

Leila Tov

The PJ Library

NEWSLETTER for the Greater
Rhode Island Jewish Community

Fall 2008 • Cheshvan 5769



Bureau of Jewish Education
of Rhode Island

JEWISH BEDTIME STORIES & SONGS FOR FAMILIES

A shanah tova, a good year, is a year of le-shanot, of change, of doing things differently and better. And it also denotes a year of repetition, of relearning all of the old lessons that our tradition of truth and wisdom has been teaching us for many centuries. Shanah is a unique word. And may the new shanah be a unique year, one in which there is both repetition of the old, and change for the better.

– RABBI DOV PERETZ ELKINS

Shalom,

We at the PJ Library are truly honored to be able to serve our Jewish community for another year filled with the joy of helping Jewish families integrate our rituals, morals, and values into family life. We all have an incredible opportunity to learn and help our children grasp the meaning of the fall holidays. We have a marvelous array of books and music that you can use to educate yourselves and your family.



Kevin Olsen, executive director of the Jewish Community Center Rhode Island, reads the PJ Library book *It's Shofar Time* at Borders Books in the Providence Place Mall.

A special **thank you** to the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island for funding the second year of the PJ Library. The coming year brings a **new** selection of Jewish books and Jewish music that are equally wonderful.

The 2008–09 PJ Library calendar is full! The Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island has partnered with our synagogues, libraries, and schools to create monthly programs. There are over 100 PJ Library events planned. You will receive a calendar update every month by e-mail to keep you connected to community programming. Events are also listed on www.bjeri.org. All PJ Library events are free and open to the community.

Leila Tov aims to create more opportunities for families to share valuable time together... through crafts, cooking, and more! May the year ahead be filled with good health and joy for your family.

RANDI BERANBAUM, PJ Library Committee Co-Chair
LAURI FRIEDMAN, PJ Library Committee Co-Chair
NICOLE KATZMAN, PJ Library Director

inside highlights

- 2 Family Focus: The Shorr Family
- 3 Mynde's Corner
- 4 Are You Snack Smart?
- 6 Digging Out Family Stories
- 8 Grandparents Corner
- 12 Raising a Jewish Child When You're Not Jewish
- 14 Jewish Early Childhood Classroom

לילה טוב



Lisa and Eric Shorr share a story with their two children, Gabriella and Samantha.

The Shorr Family

Lisa and Eric Shorr reside in Pawtucket with their two daughters, Gabriella, age 6, and Samantha, age 4. The girls attend the Henry Barnard School in Providence. Lisa and Eric are very active in the Jewish community. PJ Library Director Nicole Katzman interviewed the Shorr family about their experiences with the PJ Library.

NICOLE: When did you enroll the girls in the PJ Library?

LISA: We enrolled Gabriella and Samantha about a year ago, right at the beginning of the program. We were thrilled to have such a great Jewish program in Rhode Island.

NICOLE: Describe Gabriella's and Samantha's reactions when a PJ Library book is delivered to your home.

LISA: The girls are so excited. They make a mad dash to the front door, rip open the envelope, and look at their new books or CDs. It is like Hanukkah in our home every month.

NICOLE: What is your bedtime routine?

LISA: We have the same routine every night. Bath, pajamas, brush teeth, and then bedtime stories. We have made PJ Library books a part of our bedtime ritual. The girls are now able to have interesting conversations about the books. We discuss traditions, morals, and values.

NICOLE: What are the girls' favorite PJ Library books or CDs?

LISA: The children adore *Bagels for Benny* and the *Rock-N-Roll Matzah Ball* CD. We have listened to the CD many times! I really enjoy the Joan Nathan cookbook and am excited to try some of the recipes with Gabriella and Samantha.



NICOLE: Why do you think PJ Library is an important program for your children?

ERIC: I love the PJ Library program because it helps reinforce Jewish values and traditions in our home. It is very important for our children to continue their Jewish identity.

NICOLE: Are you planning on renewing Gabriella's and Samantha's PJ Library subscriptions for year three?

LISA: It is such a wonderful gift that the second year is free. We will absolutely renew for the third year. It will be \$18 well spent. We look forward to many wonderful years of learning Jewish traditions and values.



In this column, I will define the terms speech and language and discuss speech and language development in infants ranging from 7–12 months. Important milestones in this time period include complex babbling, intentional communication and the appearance of the first word.

