New Books for Children from Israel
Spring 2012

THE INSTITUTE FOR THE TRANSLATION OF HEBREW LITERATURE
New Books For Children from Israel

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Jonathan Yavin

Antti

AGE 12-15

Uniquely written in rap beat and with rhymes, this fast-paced novel will have a special appeal for teenagers.

Dror Antilovich, a rebellious 14-year-old nicknamed Anti, is going through a crisis. The uncle he loves committed suicide after a long depression and his father in reaction has become very closed off. Dror becomes aggressive and neglects his studies. He feels that no one understands him and finds comfort by listening to hip-hop music. One day at a music store he meets Arad and Lisa, the leaders of “Raptor,” a rap band. They get him to join the band, made up of teenagers who all live and breathe rap. Becoming part of the group helps Dror escape his unhappiness, and he proves to be a talented rapper. He also falls in love with Lisa.

But all is not well: Arad, the leader, forces the group to obey him blindly and to shoplift. So Dror decides to rebel: he does battle-raps with some of the others, and eventually leaves with Lisa. The new twosome prepare for the national rap contest which we follow with bated breath, and the results are very surprising!

Anti is a fast-paced, angry and touching book for young adults. Rap music saves Dror—it helps him communicate with the people around him, teaches him to love and inspires him to make his way as a young artist.
Tami Shem-Tov

When We Were Birds


AGE 10-14

This moving book brings to life the first democratic orphanage that ever existed. Founded by Janusz Korczak, the Polish-Jewish educator, writer and fighter for children’s rights, it opened in Warsaw a hundred years ago and was open until World War II. This is however not a Holocaust story. It is about the orphanage itself, where the children received respect, love and a humanistic education. In fact, they called it “a children’s paradise.”

In the story, Yanek Wolf, orphan, street child and outstanding runner, lives with his older sister. But eventually she sends him to a children’s home, and there he is beaten and so badly injured that his dream of becoming an athlete and representing Poland at the Olympic Games is ruined. Lame, angry and depressed, he arrives at Janusz Korczak’s orphanage without any faith in people. But he adapts to the community of children and this, plus his relationship with Korczak, enable him to heal. From being a lonely, silent boy who ran through the streets without seeing anything, he becomes observant, expressive and able to connect with others. At the end, Yanek becomes a reporter for the national children’s newspaper that Korczak founded.

The hero is fictional, but the plot is based on actual events, and ends before the Second World War, when Yanek leaves Poland.

2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the orphanage and the 70th anniversary of Korczak’s death at the Nazi death camp Treblinka. When the orphanage children were sent there, Korczak chose of his own free will to accompany them.
Deakla Keydar

Simply Complicated

Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2011. 518 pp.

AGE 14-17

Shlomtzi is already 17, and that’s no simple matter, it’s actually complicated—by her parents who’ve gotten divorced, by her friends who are too busy with themselves, by school and final exams. And when it comes to love, it’s even more complicated, because Shlomtzi wonders if she should love her boyfriend, her unknown admirer, or her creative writing teacher who’s much older than her.

Shlomtzi is learning how to write stories, but she understands that sometimes the story writes itself and surprises everyone, especially herself. She’s spellbound by words, books and poems; she also goes through a stormy love and great disasters. She tells her diary about all these things with complete openness, in the lightest of language and with lots of humor. Through writing, Shlomtzi discovers that growing up is a complicated business, and that life isn’t simple. But in the end, she’ll toughen up, understand some important things about herself and the world, and set out on a new road. A story she writes will appear in the newspaper, and a new love will light a flame in her heart.

Simply Complicated is a brave coming-of-age novel that introduces us to a wise, endearing heroine in a way that is complex, but also amusing and touching.
Yuval Elbashan

Unfinished Story

Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2011. 120 pp.
AGE 8-12

Eylam, the 10-year-old grandson of a famous Jerusalem children’s author, finds an unfinished story on his grandfather’s desk. It is about two brothers in Warsaw in the 1930s and about young Yanek’s favorite book, written in Hebrew, which he takes with him wherever he goes. His older brother gave it to him: “Take care of this book and it will take care of you,” he wrote inside. Eylam loves books too; he identifies with Yanek and asks his grandfather to finish the story. At first his Grandpa refuses—the tale doesn’t end well, he says. But eventually, pushed by Eylam, he does finish it, describing how Yanek has to part with his book when the Nazis invade Poland. Thus Eylam learns that his grandfather, born in Warsaw, had a brother who disappeared in the Holocaust.

