Hunt by Jaqueline Jules. Illus. by Rick Brown. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. Preschool. Using a feather and a flashlight, a small brother and sister search their house for forbidden crumbs of hametz (leavened food) before Passover begins. They have fun counting as they find three crusts of bread under the bed, five cookies on the floor, and so on. After they sweep the hametz into a bag and dispose of it, they are ready for the Seder. Part of the Very First Board

Book series, the cheerful bright illustrations combine perfectly with the simple rhyming text to teach young children about this part of the Passover preparation.

The Little Red Hen and the Passover Matzah by Leslie Kimmelman. Illus. by Paul Meisel. Holiday House, 2010. Preschool - Gr. 1. This Yiddish-flavored Passover version of the Little Red Hen nursery tale couldn't be more fun! Those no-goodniks sheep, horse, and dog don't have a moment to spare for their friend, Little Red Hen, as she goes about first growing the wheat, then grinding it, and baking it into matzah for her Seder. When all three have the chutzpah to show up for the Seder, she remembers the words in the Haggadah: "Let all who are hungry come and eat" and invites them in. And when it's time for clean-up afterwards, guess who says, "Not I" this time? The combination of a rollicking story, bouncy illustrations, and the familiarity of a beloved story make this a winner! Instructions for preparing and baking matzah are given.

Passover: Celebrating Now, Remembering When by Harriet Ziefert. Illus. by Karla Gudeon. Blue Apple, 2010. Preschool - Gr. 3. Outstanding in conception, design, and content, this Passover book captures both the meaning and the observance of the holiday in the present and at the time of its origin. While the text is direct and sparse, the folk art illustrations are expansive and captivating, many spread across fold-out pages that very creatively link Passover's contemporary and historical aspects. As a modern family prepares for Passover and celebrates it at their Seder, each element of the Seder is connected to the Passover narrative at a level of writing and visual clarity that is perfect for children of all ages.

A Picture Book of Harry Houdini by David Adler and Michael Adler. Illus. by Matt Collins. Gr. 1-3. Realistic color illustrations, a fluid writing style, and an attractive format blend to make this an engaging easy biography. Houdini's Jewish origin is noted but the book focuses mainly on describing and depicting his most famous escapes. Vignettes from his personal life add insight into his personality. Suspense and human interest are maintained in a good introduction to the ever-popular magician.

A Tale of Two Seders by Mindy Avra Portnoy. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. Preschool - Gr. 2. A little girl describes the two Seders she attends each year after her parents have divorced. While expressing both wistfulness and a wish that they would get back together, the story's positive perspective is strong. At each Seder, the child comments on the charoset and at the conclusion, her mother compares families to charoset - some sweeter than others, some stickier, but each tasty in its own way. Four charoset recipes follow the colorfully illustrated story.

MIDDLE GRADES

Faraway Island by Annika Thor. Translated by Linda Schenck. Delacorte, 2009. Gr. 5-8. In 1939, two Jewish sisters, eight year-old Nellie and twelve year-old Stephanie Steiner, are sent to Sweden for safety. Their parents hope to escape from Nazi-occupied Vienna and get visas for them all to go to America. The sisters are separated and while Nellie is placed with a kind foster family, Stephie's foster mother seems cold and unfeeling. Stephie learns Swedish and studies hard, but she misses her parents terribly and feels as if she is stranded at the end of the world, on this island so far away from them. Winner of the American Library Association's Mildred Batchelder Award (for an outstanding children's book translated from a foreign language and published in the United States), this is the first of a projected series of four novels about the girls and their life on the island.

The Harpist of Granada by Gershon Kranzler. Illus. by Chedvah Rubin. Feldheim, 2009. Gr. 5-8. After the Berber massacre of 1014, the orphaned young Shmuel Abinoam leaves Cordoba with other Jews for Granada, hoping to find his uncle. Alone and cold, he stops to rest by a large house and hears harp music. He is soon invited into the home of Dona Ezra, who hires a scholar to teach him Torah while she teaches him to play the harp. Soon Dona Ezra dies, leaving her

entire estate to Shmuel. His further adventures have a positive affect on all the Jews of the land. The magnificent illustrations, with exquisite detail and lush pigments, stand out. Originally published in *The Golden Shoes and Other Stories* (Feldheim, 1960).

Hot Pursuit: Murder in Mississippi by Stacia Deutsch and Rhody Cohon. Illus. by Craig Orback. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. Gr. 4-7. In 1964 Mississippi, the car with three young Civil Rights activists inside is pulled over by the Neshoba County police. Wanted by them as well as by the local Ku Klux Klan, one decision seals the fate of Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Earl "J. E." Chaney. The narrative swings between the life-and-death decision that Mickey makes and the choices that each man made, leading him to that day. Filled with suspense, this fictionalized history gives today's readers a gripping account of the Civil Rights Movement and the heroism of so many of its advocates.

Jewish Comedy Stars: Classic to Cutting Edge by Norman Finkelstein. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. Gr. 4-8. This "Who's Who" of Jewish jokesters will inform and amuse young readers and their families alike. Almost 50 mini-biographies are included, from old-timers like Morey Amsterdam to the trendy Sarah Silverman. While details are sparse and some photos are very dated, browsing through the book will elicit comments like "I didn't know he was Jewish!" An excellent history of Jewish-American humor is woven throughout the book.

Mrs. Kaputnik's Pool Hall and Matzo Ball Emporium by Rona Arato. Tundra, 2010. Gr. 3-5. A mother and two young children move to America from Russia, leaving behind everything except their pet dragon Snigger. With Snigger's help the children search for their father, who came to America five years earlier. They have many fun adventures in New York's Lower East Side along the way. Boys and girls alike will delight in reading this immigration tale with a twist.