Speech is talking and the verbal means of communicating. It is a complex neuromuscular act

Mynde Siperstein, an American Speech-Language-Hearing Association-certified speech and language pathologist, has over 20 years of experience. Mynde is also a member of the PJ Library Committee.

involving the lips, teeth, tongue, hard palate and soft palate. The acquisition of speech sounds follow a developmental sequence. Not all speech sounds are learned at once. It actually takes about seven to eight years to produce

all speech sounds correctly resembling the adult production. The general rule of thumb is; sounds that are the most visible are the easiest to produce. For example, the sounds that are made using the lips such as p,b,m, and w are easy to see and make and are therefore learned first. Sounds such as s, l, and r are more complex to produce and are less visible, causing some children to have problems mastering them. At age 4, children should be intelligible to strangers 75 percent of the time. Always provide a good speech model instead of correcting a speech sound error.

Language is comprised of socially shared rules and includes five systems: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Phonology deals with sounds and their combination. Morphology has to do with word formation. Syntax governs word order and the allowable combination of words to form sentences. Semantics includes the meaning of words, and pragmatics relates to language use or the reason(s) for communicating. When a child has a language delay or disorder, they may demonstrate weaknesses in one or more of the systems listed above.

So what are babies doing from 7-12 months?

In this new stage you might hear something like “dag-ibemu.” Babbling becomes much more complex, consonants and vowels change within the same babbled utterance, and infants will use intonation patterns similar to yours. I remember my infant daughter engaging in this behavior and imitating my vocal inflections when she was alone in her crib. I actually thought she was carrying on a conversation with real words until I listened more closely, but it was only nonsense words! Another wonderful milestone during this time is when infants begin to communicate intentionally. They do this using eye gaze, vocalizations and/or gestures. Before the appearance of first true words, your infant might raise her arms and use the same vocalization such as “eh eh” consistently every time she wants to be picked up. Your baby will also begin to engage in a very important skill

At around 12 months your baby will utter her first word.

known as joint attention. For example, the baby may look at an object, then back to you and then back to the object as if to say “I want that” or “That’s interesting”! Besides using vocalizations, gestures will also indicate intent. Your baby will reach for someone or something, show you, give you, point and wave to get people to look at or notice something of interest to her.

Okay, parents get your video cameras ready! At around 12 months your baby will utter her first word. You might ask how will you know whether it is a true word or just another babbled sound or what word will it be and what it will sound like. A

continued on page 11

Are You Snack Smart?

BY RANDI BERANBAUM
PJ Library Committee Chair

Quick quiz – **True or false:** Snacking can be good for you.
That's absolutely true when you're smart about the way you snack.

When is snacking not so smart? Well, when you're not really hungry, but you eat lots of snacks just because it's a habit, like when you're watching television. Or, if your family snacks on the same things, like salty snacks, sweet treats, or sugary drinks. These are okay sometimes, but there are so many different snacks you can try.

You're "snack smart" if you . . .

- Pick snacks that taste great and help you look and feel good. Check out the Super Snack Finder for some ideas. Then, stock up on the stuff your kids like best. Don't be boring! Try some new snacks, too.
- Have a snack when there's tons of time between meals. So, if you eat lunch at noon and dinner's at 6:00, a snack right after school – say at about 3:00 – is just right if you are hungry. Your kids will get some fuel to do homework or to get outside and play.
- Eat enough, but not too much. When you're fueling up between meals, don't eat so much that you're stuffed when it's time for dinner. But, if you're doing something active like playing a sport, taking a dance class, biking, or running around with your friends, it's OK to fuel up with a bigger snack.
- Pack a great snack in your child's backpack. When you can't get home for a snack because of your busy schedule, your children can take it with them. Pack sturdy stuff that won't get squished – try an apple, single-serving boxes of raisins, small bags of nuts or pretzels, or a box of juice.



SUPER SNACK FINDER

- Low-fat yogurt – try freezing those squeezable tubes
- Cheese sticks
- Frozen fruit bars
- Any fresh fruit like grapes, an apple, banana, or orange – you pick!
- Any dried fruit like raisins or apricots
- Any veggie, especially easy-to-eat ones like cherry tomatoes, baby carrots, and cut-up green peppers
- Graham crackers (don't forget the milk!)
- Fortune cookies
- Cereal bar, fig bar, or granola bar
- Low-fat chocolate milk
- Orange juice
- A toasted bagel half, topped with a cheese slice
- Applesauce
- Pretzels
- Salsa and baked tortilla chips
- Hummus (chick pea dip) and pita bread
- Bowl of cereal – hot or cold
- A nuked potato topped with catsup
- Cold cooked chicken
- A slice of pizza – hot or cold

SOURCE: Kidnetic.com

Everyone lends a hand when Marissa Garber Gamm and Tesa and Joey Gamm make pancakes.



recipe box

BY MARISSA GARBER GAMM

Cooking is a great activity to do with your children and a wonderful educational opportunity.