The book is a success; it is even exhibited at the Warsaw International Book Fair. And there, a boy named Philip is amazed to see that the youth on the cover looks exactly like him. He gets a copy of the book and his father helps him to translate the dedication: “To my good grandchild Eylam—take care of this book and it will take care of you,” it says. The next day, Philip’s grandfather Jan comes to visit, and when he sees the familiar dedication, he faints.

Unfinished Story is a moving and exciting book, which shows that faith in the written word can overcome time and distance.

Illustrations: Ruth Gwily

Lawyer and social activist Yuval Elbashan was born in Israel in 1969. He studied law at Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He co-founded and is director of Yedid, a network of citizens’ rights centers in underprivileged neighborhoods. In 2003, he also established the Human Rights Center for clinical legal education in the law faculty of the Hebrew University. Elbashan has lectured widely in Israel and abroad on poverty and the law; he is senior lecturer at the Hebrew University, advisor on social rights to the Labor Party and writes a weekly column in Maariv. He is also the author of four books on human rights, poverty and the law; his latest (2005) is a set text in all Israeli law faculties. Elbashan has been selected one of the ten most influential people in Israel for his work on human and social rights. Forever Flora, his first novel, was awarded the Book Publishers Association’s Gold Prize (2009).
Dorit Orgad

The Teenager from Bordeaux
AGE 11-16

This is the third book in Orgad’s historical trilogy about conversos, Jews who converted to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition. Fifteen-year-old Jacques, the son of a wealthy art dealer in Bordeaux, France, discovers that his family are conversos who fled Spain. His father considers himself Christian, but his uncle’s family follow Jewish customs in secret. When they set sail for Brazil, Jacques, who came to see them off, gets stuck in the hold. At sea, Muslim pirates capture the ship. Jacques is wounded trying to protect his aunt, and loses consciousness. When he comes to, he remembers nothing. Luckily the captain lets him join the crew, but then they are captured by Corsican pirates. Jacques is sold into slavery and ends up in Malta, where he becomes a groom for a knightly order. Here he meets a Jewish girl whom he first saw on the pirate ship, and when he sees her lighting Sabbath candles, his memory returns. Now he knows who he is and what people he belongs to.

Illustrations: Avi Katz

Friends, Drums and a Pistol
Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2010. 238 pp.
AGE 8-13

Two friends, Rami and Dov, find a bag filled with money, jewelry and a gun in a field near their home. After some adventures, they bring it to the police who return it to its rightful owner—a wealthy tourist from France. The grateful tourist invites the boys to eat at his hotel and gives them each a flute as a gift. Rami and Dov, ever resourceful, exchange the unwanted flutes for a set of drums, and start learning how to play. But there is conflict: Rami is hurt by Dov’s fickle attitude, and Dov, who is overweight, takes out his frustration on Rami. But Rami’s grandmother comes to the rescue and helps Dov lose weight!

An adventure story that involves not only cops and robbers but also a Palestinian boy from Gaza and other characters who all help create a compelling book.

Illustrations: Nurit Zarfaty

Dorit Orgad was born in Germany in 1936, and came to pre-state Israel as a young child. She has a PhD in Jewish philosophy from Bar Ilan University. Orgad has taught at various schools and academic institutions. She now writes for the press and tutors writing groups. Orgad has published three adult books and 69 books for children and youth. Her many awards include the Ze’ev Prize (1987), the Bernstein Prize (1987), the Hadassah Prize (2000), an Honor Citation from the WZO for her books about children from Ethiopia (2005), and the Verghereto Award (Italy, 2006). Her y/a book Kalkidan was nominated Favorite Youth Novel by Israel’s Ministry of Education (2007), and received the Ministry of Culture Prize (2007). Orgad’s books have been published in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Japanese, Serbian and Korean.
Neri Aluma

What Would I Do Without Bruno?


