

Association of Jewish Libraries – Greater Cleveland Chapter

NEW AND NOTABLE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Jewish Book Month 5771/2010

For the first time since the Greater Cleveland Chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries began compiling Jewish Book Month lists, the 2010 lists will be published in electronic format only. The main reason is economic: printing multiple copies on paper is expensive. But we also think/hope that these electronic versions will be more accessible to our intended audience of librarians and library patrons, who may print them for their own use or store and view them on their computers. Another advantage is that an electronic format allows us to compile longer lists, with more titles on them and longer descriptions for each title. The titles chosen are all from 2010 and they represent what the compilers, members of the Greater Cleveland Chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries, consider to be the best books of Jewish content written for children and teens this year. Librarians use these lists to help them decide what to purchase for their collections so library patrons should be able to find all of them among the Cleveland area's many fine synagogue, school, and public libraries.

YOUNG CHILDREN

Baxter, the Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher by Laurel Snyder. Illus. by David Goldin. Tricycle Press. Preschool – Gr. 2. In this comical picture book, Baxter learns the difference between being dinner and being a guest for dinner. His attempts to become kosher are ridiculously unsuccessful but when he meets a kind rabbi who invites him to her Sabbath dinner as a guest, he learns that everyone is welcome on Shabbat.

Beautiful Yetta, the Yiddish Chicken by Daniel Pinkwater. Illus. by Jill Pinkwater. Feivel and Friends. Preschool - Gr. 2. Beautiful Yetta escapes from the kosher butcher shop and is lost in Brooklyn. Rude rats and blustering 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 Brooklyn’s Spanish-speaking parakeets and is never lonely again. Pinkwater’s well-known humor is captured by his wife’s winsome illustrations and by dialogue written in English, Yiddish, and Spanish.

Engineer Ari and the Sukkah Express by Deborah Boden Cohen. Illus. by Shahar Kober. Kar-Ben/Lerner. Preschool – Gr. 2. Engineer Ari and his two railroad buddies build a sukkah made of materials given to them by friends along the Jaffa to Jerusalem train route. After realizing that a backyard sukkah won’t be seen by these generous folks along the tracks, they re-build it on a railroad flatbed car and chug-chug it along the route so everyone can enjoy it. Based on a historic 1982 Israeli train and laced with some facts about Sukkot, this warm story is a sequel to *Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride*.

Emma’s Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty by Linda Glaser. Illus. by Claire A. Nivola. Houghton Mifflin. 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. 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 setting and the beauty of the splendid carved horses. An historical note follows.

Gathering Sparks by Howard Schwartz. Illus. by Kristina Swarner. Preschool-Kdg. A gorgeously illustrated book that explains the concept of tikkun olam (repairing the world) to very young children through a story about a child and his grandfather who gaze up at the night sky. When the child asks where all the stars come from, grandfather describes the sparks that emanated from the broken vessel that God sent into the world and how it is the job of humanity to gather those sparks of light and return them to their proper place.

The Little Red Hen and the Passover Matzah by Leslie Kimmelman. Illus. by Paul Meisel. Holiday House. 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.

Miriam in the Desert by Jacqueline Jules. Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Kar-Ben/Lerner. Kdg. – Gr. 3. A legend from the Bible comes to life in this glowingly illustrated tale of Miriam, sister of Moses and wise woman of her people. Miriam is the loving grandmother of the boy, Bezalel, who tells the story. As the Israelites trek (and complain) through the wilderness, Bezalel draws pictures in the sand showing miracles such as manna and Miriam's well. At the climax of the story, Bezalel's great-uncle, Moses, climbs the mountain to receive God's laws. Where will these Ten Commandments be kept? Bezalel is chosen to craft the "safe and beautiful" Holy Ark.

Modeh Ani: A Good Morning Book by Sarah Gershman. Illus. by Kristina Swarner. EKS. Preschool – Gr. 2. Gentle illustrations grace this selection of prayers from *Birchot HaShachar*, the Morning Blessings. The language and perceptions are those of a young child, who is shown waking up and greeting the day. Excerpts from the Morning Blessings are given in Hebrew and English.

Passover: Celebrating Now, Remembering When by Harriet Ziefert. Illus. by Karla Gudeon. Blue Apple Press. 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. Holiday House. 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.

The Rooster Prince of Breslov by Ann Redisch Stampler. Illus. by Eugene Yelchin. Clarion. Kdg. – Gr. 4. A confused young prince learns through the example set by his teacher that the practice of mitzvot and rachmones will make him a mensch. In this version of a Rav Nachman of Breslov tale, psychological insight is paired with Jewish values. The distinctive illustrations are humorous but also insightful and they combine with the story into a remarkable book!

