

From: Meri Marja-terttu MacLeod
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Re: ***A Few Hanukkah Books: Respecting & Celebrating Human Diversity***

The below list represents only a wee smidgen of a growing body of many excellent storybooks, picture books and non-fiction books about *Hanukkah, the 8-day Jewish Festival of Lights*.

While some represent Jewish traditions during Hanukkah, others portray our collective and innate human spirit and thirst for justice and co-operation in the face of adversity, hatred and injustice.

All of the following promote and celebrate equity, inclusion and respect for human diversity. Except for the first 2 books on the list, the rest of the picture books and storybooks are equally suitable for both elementary and secondary level grades.

Resource People: Rabbi Shalom Plotkin, Beth Israel Congregation, 116 Centre St. welcomes school tours to the synagogue or visits to school. Phone: 613-542-5012, Email - Rabbi Shalom Plotkin shalomplotkin@gmail.com

1. ***A Light in the Darkness***, Aaron Zevy; illustrated by Susan Tebutt. Tumbleweed Press ISBN 0-9680678-9-1 "Josh and Willy are next door neighbours and best friends. They play basketball, rent scary movies, and goof around. When a rock is thrown through the window of Josh's house while his family is celebrating Hanukkah, it is young Willy who is able to rally the street in support. This poignant and uplifting story of friendship, [acceptance] and community, based in part by a true incident, highlights the true spirit of the holidays. Sensitive written, [the story] clearly conveys to children the importance of religious, ethnic and racial diversity and inclusion. Books such as this one can play a vital role in shaping the formative value systems of children, and in doing so, empower our youth to build communities in which equity, diversity and mutual understanding prevail." (Gr. 1-4)
2. ***Light the Candles (A Hanukkah Lift-the-Flap Book)***, Joan Holub. Puffin Books. ISBN 0 14 05.6757 7 "There are many fun things to do; light candles, open presents, play dreidel games, and more! Lift the flaps - see all the special things to do to celebrate this joyful holiday." (Ages 2-6)
3. ***The Christmas Menorahs: How a Town Fought Hate***, Janice Cohn, D.S.W. Albert Whitman & Company, Morton Grove, Illinois. ISBN 0-8075-1153-6. Based on real events in Billings, Montana 1993. "It's Hanukkah...menorahs glow in the Schnitzer home windows ... suddenly, a rock crashes [through Isaac's bedroom window.] When Isaac asks why, his father tells him, "Because we are Jews."

Christmas lights shine in the Hanley home. Teresa Hanley is Isaac's friend. Teresa's family "decide to do something brave so that the Schnitzer's can celebrate their holiday without fear."

"Janice Cohn's powerful narrative tells how two children, two families, and the community resolve to stand together against bigotry and acts of hatred....Bill Farnsworth's beautiful paintings illuminate the message of the power of goodness."

"Because of understanding people who believed everyone should celebrate their holidays without fear, a town of all faiths united against these acts of hate. A must-have book for all ages - child and adult" - *American Bookseller* (Pick of the Lists, 1995)

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4. ***The Lights of Hanukkah: A Book of Menorahs***, Barbara Rush, Stewart Tabori & Chang, NY, ISBN 1-58479-313-9. "Hanukkah, the eight day festival of Lights, remains timely today and timeless for the future. By lighting the Hanukkah menorah, modern Jews reiterate the holiday's personal message: *How can I bring light out of darkness in my own life, and the lives of others? How can I rededicate the world by making it a better place.*"

60 stunning menorah photographs from 14 countries in 3 continents, reaching back 9 centuries: "oil & candle lamps, in designs ranging from the traditional to the ultra-modern..."

5. ***Celebrating Hanukkah***, Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith; photos by Lawrence Migdale. Holiday House, NY, ISBN 0-8234-1252-0. A book about faith and freedom. "Eleven year old Leora lives in San Francisco... Leora explains the origins of the holiday... how her own family enjoys the holiday." Leora includes a recipe for potato latkes (p. 22 - traditional potato pancake eaten during Hanukkah), how to play dreidel, the popular Hanukkah game... and "most of all Leora lets the reader know the importance of Hanukkah to her and her family, as a time to proclaim their faith and celebrate their community."

Glossary of terms included, and events over the 8 nights of Hanukkah.