AGE 11 UP

This is an entertaining and moving story about the love of a 12-year-old boy for a calf. Dor lives with his family in a moshav—a farming village—and he isn’t very good at school. Whenever he can, he plays hooky and goes to his father’s dairy farm, where he enjoys taking care of the cows and calves. He is especially attached to one new-born calf which he saves and calls Bruno. In sub-plots that are delicately woven into the main story line, we also find out about other family members and villagers. Among these is Jamus, a warm man with a sense of humor, but a lonely man. He sends Dor and a friend to look for old graffiti in the village, and the two boys learn of Jamus’ tragic past love. Then they discover other stories of the past that make up the village’s unique mythology. One is about Dor’s great-grandmother, who also raised a calf when she was a girl. The calf followed her around like a shadow, until it was led off to slaughter.

Will this also be Bruno’s fate? With great resourcefulness, Dor manages to rescue the young bull; his success bolsters his self confidence and uncovers his hidden talents.

Illustrations: Danny Kerman
Orit Uziel

We’ll Meet Again

Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Sifriat Poalim, 2010. 219 pp.
AGE 12 up

In 1935, soon after the Nuremberg Laws were passed, Paul, the son of a German Christian father and a Jewish mother, decides to leave Germany. He travels to Switzerland and there he meets Elsa, a young Jewish refugee. Together, the two cross the border and eventually reach Paris. They face many hardships, but in the meantime the friendship between them blossoms into love. In July 1936, the Spanish Civil War breaks out. Paul, who feels he cannot stand by and watch another democracy trampled by tyranny, joins a group of volunteers from various countries and sets off to fight in Spain. Once there, he also meets volunteers from Palestine. In the meantime, Elsa, who realizes that Paul will not be coming back any time soon, sails to Palestine and settles in Tel Aviv.

When the foreign volunteers are evacuated from the Spanish front, Paul leaves Europe and also makes his way to Palestine, where Elsa is waiting for him.

A moving story about two youngsters who are willing to fight for their ideals and true love.

Orit Uziel was born in Ness Ziona, Israel, in 1952 and graduated in history and English literature from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. She started writing after a two-year stay in southern Mexico. She has also lived in Spain and England, and the history of various countries serves as a background for her books. She has published ten books for children. Uziel received the Ze’ev Prize in 1993 for Marrano Boy, and again in 2003.
Anat Israeli

Don’t Cry, Roni

AGE 13-16

One day, without any warning, the father of Talia, Roni and six-year-old Eran leaves his wife and children. Each one responds to the pain of abandonment differently, but Roni, the teenage middle daughter, takes it worse than the others. She consolers herself by playing her drums. Only Hanoch, the boy next door, understands her, and he infects her with his love for jazz. After four years abroad, the youngsters’ father suddenly returns, but he sheds no light on the reasons for his disappearance. Once again the delicate family balance is upset. Old wounds open up and Roni goes through a big crisis. Her father understands that the family gets on better without him and leaves again, this time for good.

Years later, after the father dies, Eran, now 19, flies to New York where Roni is studying music after winning a scholarship from an anonymous benefactor. Only Eran, a cripple since childhood, can forgive his father, and now he tries to solve the mystery. Will he succeed?

Anat Israeli doesn’t pull any rabbits out of her hat. Some of the questions about the father are cleared up and some closure is achieved. But just as in real life, his personality remains unclear and his children’s attitude toward him remains ambivalent.

Anat Israeli was born in Petah Tikva, Israel, in 1955. She studied social work at Tel Aviv University. After receiving her BA, she worked with children at a boarding school for two years. Between 1981 and 1991 she worked as a rewriter at various newspapers, and is now an editor. Israeli has published three books for children. Her first book, Seeing Through Darkness, was awarded the Ze’ev Prize in 2000.
Yehonatan Geffen

The Sixteenth Lamb
Illustrated by David Polonsky

1978; Tel Aviv, Dvir, 1992; 2010. 71 pp.

AGE 3-8

Generations of Israeli children have grown up to the rhymes of this popular and much loved book. Many of the poems have been put to music and a successful children’s play is based on them. Adults too know them by heart, and some of the lines have become well-known expressions.