Sammy Spider's First Simhat Torah by Sylvia A. Rouss. Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Kar-Ben/Lerner. Preschool–Gr. 2. In this latest installment in the series about a curious little spider, Sammy and his human counterpart, Josh, learn that on Simhat Torah, the yearly cycle of reading the Torah is completed and begun again. After Sammy hitches a ride to services on Josh's candied apple, he joins in the celebration thanking God for the gift of Torah. Bright collage illustrations and a rhyming refrain tell a charming story.

MIDDLE GRADES

Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Sword by Barry Deutsch. Amulet/Abrams. Gr. 4-8. Mirka's stepmother, Fruma, would like her to learn the "womanly arts." But eleven year old Mirka wants to slay a dragon so she embarks on a quest for a sword. This spirited graphic novel has color illustrations that strike just the right balance in the portrayal of both a realistic Orthodox community and a magical fairy tale landscape.

Hot Pursuit: Murder in Mississippi by Stacia Deutsch and Rhody Cohon. Illus. by Craig Orback. Lerner. Gr. 4-7. In 1964 Mississippi, the car with three young Civil Rights workers 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 earlier, 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 activists.

Jewish Comedy Stars: Classic to Cutting Edge by Norman Finkelstein. Kar-Ben/Lerner. 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 browsing through the book, readers will exclaim, "I didn't know he was Jewish!" An excellent history of Jewish-American humor is woven throughout biographical accounts.

The Life and Opinions of Amy Finawitz by Laura Toffler-Corrie. Roaring Brook. Gr. 5-8. A laugh-aloud story about a smart, sarcastic, and opinionated eighth grader. Amy's best friend has abandoned her for what Amy, the ultimate New Yorker, considers the boon-docks (Kansas) and she finds herself left with some nerdy classmates and the companionship of an older lady who gallivants with her around the city and introduces her to a Hasidic boy who proves to be a true friend. Told in text messages, emails, and short plays, it abounds with humor, quirky characters, and wholesome values.

Mrs. Kaputnik's Pool Hall and Matzo Ball Emporium by Rona Arato. Tundra. Gr. 3-5. A mother and two young children move to America from Russia, leaving behind everything but their pet dragon Snigger. With Snigger's help the children search for their father, who came to America five years earlier. Their rollicking adventures in New York's Lower East Side give non-stop action to this immigration tale with a fantasy twist.

One Is Not a Lonely Number by Evelyn Krieger. YM Books. Gr. 5-8. Thirteen year old Talia is the only child of affluent Orthodox parents. She has many privileges but like most adolescents, finds some things to complain about as well, including the presence of a flighty young woman whom Talia's hospitable parents have invited to stay with them while she learns about Judaism. One year in Talia's school life is portrayed in a story that shows the wholesome everyday life of a typical teen and her observant parents, friends, and teachers.

Otto: The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear by Tomi Ungerer. Phaidon. Gr. 4-7. Written by an internationally acclaimed artist who is also the author/illustrator of the classic picture book, *CriCTOR*, among many others, Otto's story is one of friendship and perseverance set during the Holocaust. He is separated from his best friends, David and Oskar, when the Nazis take David away and Oskar loses Otto in the chaos of war. An American soldier brings Otto to the United States and after many years, the scruffy old teddy bear is reunited with his friends, who are also reunited with one another. Ungerer's expressive illustrations illuminate a touching story.

Rabbi Harvey vs. the Wisdom Kid: A Graphic Novel of Dueling Jewish Folktales in the Wild West by Steve Sheinkin. Jewish Lights. Gr. 4-7. Wise and witty Rabbi Harvey, the hero of two previous graphic novels, returns to save the town of Elk Spring from various villains. A rival challenges him with different approaches to solving problems but in this tale of dueling Talmudic teachings, Rabbi Harvey triumphs over the mistakenly named "Wisdom Kid."

Secrets at Camp Nokomis: A Rebecca Mystery by Jacqueline Dembar Greene. Pleasant Company. Gr. 4-6. In the early years of the last century, Rebecca Rubin, the Jewish addition to the popular American Girl series, heads to a fresh air camp established to give children a break from the congested and germ-filled city. There she makes friends with backgrounds different from her own and solves a mystery with all the flair of a girl detective. Historical details and realistic camping experiences are woven into the story.