6. ***Latkes and Applesauce: A Hanukkah Story***, Fran Manushkin, illustrated by Robin Spowart. Scholastic Inc., A Blue Ribbon Book. ISBN 0-590-42265-0. "Long ago and far away, the Menashe family was ready to celebrate Hanukkah. But suddenly there came a furious blizzard that covered all the apples and potatoes. Alas, there would be no latkes and applesauce this year... but a stray dog and cat ... come in from the storm.... [bringing] with them the miracle of Hanukkah - and in surprising ways bring latkes and applesauce to the Menashes' home"...filled with an abundance of affection and humour". (P/J)

7. ***The Gift, A Hanukkah Story***, Aliana Brodman, illustrated by Anthony Carnabuci. Alladin Paperbacks (Simon & Schuster). ISBN 0-689-82240-5. "With her Hanukkah money in her pocket a little girl eagerly sets out to find the perfect way to spend her treasure....Nothing seems right until she hears a lovely melody...suddenly, she knows what to do with her gift- and in giving from her heart she receives the best gift of all."

The author, a child of Holocaust survivors writes: "I have always derived inspiration and a great deal of hope from 'different sides' coming together. The discovery of 'common ground' among people departing from 'opposite sides' [is a predominant theme in her writing.] Book is based on her recollection of her "childhood in Germany in the 1950's, when 2 individuals from different backgrounds meet during the giving season." To the author, 'the other' person - a street musician -was veteran from the Battle of Stalingrad - in the same geographic area where her grandparents had been killed. The author states: "Somehow I thought both of our lives, his and mine, had to have been so terribly impaired by the same evil. Mostly, however, this story is about music and magic that happens when people come to share each other's gifts." Beautiful painted illustrations.

8. ***One Candle***, Eve Bunting; illustrated by K. Wendy Popp. Joanna Cotler Books (Harper Collins) ISBN 0-06-008560-6. For one family, Hanukkah has a deeper meaning. Amidst the food and festivities, Grandma and Great-Aunt Rose each year tell the same story, about values, traditions, family and "perseverance during the darkest hours of the Holocaust...and why continuing to honor past tragedies and triumphs provides hope for the future." (Ages 4-8)

9. ***Christmas Tapestry***. Written & illustrated by Patricia Polacco. Philomel Books (Penguin Putman) NY. ISBN 0-399-23955-3. "When a bad leak ruins the sacristy wall in his father's church, Jonathan Jefferson Weeks thinks his family's first Christmas Eve service in Detroit will be ruined too. Luckily, he and his father find a beautiful tapestry for sale in a secondhand shop - just the thing to cover the damaged wall...But there is more to the tapestry, as they discover when an old Jewish woman who is visiting the church recognizes the lovely old cloth. It is her discovery that leads to a real miracle on this unforgettable Christmas Eve."

10. ***The Trees of the Dancing Goats***. Written & illustrated by Patricia Polacco. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman. ISBN 0689838573. A compelling story of true friendship between a Jewish family and a Christian family. "Trisha is excited to be celebrating Hanukkah with her grandparents, and mother, but around town, many of the families are stricken by a scarlet fever epidemic during the Christmas holidays. Trisha's grandparents think of a way to help these families during this most cherished family time. A poignant story about sharing and friendship which shows that everyone should be able to live in peace and happiness despite differences"... a story about how the human spirit rises in the face of adversity - a story of hope, justice, true charity of the heart, and commitment to respecting human diversity....

11. ***Elijah's Angel: A Story for Chanukah and Christmas***. Michael J. Rosen, illustrated by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson. Voyager Books Harcourt Brace & Company NY. ISBN 0-15-201558-2, Winner of National Jewish Book Award. "A fine tribute to an intriguing character; an interfaith story with true respect for both faiths." - *Kirkus Reviews*

"Michael and Elijah are friends, but when Elijah gives Michael one of his special carved angels, Michael doesn't know what to do. How can he possibly take home a Christmas angel, a forbidden graven image--especially on Chanukah? " A strikingly illustrated story that tenderly bridges the boundaries of age, race, and religion." --"American Bookseller"

"Elijah Pierce (1892-1984) was a renowned woodcarver, lay minister, barber and personal friend to many of his visitors. Elijah shared his work with customers, fellow churchgoers and neighbourhood admirers for nearly half a century before participating in gallery exhibits and museums." He won many prizes. "He was later awarded a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship as one of fifteen master traditional artists.... Columbus Museum of Art owns more than 300 pieces of Elijah's work."

12. ***How I Saved Hanukkah***, Amy Goldman Koss; illustrated by Diane DeGroat. Puffin Books. ISBN 0141309822. "While everyone in her 4th grade class is decorating trees and hanging stockings, Marla Feinstein, the only Jewish kid in the class, is forgetting to light the menorah and staring at a big plastic dreidel. The holidays couldn't get much worse. So Marla decides to find out what Hanukkah's really about - and soon she's got her family turning lakes into Hanukkah Performance Art and doing a wild hora." (Grade 3-4)