Containing both poems and stories, The Sixteenth Lamb uses direct, simple language and is written mostly from the child’s point of view, depicting his or her perspective and feelings. The book is full of wonderful humor, but it is also tinged with sadness: the children are so innocent, but they are also shrewd and subtle. Mainly, they think in an original way, free of clichés, and it is easy for the reader, to identify with them because they are so genuine. For example, in the poem “I Like,” the child makes a list of his favorite things, going from chocolate, cheese cake, ice cream and strawberries, to his parents, relatives and his pre-school teacher, right up to the punch line: “But most of all I like me!” However, the children are not selfish, as we see in another poem, where the little boy is empathic and sensitive: of everything that he sees during a trip to the city, what he remembers best is “a poor man with holes in his socks.”

SPANISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE.
Dror Burstein and Meir Appelfeld, *Illustrator*

*My Cup of Tea*

Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2011. 49 pp.

**AGE 4 UP**

Dror Burstein's first children's book is about a boy who likes asking questions. “One day in winter I was sick, my throat hurt and I had a fever,” he starts as he lies in bed. Then in comes Dad with some tea with honey and lemon, and while the boy drinks it, questions pop up in his mind. Where does the tea go after I drink it? Is it in my stomach? And if I’m thinking about it, maybe it’s just in my thoughts. Yes, this curious boy asks philosophical questions. After he’s finished his tea, he wonders what it’s made of. Where did the honey come from? From bees, of course. And how was it made? From the nectar in flowers. So the bees and flowers are partners, just like Grandpa and his partner at work. And for there to be flowers, there have to be other things. Like water and sunlight. And where does the water come from? From under the ground and from the rain. And for that, there have to be clouds. And what are clouds made of? Wait, the boy thinks, how did I get from a cup of tea to the clouds and the water under the ground?

The flower, the bee, the sun and the cloud don’t know the boy, but they work together to help him, because they make the cup of tea. And it’s the same with Dad. For him to make the tea, he had to be born, and for that he needed Grandpa and Grandma, and so on.

The boy isn’t sad anymore. He knows that the whole world is in his teacup. So even if Dad isn’t with him in the room, he isn’t alone.
Shoham Smith and Rutu Modan, *Illustrator*

**Who Drank My Juice?**

AGE 3-6

A delightful comics story about a boy, his Dad and a camel!

It all begins when a little boy discovers that someone has drunk his juice. His Dad says that a camel came by at night and was very thirsty. So he had a drink. “And after that?” the boy asks. “He wanted to take a bath,” Dad says, and he explains that the camel lives in the desert, where there’s very little water. Then, the camel went into the living room and wanted to watch TV. But Dad didn’t allow him to, and the camel got furious. “Did you hit him?” asks the boy. “Are you out of your mind?” Dad replies. “I hugged him and called his father. Daddy Camel came at once, but before the two of them left, he drank the rest of your juice.”

“Never mind,” says the boy, not upset at all. Now he and Dad are going to the grocery store to buy some more juice.

The dialogue and the pictures complement one another, so every page holds a new surprise. And this Dad has a great imagination, so he answers each question in absurd and unexpected ways.
Leah Goldberg

In the Land of China


AGE 3-6

Leah Goldberg thought it was very important for young readers to get to know distant civilizations and children from different countries. Her fairytale In the Land of China takes place at an unspecified time in China’s past, when reality and imagination mingled freely.

Chan Soo Lin has three grown sons and a little daughter, and her father calls her Shining Flower. She is beautiful and delicate, she wears silk slippers and she loves to dance in the garden. When her father leaves home, he orders his sons to take care of their sister. But two of his sons also leave, promising to bring her pretty gifts. Only the youngest son swears to stay with his sister and keeps his word. At night, a black dragon appears, declares that he is a prince and tells the youngest brother to give him Shining Flower—or else he will die. But the lad refuses. He quickly gathers an army of ants, puts a grasshopper general at its head, and in the heroic battle that follows he defeats the dragon who leaves empty-handed.

In the morning, Chan Soo Lin and the two older brothers return with gifts for Shining Flower. When they hear about the battle, they declare that in all China there is no greater hero than their younger brother. And they also remember to reward the army of ants and the grasshopper.

Illustrations: Galit Levin

Leah Goldberg (1911-1970) was born in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia), and started writing Hebrew verse as a schoolgirl. She received a PhD in semitic languages from Bonn University, and immigrated to pre-state Israel in 1935. Goldberg was a renowned poet as well as a successful children’s author, theater critic, translator, and editor. In 1952, she established the Department of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and remained its chair-person until her death. During her lifetime, Goldberg published 9 books of poetry, about 20 children’s books as well as fiction, plays and non-fiction. Her work has been translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Catalan, Polish, Russian and Korean. Goldberg was awarded many prizes, including the Israel Prize for Literature in 1970.