Sharing Our Homeland: Palestinian and Jewish Children at Summer Peace Camp by Trish Marx. Photographs by Cindy Karp. Lee and Low. Gr. 3-6. Imagine a place where Jewish and Arab children play together and learn to understand one another. Summer Peace Camp on the grounds of Givat Haviva in Israel is such a place. Clear color photographs and a readable text show the excitement, the camping activities, and the friendships that are nurtured in this hopeful oasis amidst the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Orphan Rescue by Anne Dublin. Second Story Press. Illus. by Qin Leng. Gr. 3-6. An exciting and very readable story about a girl who finds a way to rescue her little brother from a dangerous factory where he has been sent to work. Set in Poland in the 1930's, it is based on the experiences of some of the author's relatives. Today's children will be moved by the plight of a poor family and the courage of a child who found a way to keep her family together.

The Song of the Whales by Uri Orlev. Trans. By Hillel Halkin. Houghton Mifflin. Gr. 3-6. The lyrical story of an unusual bond between a boy and his grandfather. After moving to Jerusalem with his parents, nine year old Michael discovers a kindred spirit in his fanciful, imaginative, unconventional grandfather. Michael is able to enter into the old man's dreams and together they experience those "slight distortions of reality" that take them to other worlds and other times. Michael becomes a kind of sorcerer's apprentice and to him is passed on a key that unlocks the secret of grandpa's gift.

TEENS

Annexed by Sharon Dogar. Houghton Mifflin. Gr. 8 - 12. Readers of Anne Frank's diary will know that Peter van Pels and his parents hid with the Frank family in the Secret Annex. In a story that goes beyond the diary, Peter is the main character whose imagined thoughts and experiences take him from a life in hiding, to capture, to death in a concentration camp. Peter's feelings about and for Anne Frank are the focus of a powerful novel that combines historical and intimate details.

Ashes by Kathryn Lasky. Viking. Gr. 7-10. Gabby Schramm is a thirteen year-old gentle 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 gains 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.

Extraordinary by Nancy Werlin. Dial. Gr. 8-12. Teenage Phoebe, a modern-day descendant of the Rothschild family, becomes a pawn in a dangerous struggle to fulfill a vow made by Meyer Rothschild long ago. It is the Faerie Queen who desperately needs Phoebe so her emissaries to the human world, a teenage girl and a sly young man, are sent to lure her into the Faerie Realm.

Hush by Eshes Chayil. Walker. Gr. 10 – Adult. A shocking story of sexual abuse and cover-up in an ultra- Orthodox community, spanning six turbulent years in a girl's life. Gittel is ten when her best friend, Devory, commits suicide, the victim of repeated rapes by her older brother. Gittel lives with this knowledge that none of the adults involved will acknowledge until finally, at 18 and married, she reveals what has happened and demands that the community take responsibility.

Life, After by Sarah Darer Littman. Scholastic. 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. 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.

The Things a Brother Knows by Dana Reinhardt. Wendy Lamb Books. Gr. 9-12. An exploration of the effects of war on one family, this thought-provoking novel is about Israelis who live in the United States and whose oldest son joins the Marines to fight for three years in an unnamed war. When he returns, he embarks on a long solitary journey, followed by his younger brother who tries to figure out what disturbs him. Themes of tikkun olam (repairing the world) and loyalty to family, friends, and country are deftly interwoven into the plot.

Under a Red Sky: A Memoir of Childhood in Communist Romania by Haya Leah Molnar. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 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 Books. 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’s lynching for a crime he did not commit. 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. Hyperion. 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.

FILMS

The first two films in the new Shalom Sesame series are:

Shalom Sesame: Vol. 1, Welcome to Israel (Israel: Kol Ami, 2010, 55 minutes.) Grover goes to Israel! Join your favorite blue monster and his new pal, Anneliese van der Pol, as they begin to explore this beautiful land. It’s an adventure they’ll never forget — full of fun, friends and flying falafel!

Shalom Sesame: Vol. 2, Chanukah (Israel: Kol Ami, 2010, 55 minutes.) It’s time to celebrate Chanukah in Israel! Grover’s bringing the latkes and all is well until Anneliese gets caught in a game of tag with a chicken and loses her special menorah! Can her Muppet friends find the missing menorah in time to celebrate Chanukah?

These films will be available in mid-November:

Shabbat Shalom, Grover!

Grover Plants a Tree

Mitzvah on the Street

Be Happy, It's Purim!

It's Passover, Grover!

Grover Learns Hebrew

Countdown to Shavuot

The Sticky Shofar

Monsters in the Sukkah

Adventures in Israel

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