HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS TITLES FOR SPRING 2023

These titles are the Association of Jewish Libraries' picks for the best Jewish holiday children's books of Spring 2023.

PURIM


What do duct tape and Queen Esther have in common? Both are strong and flexible! This book gives you step-by-step instructions to create your own duct tape costumes and accessories for all your Purim needs. Make your own crown, Haman's triangular hat, or a shalach manot Purim gift tote bag!


After baking a fresh batch of hamantaschen, Lily Bluestein puts on her blue hoodie and helmet and hops on her skateboard to go to Granny’s Florida condo, only to be stopped by golfer Thaddeus T. Wolf! A modern Jewish twist on the classic fairy tale packs a ton of visual jokes into the illustrations for this fun holiday tale.


Elsie can’t wait for Purim and her synagogue’s party--she has the ultimate Queen Esther costume planned. When she learns the temple is in financial trouble, she spearheads an effort to turn the party into a fundraiser, getting the entire community involved. But even Queen Esther might not be able to save the day after an antisemitic attack leaves the temple trashed and vandalized. Short chapters and a fast-moving plot make this a page-turner.

Saralee Seigel and her super-nose return for a fourth story, this time about the holiday of Purim. Zaide is getting the Seigel House restaurant ready for a big Purim bash, while Saralee is trying her best to come up with the perfect hamantaschen recipe, but every time she tries, they taste all wrong, and odd newcomers magically appear. People like Herman, the new party coordinator, who is not very nice, and a lot like someone in the Purim story....This delightful early chapter book will have readers cheering for Saralee as she stands up for herself, defeats Haman, and resumes her place at Zaide's side.

PASSOVER


A wordless book with beautiful watercolor illustrations introduces three children at a seder, who follow the afikomen-stealing dog under the table and are magically transported to ancient Egypt. They witness Yocheved and Miriam setting baby Moses in a basket on the River Nile, and help steer his basket to safety with Pharaoh's daughter before returning to their own time.


Hannah is sad when her relatives can't come to her seder, so her family invites local friends. While making the invitations, Hannah and her parents think of words to describe the holiday—such as freedom, spring, history, and great food! When their friends arrive, they each bring something from their own cultural background that reminds them of those same words. A wonderful gathering that reminds readers of the many different meanings of the holiday and cross-cultural connections.


This book board works as a toddler-friendly Haggadah and is a companion to Kar-Ben's A Family Haggadah II. The text is very simple and the illustrations are delightful. The story centers on an adorable nameless child who walks readers through the major components of the seder including how we light the candles, ask the Four Questions, and eat crunchy matzah, among other highlights of the seder.
TISHA B’AV

Luis de Torres Sails to Freedom by Tami Lehman-Wilzig, illustrated by Oliver Averill, Kar-Ben Publishers, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group. Ages 5-10, ISBN 9781728445502

In this work of historical fiction, readers get a glimpse into the life of Luis de Torres, Christopher Columbus’s interpreter, who may have been a converso, a hidden Jew. In this story, he is trying to escape the Spanish Inquisition by joining the expedition. When the ship is scheduled to leave on Tisha B’Av, an important Jewish day of mourning, Luis convinces the commander to wait for better weather and better luck. Beautiful illustrations and brief back matter enhance the exciting story.

AJL’s 2023 Holiday Highlights judges are Rebecca Levitan, Librarian III at the Baltimore County Public Library - Pikesville branch in Baltimore, MD; Jennifer Rothschild, Collection Engagement Librarian at Arlington Public Library in Arlington, VA; and Danielle Winter, reference librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library in Brooklyn, NY.

To learn more about the Association of Jewish Libraries, please visit www.jewishlibraries.org.

To learn more about Holiday Highlights, contact Heidi Rabinowitz holidayhighlights@jewishlibraries.org