

RECENT BOOKS FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS AND HANUKKAH



Baum, Maxie. **I HAVE A LITTLE DREIDEL.** Illus. by Julie Paschkis. Scholastic, 2006. Preschool, Primary

An oversize picture book that repeats the words of the familiar Hanukkah song and decorates each quatrain with bright, bold illustrations. The text is framed on the bottom third of each page against a blue and white background resembling paper cuttings.

Above are illustrations of a modern, multigenerational family celebrating Hanukkah. The musical score, a recipe for latkes, and directions for playing dreidel are included.

Bietz, Barbara. **LIKE A MACCABEE.** Yaldah, 2006. Elementary

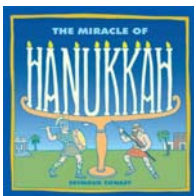
Hanukkah and soccer are the twin subjects of this heartwarming novel for middle grade children, especially boys. Ten year old Ben is worried about a school bully, an up-coming soccer game, and his parents apparent lack of understanding of issues that he finds important. His grandfather tells him the story of the Maccabees and through it and a growing fondness for his grandfather, Ben learns to overcome his fears and play the big game "like a Maccabee." Set during Hanukkah, it depicts a Jewish family's celebrations with joy.

Blitz, Shmuel. **THE ARTSCROLL CHILDREN'S BOOK OF YONAH.** Illus. by Tova Katz. Mesorah, 2006. Primary.

Reading from right to left, this contains the Hebrew text of the Book of Jonah along with an English translation, which is not literal but rather, simplified for its intended readers. In addition to the actual story of Jonah, there is commentary from the sages and brightly colored illustrations. Useful for teaching.

Bloom, Daniel Halevi. **BUBBIE AND ZADIE COME TO MY HOUSE FOR HANUKKAH.** Illus. by Alex Meilichson. Square One, 2007. Primary

Originally published in 1985, this is a handsomely illustrated story about magical friends called Bubbie and Zadie who fly from house to house on the first night of Hanukkah telling stories and playing dreidel with children.



Chwast, Seymour. **THE MIRACLE OF HANUKKAH.** Blue Apple Books, 2006. Preschool

Teachers of young children often look for Hanukkah picture books that tell the story of Hanukkah unembellished with fictional details. Here is a straight account of the holiday in a clever, step-page format, with stylized pastel illustrations that follow the text in showing what Jewish tradition says about Hanukkah.

Cleary, Brian P. **EIGHT WILD NIGHTS: A FAMILY HANUKKAH.** Illus. by David Udovic. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2006. Primary

Genuinely clever rhymes, several cuts above the jingles used in so many picture books, tell the story of an extended family's raucous eight nights of Hanukkah. It's an exaggerated version of many family celebrations and the realistic illustrations, colored in a pastel palette with strong facial features on all of the characters, complement the plot and the style.



DaCosta, Deborah. **HANUKKAH MOON.** Illus. by Gosia Mosz. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2007. Primary

The author of **Snow in Jerusalem** has written a pleasant and off-beat Hanukkah story with a slight Sephardic flavor. A little girl named Isobel is fascinated by Hanukkah at Aunt Luisa's and her first person narrative captures a child's curiosity about an aunt who celebrates the holiday in some unusual ways. Isobel's magical visit ends with a party to celebrate Rosh Hodesh, the New Moon that occurs during Hanukkah. The full-page, full-bleed illustrations accompanying the story are charming, with fluid lines, piquantly 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.



Goldin, Barbara Diamond. **THE BEST HANUKKAH EVER.** Illus. by Avi Katz. Marshall Cavendish, 2007. Primary.

Trying to follow their rabbi's advice about "the perfect gift", the not-too-bright Knoodle family decides to have a Hanukkah gift exchange. However, instead of giving a gift the recipient would treasure, they each give one that they, themselves, want. Disappointed in their gifts, they summon the rabbi who explains to the Knoodles that the perfect gift is one that "should be a treasure to who gets it, not to who gives it". Enlightened by this rabbinical wisdom, the Knoodles trade presents, with each one getting exactly the one they want as well as "the best Hanukkah ever". Avi Katz's illustrations for this silly story are broadly humorous, reflecting its tone.

