HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS TITLES FOR FALL 2024

These titles are the Association of Jewish Libraries' picks for the best Jewish holiday children's books of Fall 2024.

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SHABBAT

Challah for Shabbat Tonight by Sara Holly Ackerman, illustrated by Alona Millgram, Algonquin Young Readers, an imprint of Workman Publishing, 2024. Ages 4-8, ISBN 9781643753577, release date 9/3/24. Warm illustrations accompany this lyrical story of a granddaughter and her grandmother spending the day making challah together, as the refrain repeats "Challah for Shabbat tonight," culminating in a lively yet cozy Shabbat dinner with the whole family.

Ping-Pong Shabbat: The True Story of Champion Estee Ackerman by Ann Diament Koffsky, illustrated by Abigail Rajunov, Little Bee Books, 2024. Ages 4-8, ISBN 9781499816099, release date 9/10/24. At age 11, Ping-Pong Champion Estee Ackerman gave up a shot at the national gold medal to avoid playing on Shabbat. Bright, lively illustrations help to highlight the action of the game.
ROSH HASHANAH


Three cousins in Istanbul set off to the market to buy pomegranates, leeks, and a whole fish for Rosh Hashanah. As they shop, they face complications from some overly-interested cats and a bully. When tensions with the bully boil over, the cousins receive some unexpected help from the cats, allowing them to make it home with most of their purchases, where they celebrate the holiday with their extended family and each traditional food is explained. Back matter includes a Ladino glossary, information about Jewish communities in Turkey, and information about how Sephardi Jews celebrate Rosh Hashanah. A gentle holiday tale featuring a community not often represented.


From her lucky socks to lucky pencil, Penny is a luck expert and is going to use that knowledge to make sure her teacher picks her to blow the Shofar at the Rosh Hashanah picnic. She’s excited when she finds a lucky penny on the way to school, but her friend Mara warns that because it was face down, it’s actually bad luck. Mara’s predictions seem to prove true when everything starts to go wrong, further compounded by Penny’s attempts to reverse her fortune. Centering around the preparations for Rosh Hashanah, this humorous early chapter book looks at perception and superstition and how to make a fresh start for a new year.

SUKKOT


The Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival and Sukkot often overlap. Ruby is excited to celebrate both holidays - with her Chinese grandmother she buys permissions and pomelo, and with her Jewish grandfather she buys an etrog and lulav. Looking for ways to celebrate both holidays together, she decorates her sukkah with Chinese lanterns and makes special Jewish mooncakes - the traditional mid-autumn festival desert, but with a dried date, honey, and walnut filling. (A recipe is included.) A sweet picture book of a family honoring multiple traditions.
HANUKKAH


It doesn't matter that Rachel Friedman's brother isn't sharing her enthusiasm for Hanukkah and that Mason at school thinks she is missing out during the season without Christmas. Rachel Friedman is determined to make this the best Hanukkah yet! She has activities planned for all eight nights of the holiday, but when an accident happens, Rachel learns that even when things aren't perfect, you can still have a happy holiday. This early chapter book is filled with lovable characters and lots of Hanukkah joy.


Join the kids for the Hanukkah Hippity-Hop where you'll march like a Maccabee and stomp your feet, then shake like the jelly in a doughnut treat. This board book is a fun read-aloud, with adorable bright pictures and an interactive way to learn the basics about Hanukkah.


Set in a diverse Jewish household full of latkes, applesauce, sufganiyot, and other Hanukkah holiday treats, this warm story highlights the importance and joy of passing along traditions from one generation to the next, and making new traditions too. Children can also learn about the meaning of the holiday through informative side notes on each page that give a brief explanation of Hanukkah concepts, such as the Maccabees, hanukkiyah, shamash, and gelt. An afterword from the author provides even more historical background to the holiday.

AJL's 2024 Holiday Highlights judges are Rebecca Levitan, Librarian 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.