Rabbi Harvey vs. the Wisdom Kid: A Graphic Novel of Dueling Jewish Folktales in the Wild West by Steve Sheinkin. Gr. 5-8. Jewish Lights, 2010. The latest adventure of Rabbi Harvey, from the Wild West, is sure to please fans of the first novels. A charming romp that reworks classic Jewish folktales and lore into this popular format, it will appeal to middle school students and teens.

Secrets at Camp Nokomis: A Rebecca Mystery by Jacqueline Dembar Green. American Girl, 2010. Gr. 4-7. Join Rebecca Rubin, star of an American Girl Series, as she ventures off to summer camp to escape the 1916 polio virus in New York City. Campfires, canoe trips, and a mysterious camper are sure to captivate Rebecca's legions of fans. Great summer reading for girls who might be having their first camp experience too. Photos and information provide historical context. Moms will recognize the Nancy Drew-like feel of the book.

TEENS

Anne Frank: Her Life in Words and Pictures from the Archives of the Anne Frank House by Menno Metselaar and Ruud van der Rol. Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans. RoaringBrook Press/FlashPoint, 2009. Gr. 5-9. Numerous Frank family photographs impart much detail of their life from the time they fled Germany in 1933 to the fateful day in 1944 when they were discovered in the Secret Annex. Excellent historical information, laced with diary excerpts, tells the sad story. Included is information about the Anne Frank House, an Amsterdam museum since 1960.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict: The 1948 War by Efraim Karsh. Rosen, 2009. Gr. 10-Adult. The author, a professor of Middle East Studies and an authority on the subject, analyzes the background of the 1948 war between the Arabs and the Jews of Western Palestine, and the effects on the region of the 1949 agreement between the new state of Israel and its neighbors. Karsh outlines the war's military history and provides facts not emphasized enough in similar works. For example, he points out that the Arab refugees of that time saw themselves as victims of their own leaders rather than

Israeli aggression. He stresses that Arab leaders, if they had been successful, would have divided up Palestine between Egypt, Syria, and Transjordan rather than create a new Palestinian state.

Ashes by Kathryn Lasky. Viking, 2010. Gr. 7-10. Gabby Schramm is a thirteen year-old gentile girl living in 1930's Berlin during a turbulent political climate. Hindenberg, "The Old Gentleman," loses control of the government and the Weimar Republic crumbles while Hitler's Third Reich climbs to power. Gabby's father, an astronomer and a close colleague of Albert Einstein, is accused by the Nazis of adhering to "Jewish physics" because he accepts Einstein's theory of relativity. The story is filled with memorable characters, exciting events, and a believable portrayal of Germany in that era. The author is a consummate writer of historical fiction; she provides a foreword with an abbreviated history of the numerous changes in the German government and the targeting of Jewish scientists by the Nazis.

Israel, Rev. Ed. by Adam Garfinkle. Mason Crest, 2010. Gr. 7-12. Originally published in 2004, this updated and revised edition -- with editorial consultation provided by the Foreign Policy Research Institute -- offers a balanced view of the small Jewish nation in a volatile Muslim region. Much is covered, including Israel's history, geography, society and politics. Included are maps, photographs, websites, and other features making it an excellent resource for the teen researcher.

Life, After by Sarah Darer Littman. Scholastic, 2010. Gr. 7-12. When poverty forces her family to leave their home in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Dani has a hard time adjusting to life in New York City, where everything is different except her father's depression. She forms an unlikely bond with a wealthy, spoiled girl and her brother, who has Asperger's Syndrome. They too know suffering, because they lost their father on 9/11. Background information about the situation of Argentinean Jews is seamlessly woven into a story about modern-day immigrants and one strong, spirited teen.

Queen of Secrets by Jenny Meyerhoff. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. Gr. 7-10. When Esther ("Essie") Green's first cousin Micah, an observant Jew, joins the high school football team, she is faced with difficult choices. Conflicting loyalties and confusing emotions assault her as she decides what to do. Essie's struggle with a newly uncovered family secret contributes to her self-identity as she turns sixteen. A modern twist on the biblical story of Queen Esther.

Under a Red Sky: A Memoir of Childhood in Communist Romania by Haya Leah Molnar. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. Gr. 5-9. A child's-eye view of life in Communist Romania, with all of its shortages, secrets, spying, and anti-Semitism, is conveyed in this lively memoir. Eva lives with her eccentric but loving family in a crowded Bucharest apartment. From them she learns about the complicity of Romania's fascists during the Holocaust and she also begins to embrace her Jewish heritage, despite the risks. Black and white family photographs accompany the story.

An Unspeakable Crime: The Prosecution and Persecution of Leo Frank by Elaine Marie Alphin. Carolrhoda/Lerner, 2010. Gr. 8-12. Following the murder of a thirteen year-old girl who was an employee at The National Pencil Factory, Leo Frank was tried and convicted during a sensational trial that captivated Atlanta in 1913. Painstakingly researched, the author explores the events leading up to Frank being lynched for a crime he may not have committed. This book is a searing look at a dark chapter in Jewish American history and should not be missed.

The Year of Goodbyes by Debbie Levy. Disney/Hyperion, 2010. Gr.6-8. Like many German girls in the 1930's, 12 year-old Jutta Salzberg kept a *poesiealbum* – a blank book that friends and relatives filled with drawings, inscriptions, and verses. Jutta's daughter, Debbie Levy, uses her mother's *poesiealbum* as the springboard for telling the true story of her mother's last year before fleeing from the Nazis. Historical background notes and photographs complete the picture.