Blueberry Pancakes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups low-fat milk (can substitute soy milk – I often use vanilla soy milk)
- 3 tablespoons melted butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 pint fresh blueberries, rinsed



Mix together all dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Wisk together wet ingredients and pour over dry and mix until combined. Fold in blueberries. Heat a medium saucepan and melt a pat of butter over medium heat.

Using a soup ladle, pour batter into pan (about 1/2 ladle per pancake), careful not to have edges touch. Pancakes are ready to flip when bubbles appear on the surface (about 2–3 minutes). Flip and cook another minute. Serve with warm maple syrup or just eat plain!



I usually make two batches, one with blueberries and one with chocolate chips for my chocoholic daughters. I freeze half of each batch so we always have pancakes ready for a quick breakfast or snack. Heat for one minute in the microwave.





Digging Out Family Stories

BY MARK BINDER
PJ Library Committee

You know what stories to read to your youngsters. As PJ Library subscribers, you get a new book every month. That's wonderful and fine.

But what family stories can you tell them?

A number of years ago, I had the good fortune to interview both of my father's parents. I recorded the conversations and later on we had them transcribed. I learned more about my grandparents in two hours than I had in the decades before that.

A few years after that, I performed a similar interview with my mother and father.

Again, I learned to love my parents on a different level.

Do you tell your children how you were married? Or when you first met your partner? Do you tell them how you got interested in your job? Or what your home was like when you were a youngster?

Chances are you don't. Chances are, your parents didn't tell you much and you're likely to pass along this unfortunate habit to your children.


There are plenty of reasons that we don't share our own personal stories. Business, laziness, and embarrassment are high up on the list of excuses. There are also plenty of reasons that we don't know our family's stories. (See above, and add in fear of upsetting someone.)

There is, however, a simple solution.

Start telling the stories of your life. Start asking your parents and grandparents to share their stories.

But wait, you say, that's impossible. How do you even begin?

Let's start with the premise that your loved ones are still alive. If they are, then you can talk with them. (If they're not, you can take these steps



Start learning
and telling the stories
of your life.
Here's how . . .

and use them to ask anyone who knew them about your relatives. You'll be surprised how much you can learn.)

Twelve Steps for Interviewing Your Family

1 Buy or borrow a digital recording device. You can find these online, at electronics stores, and office supply stores. (If you're really cheap or broke, you can always return the device to the stores after you've used it.) Don't worry too much about recording quality. Make sure you have enough memory to record for at least an hour, preferably two. Practice with this device. Make sure you know how it works before you run your interview. Test it out. Figure out how to get the recording off the device.

2 Schedule the time and date with your family members. Be sure that you'll have at least two hours together. Even if you don't use the whole time, it's good to have the space. *Don't* interview just one parent and not the other. You don't have to do a marathon, but make sure they all know that they're all going to have their say.

3 Make a list of questions. Make a huge and long list, but don't get attached to it. In other words, you won't get to ask every question on your list. The objective is to hear stories, and stories don't necessarily answer questions, but they can be inspired by them.

SOME CATEGORIES OF QUESTIONS INCLUDE

- a. Where did you grow up? What did your parents do?
- b. What kinds of food did you eat?

- c. Do you remember any smells from when you were a child? (Smell is a powerful memory activator)
- d. How did you meet Mom / Dad?
- e. Did you ever fight in a war? What was that like? (Be cautious with this one.)
- f. What was the hardest time of your life?
- g. What was the easiest time of your life

4 Ask your children to contribute questions to the list.

5 Remind everyone in advance that you're going to do the interview. If they try to back out, reschedule.

6 On the day of the interview make sure that the house is neat, the chores are done and put on a pot of tea or coffee. Have water and snacks available.

7 Test your recording device again in the location you are doing the interviews. Make sure you have extra batteries or it's plugged in. **Make sure it's recording.** Listen to it. (You will want to kill yourself if you blow this.)

8 Let the recording device run. Don't look at it. Just ignore it and write notes on your paper. After about 10 minutes it will become invisible. Look in their eyes, not at the recorder. The longer it runs, the better it gets.

9 Ask your questions, but listen for stories. Follow the threads of the conversation rather than sticking with your list.

10 Don't get discouraged if they get stuck. Ask about other people in their lives. Ask about details. Listen to the silence. Ask how they felt.