Heiligman, Deborah. **CELEBRATE HANUKKAH WITH LIGHT, LATKES, AND DREIDELS.** National Geographic, 2006. Primary, Elementary

Uganda, Kenya, Poland, Peru, Israel, Italy, the United States, and Canada and are some of the places where Hanukkah celebrations are pictured. Written with accuracy, simplicity, and clarity, the text describes the two miracles of the holiday: that of the Maccabee's victory over the powerful Greco-Syrian army and the other of the oil that burned for eight days after the Temple was rededicated. There are color photographs on every page, celebrating both the holiday and Jewish diversity. The appended material is also informative.



Heiligman, Deborah. **CELEBRATE ROSH HASHANAH & YOM KIPPUR WITH HONEY, PRAYERS, AND THE SHOFAR.** National Geographic, 2007. Primary, Elementary.

Heiligman's lively writing style, coupled with arresting full-color photos, makes this an excellent addition to National Geographic's Holidays Around the World series. Readers will enjoy learning how people in the United States and in diverse locations all over the world celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with various customs. Accompanying the photos are clear explanations for all of these customs. Concepts are in large bold print; text in smaller print explains them.

Jaffe, Ellen S. **FEAST OF LIGHTS.** Sumach Press, 2006. Elementary, Middle School

Sarah's family is in chaos after the death of her younger brother, Ben. Her father has turned away from religion completely, and her mother is busying herself with other tasks. Still, Sarah wants to continue their Hanukkah tradition of lighting the candles each night. Using a menorah given to her by her great-grandmother, Sarah lights the candles—alone at first—and as the candles burn, she finds herself transported back in time. She eventually realizes that she is witnessing her own family's history, experiencing their trip in steerage to Canada, as well as their difficulties in establishing themselves in their new homeland. Eventually, Sarah's parents realize that she, too, has been struggling since Ben's death, and that discovery finally brings them to understand how important the family celebration is to Sarah. While they are all still grieving for Ben, at last, they can begin to reassemble their lives—individually, and together.

Krensky, Stephen. **HANUKKAH AT VALLEY FORGE.** Illus. by Greg Harlin. Dutton, 2006. Primary, Elementary

During the grim winter at Valley Forge, a Polish-born soldier tells General Washington about Hanukkah, who draws parallels between the Macabbees' war against their foes with the American war against the British oppressors. Handsomely illustrated and designed, the book draws on some known historical references to evoke a compelling picture of Washington and of American courage. The text is dignified and the illustrations are outstanding. Winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award.



Kropf, Latifa Berry. **IT'S SHOFAR TIME!** Photos by Tod Cohen. Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2006. Preschool

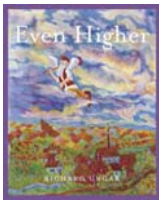
Part of a series of holiday books for preschoolers, this shows an adorable group of children in a Jewish preschool, including one African-American and one Asian child, celebrating Rosh Hashanah. In showing them blowing the shofar, throwing crumbs for tashlich into the water, dipping apples in honey, etc., the text draws analogies between these developmentally appropriate activities and the meaning of the holiday. The color photographs are, as usual, superb. A craft and brief explanation of the holiday are appended.

Sievert, Terri. **HANUKKAH: JEWISH FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS.** Capstone, 2006. Primary

Clearly written and well-organized, this easy-to-read book gives all of the basic facts about Hanukkah and provides a few enrichment activities in the form of a dreidel craft and the address of the First Facts website. It is attractively illustrated with full page color photographs and provides an overview of the holiday, its historical background, and aspects of its celebration. Part of the First Facts series.

Trueit, Trudi Strain. **CHANUKAH.** Children's Press, 2007. Preschool, Primary

The Rookie Read-about-Holiday Series consists of short, easy-to-read introductions to holidays, including Passover, Purim, and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Basic information about the history and traditions of Hanukkah is presented along with a pictorial glossary and a short index. Non-Jewish children are the primary audience.



Ungar, Richard. **EVEN HIGHER.** Tundra Books, 2007. Primary

Reuven is put up to spying on the rabbi by his friends in a 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. Reuven hides under the rabbi's bed and, in the morning, follows the rabbi, who is now dressed as a woodcutter, into the forest. There the rabbi chops wood that he brings to the widow Shayna, who lies sick in bed. Kindly the rabbi stokes her stove and gently reassures her that she will pay him when the Holy One provides. Did the rabbi ascend to heaven? Reuven's friends ask when he returns. And having witnessed a higher kind of giving, Reuven answers, "Even higher." Full color illustrations fill the pages with an autumn palette of blazing reds and blues. With Barbara Cohen's book out of print, this is now the only picture book version of Peretz's story available and it is still a timeless story.

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