11 When you have finished, be sure to press stop on the recorder. Digital devices may erase if you let their batteries die before pressing

Morning Rituals

BY LAURI FRIEDMAN, *PJ Library Co-Chair*

Good Morning!

We just woke up and still have the PJ Library story, *It Could Always Be Worse*, by Margot Zemach, fresh in our minds.

What a good night's sleep we had, but now it is time to wake up. Just like we read our PJ stories every night before we go to bed, we have rituals that we do each morning.

7:00 A.M. (Hopefully, sometimes it's 6:00 A.M.!) We say "Thank You" for waking up.

7:10 A.M. We try again to say the thank you for waking up. Thankfully this time it works!

7:20 A.M. We stretch! Sometimes we stretch for a long time, it feels good! We reach our hands to the sky and then we reach our hands way down to our toes!

We stand up and raise both arms high above our heads. Stretch, Stretch, Reach for the sky! Then reach way down low to touch our toes. Reach, Reach!

7:30 A.M. We wash up, brush our teeth, and get dressed.

These are our morning rituals. What rituals do you have?



stop. Later on you can make copies for your relatives and share it with your children. Thank them and give them a hug. No matter what you got on the audio recording, the time you spent with your family was worth it.

Mark Binder is an award-winning writer, storyteller, and member of the PJ Library Committee.



The Blessings of Grandchildren

BY BARBARA SHEER
PJ Library Committee

There are no gifts more precious than grandchildren; grandchildren are blessings, who make our "golden years" meaningful. My husband and I spend as much time as possible with Jodd (4 1/2 years old), Ram (2), Penelope (2 1/2), and Philip (7 months), because they are our favorite people. We derive so much pleasure from their company. They want to be with us, also, and they consider us special. We cherish this time.

Of the many activities that we share with our grandchildren, more than anything I enjoy reading to them. When they were infants, I would hold them in one arm with a cloth, plastic, or sturdy cardboard book in the other. As they developed from babies to toddlers to preschoolers, our choice of books and routines, of course, have changed, but it's still quality time together. Hopefully, as we continue to bond, they are learning to appreciate books as much as I do.

Each child has his own way of responding to reading with Grandma. Recently, our whole family went away for a mini vacation, a quick overnight together. After dinner and baths, two-year-old Ram came running into our room: "Gamma, books!" He snuggled onto my lap so that we could read picture books until bedtime. His older brother chose to spend the night in our room with us, and then we read until he fell asleep. Not only is he a night owl, but his taste these days favors Babar and Richard Scarry books. Believe me, they are long ones!

I love to participate with my New York babies in their naptime / bedtime routine. This includes reading some stories before going to bed and then reading just a few more once they are settled in



Barbara Sheer with her grandchildren, Philip (age 4) and Ram (age 2).

their cribs. I am amazed at how responsive Philip has become. At seven months, he looks up at me with big brown eyes and coos and gurgles as I read to him. It's exciting to watch as his language is developing.

Among my favorite family-themed books for young children are:

Who Loves Baby? – When Penelope was born, my daughter-in-law, Alyssa, introduced me to this attractive, multi-colored photo album. It's made by the Sassy Company, manufacturer of toys for infants, and it can be found at Babies R Us and Amazon.com. Not only does it have decorative pages with plastic sleeves to hold family pictures, but also it has a grip handle that doubles as a teething ring. What a lovely way for baby to learn to identify her parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends!



This is especially useful for families separated by distance.

Grandpa, Will You Play With Me? by Emilie Boon – This lift-the-flap book is about little Hippo, who only wants his grandfather to abandon all his morning chores and play. Written completely in rhyme with delightful colorful pictures, it encourages children to interact as they lift the various flaps.



The Grandpa Book* and *The Grandma Book by Todd Parr – Well worth reading are Todd Parr’s beautifully illustrated picture books, which deal with self, families, and emotions. (*The Peace Book*, *The Mommy Book*, *The Daddy Book*, *The Family Book*, *The Feel Good Book*, and *Reading Makes You Feel Good*, just to name a few. Also, the Otto series about a dog, fashioned after Parr’s own beloved pet.) Parr aims to promote tolerance and diversity. His premise is that all people and families are unique. He stresses positive values, such as kindness and self-confidence. His desire is that each child feel comfortable within himself.

At the end of *The Grandma Book* and *The Grandpa Book*, there is a place to put a photo of one’s own grandparent. No matter how many times I’ve read the book to Penelope, she never fails to squeal with glee when she rediscovers the picture of her with her grandfather.

When our grandsons went to Thailand with our daughter-in-law, Ang, last summer, our going-away gifts to the boys were *The Grandpa Book* and *The Grandma Book*. It was almost like taking us with them, and I hoped that they would remember us.

My wish is that all grandparents enjoy their grandchildren to the fullest and that they have wonderful experiences reading together.

For more information about Todd Parr and his work, check out his website at www.toddparr.com.

Reading Tips

BY LISA DAVIS, PJ Library Committee

We all love reading to our children, and we want to ensure they get the most out of every book we read to them. Here are a few things I’ve learned while volunteering in my kids’ classrooms and reading to them at home:

- ▶ Read slowly and enunciate. Your kids are still learning new words.
- ▶ When reading to several kids, read the page first, then show the picture. If you try to do both at once, you will just hurt your wrist and your neck!
- ▶ Ask your child questions as you read . . . but let them ask questions, too.
- ▶ More importantly, let them try to answer the questions before you do.
- ▶ If your child asks too many questions, have him hold onto them until the end of the story.
- ▶ Encourage your child to anticipate what might happen next in the story. Get them excited about it!
- ▶ If your child is just learning to read, you can encourage this emerging skill by alternating reading the words. First you read a word, then your child does, then you, and so on.
- ▶ Make reading part of your daily routine.



“Reading with my kids is my favorite activity!” – LISA DAVIS

spotlight from the PJ Library Collection

Something from Nothing

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY PHOEBE GILMAN
REVIEWED BY JOHN LANDRY

There's no timelier book than *Something from Nothing*, a PJ Library folktale about re-using worn clothes. Our five-year-old twin boys, Eli and Aaron, needed little prompting to get the message about recycling, which kids learn about even in pre-school these days. Like any old tale, though, it also has a timeless underlying point.

The story takes place in a shtetl, where an elderly tailor makes a blue blanket for his newborn grandson Joseph. Joseph loves the comfy blanket, but in a few years the blanket frays, and his mom wants to throw it out. Joseph is confident that Grandpa can fix it, and sure enough Grandpa snips and sews it into a fine jacket.

Joseph's mom is ready to throw out the jacket when he outgrows it, but Grandpa refashions it into a vest, then a tie, handkerchief, and finally a button for Joseph's suspenders. The story runs in almost singsong repetition, a wonderfully reassuring sequence as Joseph grows out of toddlerhood. Author/illustrator Phoebe Gilman changes the settings of the events to show the varied life of a child, from the street to the woods, from school-house to Shabbat dinner.

Then the scary part – Eli has to look away here. The button falls off Joseph's pants and he loses it! Grandpa is helpless here – you can't make something from nothing. Joseph is crestfallen. But the next day at school he regains his spirit and puts the events down into a story, which he reads to his happy family.

Recycling comes across in the richly painted illustrations too. We see the insides of the family's house, where parents and grandparents each have only one large room to themselves. At different times the rooms become a bedroom, living room,



workroom, kitchen, and dining room. Joseph's dad repairs shoes. The story itself is a retelling – before this book arrived we had another version called *The Blue Coat*. It's all a fine example to our boys,

who have so many toys, that they're on the verge of embracing our throwaway culture.

Best of all, the illustrations show a subplot. A pair of mice exploring the basement find the scraps of blue cloth fallen through the floorboards, decide to make a home there, and gradually decorate their homes and numerous children with the cuttings from each successive tailoring. Naturally, they find the lost button and it becomes a cushion for a chair, so nothing goes to waste. Twice I've gone through the book ignoring the main plot and just narrating the mice's story.

Still, it takes only a few readings to get that the book is about something bigger than the "reduce, reuse, recycle" mantra of some of the boys' other books. A hint comes from the cover, which shows not the series of clothes but Grandpa and Joseph smiling at each other.

The true something from nothing is what people give each other throughout, the gift of love. Joseph treasures his Grandpa's help over any possession, and losing that is worse than any bright blue button. His little sister offers her doll to make up for the lost button, but he needs only the memory of the help, preserved on paper, to make him happy again.

I think our boys took all of this part for

granted. They enjoyed the book for a while, and it helped that we have a neighbor we call *Zayde*, an actual tailor from pre-war Poland, who visits a lot and who still mends some of our things. Yet by the time the next PJ book arrived, it had fallen out of the bedtime rotation, and we've hardly read it since. The book has few laughs, no animals other than mice, and it lacks adventure, pirates, and trucks. Writing a story is nowhere on the boys' list of ambitions. The *schmaltz* factor is high. Even the

fine illustrations are just par for the course as kids' books go nowadays.

I guess it made a bigger impression on me, which isn't such a bad thing since kid books are a big part of my reading these days. I liked how it combined recycling and relationships. Going truly green will take a lot of adjustment; we'll have to change how we live with our possessions. Making those changes will be a lot easier if we do it as a community.

MYNDE'S CORNER

continued from page 3

true word is used consistently to refer to a particular person or object. For example, your baby might say "baba" every time he sees his bottle. A true word sounds very similar to the adult production. A 12-month-old does not have the ability to say bottle but "baba" is a close approximation. Consonants that are used will come from the front of the mouth such as *p, b, d, t, m*, and *n*. First words will be people or things your baby can easily manipulate

such as people in the immediate family, toys, pets, food or clothing. First words

might be shoes or socks, but not mittens. Most early words are nouns followed by action words. Your baby will also understand about 50 words at around 12 months. Imagine all of these accomplishments in a mere 12 months. Stay tuned for the next exciting milestone. Parents, all of your efforts have surely paid off!

Advice to Parents, Grandparents, and Caregivers:

This is a wonderful and delightful time to interact with your very social and communicative baby. Implement these suggestions during natural and daily routines and you will foster their speech and language development.

- Babies are wonderful imitators. If you repeat

their sounds and add new ones, so will your baby.

- Play interactive games such as "this little piggy," bounce on the knee for horsie, itsy bitsy spider, peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, and "Show me your (body part(s)) nose?"

- Always respond to and follow your infant's lead and talk/comment on what is interesting to him. Research has demonstrated that you can bolster your child's language development by following their lead and not redirecting them to yours.

- Label and describe everything in the immediate environment. This will help your infant attach meaning to your speech sounds and increase vocabulary. Remember babies require a lot of repetition to learn. Imagine being in a foreign country and not understanding the language... so be patient, unhurried, redundant, and talk all the time.

- Provide the adult production of early words and expand the utterance into a simple sentence. Baby says "baba" and you say, "bottle, bottle... you want to drink your bottle... mmmmmm that tastes so good!"

- Continue to read simple board books describing the pictures, even if it is just for a few minutes each day.

- Watch for ear infections as they can hinder speech and language development. Ask for a two-week follow up to make sure the ears are clear of fluid.

- Always praise your child's effort to communicate.

Babies require a lot of repetition to learn.

Raising a Jewish Child When You're Not Jewish

BY KIT HASPEL
Mothers' Circle Facilitator

I hate feeling like an outsider. As a child enrolled in a drama class in my very Catholic hometown – New Orleans – I was told to improvise being a nun asking for charity. I was too embarrassed to admit that I simply had no idea how a nun would behave. During the Christmas season, New Orleans was covered with crèches or mangers and I was clearly told that crèches had nothing to do with me. Those childhood experiences can't compare with how it must feel to be different, or an outsider, within one's own family. Yet, many women and men may experience those feelings daily when they choose to raise their children in a religion different from their own.

Today, almost 50 percent of Jews who marry choose to marry individuals who are not Jewish. Of those marriages, about a third of non-Jewish spouses generously and bravely decide to raise their children as Jews, even when they do not convert and frequently continue to practice another religion. The non-Jewish parents can easily feel confused, embarrassed, or neglected during a family Seder; sad when Christmas and Easter arrive; and pained when they can't pass on family traditions that brought them joy as children, such as big family Sunday dinners after church.

While those feelings may be inevitable, there are ways to minimize their adverse impact on all the family members. For the non-Jewish partners, consider these ideas for your family. You, your partner, and your children just might create rich and meaningful family traditions for future generations.

- Try the following exercise with your partner. Ask yourselves: What is the single most valued element of your religious background that you'd like to transmit to your own family? Then, see if you can incorporate some of that into your life together.

In Jim Keen's book, *Inside Inter marriage: A Christian Partner's Perspective on Raising a Jewish Family*, Paula Brody describes a couple in which the non-Jewish spouse wanted to re-create with his children regular attendance at worship services, family Sabbath dinners and holiday celebrations, and blessings before meals. It was relatively easy to adapt these practices from the spouse's Christianity to the family's Judaism, for example, by moving the big weekly family dinner from Sunday afternoons to Friday nights.



PJ Library Director Nicole Katzman reads *The Shabbat Box*, by Lesley Simpson, at Books on the Square in Providence.

- Involve your children; let them help you celebrate your religion. Jim Keen is a practicing Protestant raising Jewish children. Just as he accompanies his children to the synagogue, they sometimes attend church with him. They also help him celebrate Christmas. Nevertheless, they clearly know that Daddy's religion is different from their own.

- Be involved in your children's religion. As Annie Modesitt writes in "Raising My Children as Jews" in *The Guide to Jewish Interfaith Family Life*,

“There’s a school of thought that only a Jewish ‘mama’ can raise a Jewish child – obviously I disagree. Not all great voice teachers are themselves great singers. One of the best ways to teach a subject is to learn along with your student. As I study Hebrew and Yiddish, learn Jewish songs and blessings, and round out my own Jewish education with Torah study, I pass all this on to my children with passion and excitement.” PJ Library offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with your child around a Jewish theme. Don’t leave the reading of the PJ Library books to your partner!

- Learn as much as you can. Read some of the books and visit some of the websites listed below. Many synagogues, as well as other Jewish organizations, have adult education programs, including introduction to Judaism courses. Mothers Circle offers a course specifically for women of other faiths who are raising Jewish children. Last month, we began a Mothers Circle course in Rhode Island. To learn more about our local group and activities, see the contact information below.

And for the Jewish partners, please keep in mind:

- Appreciate, appreciate, appreciate. Imagine if the situation were reversed. Dr. Paula Brody of the Union for Reform Judaism teaches a class called “Yours, Mine, and Ours.” She asks both partners to consider, “If you were to raise children in the religion of your partner, what are the three things about your religious background that would be most difficult for you to give up, and of those, which is the most important?” It is often the Jewish partner, not the partner of another faith, who has the most trouble with this, she notes. When I tried this exercise at a training workshop, I confess that I drew a complete blank. It was too hard to even imagine raising my children in another religion. Yet, that’s what non-Jewish partners in Jewish families do all the time.

- Educate. Don’t expect your partner to follow the Seder at your grandmother’s house without first explaining the Hagaddah. During the Seder,



This PJ Library Shabbat craft project was created by Diane Cerep, Creativity Center coordinator at the Bureau of Jewish Education.

briefly stop and explain what’s happening and what you’re doing. If your spouse practices an Eastern religion, you may have to start at the beginning – with the story of the Exodus – as my son and I did when he first brought his Chinese girlfriend to our Seder.

- Support. Ideally, your partner will feel that he or she has gained something special, rather than having given up or sacrificed something. Think about the practice exercise. If regular worship attendance is important to your partner to feel comfortable raising Jewish children, then take the family to services together, even if that is not something important to you.

For information about Mothers Circle Rhode Island, contact Kit Haspel at 331-0956 x 180 or khaspel@bjeri.org, or visit www.motherscircle.org.

PJ Library Books in the Jewish Early Childhood Classroom

BY ESTA YAVNER, *PJ Library Committee*

How does an early childhood program reap the full benefits from this selection of Jewish books? Begin by opening one up and introducing our children to a world where print carries a message – a message full of wonder, mystery, and knowledge – and where pictures tell a story. And, stories they are! As we, the teachers, begin by introducing the title, author, and illustrator, and subsequently read each page, the children learn that there is order in each book. With each additional reading, we add the new vocabulary to our word wall and discuss the meanings. We ask deeper and deeper questions, allowing each child to analyze ideas, concepts, and content. By the third reading, the children are filling in the words as we pause to allow them to participate by retelling the tale. This is referred to as dialogic reading, a research-based method for reading stories to children. “In dialogic reading, adults help children to become the storytellers by reading the same story more than once over time.” (Ready to Learn Providence) In this manner, we have created a developmentally appropriate way for children to learn about the many aspects of their Jewish heritage and culture.

We use the themes presented in these stories as the focus of our learning center “play.” In the dramatic play and reading centers, we provide props for the children to act out their interpretations of the story with clothing, puppets, and felt board pieces. The science center enables the children to experiment, grow, cook, or discover scientific concepts described in the story. The block center provides the tools to build castles, cities, or cultural landscapes. And, of course, the art center allows for creative expression through a variety of medium.

The PJ Library books offer a plethora of opportunities for the children to interact meaningfully in a Jewish environment. Our goal is to scaffold them to the next level on our developmental continuum. What better tools to utilize than our PJ Library books!



Naomi Blank, Jodd Sheer, and Ben Stone check out the Shabbat Box.

This past school year, the PJ Library book, *The Shabbat Box*, by Lesley Simpson, provided us with a way to encourage a child / parent school connection. We created a Shabbat literacy bag whose contents and activities reflected the theme of the story. As the bag circulated from home to home, each child and parent interacted cooperatively, enjoying the songs, writing activities, stories, and games that were included. Afterward, the parents were invited to join us during circle time to present, with their child, any creations and dialogue that they shared at home. It afforded a wonderful tool for parent involvement, education, and updates as to our daily Jewish classroom routines.

Esta Yavner is an early childhood educator at the Jewish Community Center in Providence.

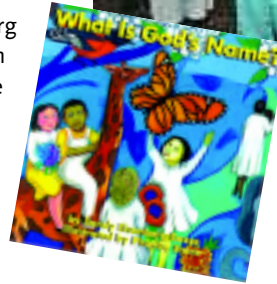
spotlight from the PJ Library Collection

East Greenwich Public Library Story Time

BY RACHEL SILVERMAN, *PJ Library Committee*

This past year, Temple Torat Yisrael in Cranston, R.I., hosted eight PJ Library story hours at the East Greenwich Public Library. The programs were all well attended: thirty-four families with seventy children participated. We were thrilled to have a great response from the community.

One of the PJ Library lessons that was very successful at Story Time was based on the book *What Is God's Name?* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. The theme discussed with the children was how God is everywhere, in all that we see and do, and that God is inside each of us. After we read the story, we made hand mirrors and decorated them with colorful foam stickers and ribbons. The mirror was to remind us that each one of us is created in the image of God.



Participants in a PJ Library story hour included Aliyah Land, Sydney Hammer, Evan Hammer, Zachary Hammer, Lev Simon, Julia Stanger, and Brayden Stanger.

The Rhode Island Jewish community's PJ Library acknowledges its generous funders and partners.

PJ Library Funders

Randi and Neil Beranbaum
DeRabbananan Fund of the Rhode Island Foundation
Engle Family Foundation
Rosalie Fain and Family
Freedman Family
Ira and Anna Galkin Trust
Lawrence and Jill Goldstein
Harold Grinspoon Foundation
David and Hope Hirsch
Jewish Federation of Rhode Island
Mynde and Gary Siperstein
Ravera and Rosenstein Families
Rotenberg Family
Arthur and Barbara Sheer
Sharon Yarlas

PJ Library Partners

Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Warwick
Barrington Books
Congregation Beth Shalom
Borders Book Store, Providence
Brown University Hillel Foundation
Camp JORI
Congregation Agudas Achim
Congregation B'nai Israel
Congregation Beth David

EPOCH Senior Healthcare on Blackstone Blvd
Harry Elkin Midrasha Community High School
Holocaust Education & Resource Center of R.I.
Jewish Community Day School of Rhode Island
Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island
Jewish Family Service of Rhode Island
Jewish Federation of Rhode Island
Jewish Seniors Agency of Rhode Island
Jewish Voice & Herald
J. Marcel Shoes

Phyllis Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence
Providence Hebrew Day School
Providence Public Library
South County Hebrew School
Temple Am David
Temple Beth-El
Temple Emanu-El
Temple Habonim
Temple Shalom
Temple Sinai
Temple Torat Yisrael
The Friday School
URI Hillel Foundation

AS OF OCTOBER 2008



130 Sessions Street
Providence, RI 02906

Sharon Gaines
President

Randi Beranbaum
PJ Library Committee
Co-Chair

Lauri Friedman
PJ Library Committee
Co-Chair

Nicole Katzman
PJ Library Coordinator
and newsletter editor

401 331-0956
www.bjeri.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 601
Providence, RI

Save The Dates!

PJ Library Book Fair @ Barnes & Noble Warwick

Wednesday, December 10

10:00 A.M. – 9:00 P.M.

PJ Library Story times • Live Music • Raffle • Hanukkah foods
Jewish jewelry design • Jewish adult book club
And so much more

Shira Kline in Concert

Thursday, December 11

5:30 – 7:30 P.M.

Jewish Community Center

Featuring “outrageously hip Jewish music for kids”
Activities for kids • Kosher food available for purchase

Shira Kline in Concert generously funded by
the Alan and Carol Gertsacov Memorial Fund of the
Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island Endowment

Barnes & Noble
BOOKFAIR
Supporting

**PJ Library
Bureau of Jewish
Education of R.I.**

Wednesday, December 10th

9:00 am–10:00 pm

Barnes & Noble

1350B Bald Hill Road

Warwick, RI 02886

Please present this voucher prior
to making your purchase.
A percentage of the net sale will be
donated to your school/organization.*

347435

*The purchase of gift cards, Barnes & Noble
memberships, text books and magazine
subscriptions are not included in bookfair
totals. Our discount purchasing program may
not be applied to bookfair purchases.