Her children’s book, A Flat for Rent, has been published in English (Ward & Ritchie; NBT New Delhi), German (Ariella), Korean (Joongang M & B), Tamil, Gujarati, Telugu (India, NBT). Forthcoming in Portuguese (Leya) and Russian (Text).
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### Garden of Stars

AGE 3-6

Dan has a friend who is also called Dan and they go to the same kindergarten. But Dan’s friend is very different from him. He tells our Dan:

Every night before I go to sleep, I drink a magic potion and wonderful things happen. Two airplanes come and fly me into the sky. Then I land in a garden of stars. I put the stars in my hat and eat them, and each one has a different taste. Last night, the gardeners gave me star seeds as a gift. I’m going to plant them and when they’ve grown, you’ll come and eat the stars in my garden. Dan is fascinated by the story, but he isn’t sure if he’ll go. What if his friend’s story isn’t real?

Two children with the same name, but different personalities. The one flies off in his imagination, the other doubts its truth. But both love good stories!

Illustrations: Ayelet Sharon

### Why Did the Child Laugh in his Dream?

AGE 2-5

Three of Leah Goldberg’s best-known children’s poems with beautiful illustrations. Every child and adult in Israel knows them. In the first one, a mother attempts to interpret her son’s smile while he sleeps: Is he dreaming about an impish cloud that turns the sun into a golden balloon? The second describes a magical relationship between the moon, the rainclouds and the hyacinths at night. The moon asks the clouds to water the buds. The rain falls, singing happily to the buds, and they respond joyfully by growing. In the third poem, we move to the animal world: What do deer do at night? Who watches over their dreams? The answers are wonderfully imaginative, full of humor and childish innocence.

Illustrations: Cristina Kadmon
Shlomit Miron

My Pacifier and Dad’s Pacifier

Tel Aviv, Astrolog, 2005. 35 pp.

AGE 3-6

A four-year-old boy and his dad decide to try and kick their bad habits together. The boy is very attached to his pacifier, which he calls Tzetzi; his dad likes his cigarettes. One day, when they are sitting together, the dad says: “This might be a good time to give up your pacifier. It isn’t good for you: it’ll make your teeth stick out.” “That’s exactly what they say to you about smoking: it’s bad for you!” the boy answers.

So father and son make a pact: they’ll collect all the pacifiers and all the cigarette packs lying around the house and put them in a closet. The boy has a hard time, he misses his Tzetzi, especially at night, but eventually he gets used to it and feels good about himself. Then he finds out that his father isn’t as brave as him and hasn’t managed to give up his cigarettes. So he decides to help him, no matter what, even if he gets angry, because he loves him so much.

This is a story written largely about and for us adults, but it is also a story for children, who look up to us and learn about life and freedom of choice through us. Will we have the courage to learn from them?

Photos: Adi Adar

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Shlomit Miron was born in Kfar Saba, Israel, in 1962. After receiving a BA in the Humanities and Social Sciences, she is now completing her MA in Hebrew Culture at Tel Aviv University. Miron has published poems and short stories in various journals, and mentors groups in ‘awareness through writing.’ My Pacifier and Dad’s Pacifier is her first book for children.

My Pacifier and Dad’s Pacifier has been published in Spanish (Alreves) and Catalan (Alreves).
Nira Harel

Noah-No-Brain

AGE 3-6

Once upon a time there was a boy named Noah, but everyone called him Noah-No-Brain.” This the beginning of Nira Harel’s book about a talented boy who spent all his free time on one single hobby: automobiles. He knew all the different types of cars, his room was full of toy cars, and when he was asked to draw, he of course drew cars. But people around him didn’t appreciate his skill. Until one day he got to prove it! That day, while Noah was waiting for his father outside a store, he saw a car crash into a motorcycle and then drive off. The motorcyclist was thrown onto the road. People rushed to him, and after an ambulance took him to hospital, the police questioned people about the accident. Everyone started talking at the same time. But nobody could actually describe the car until a small boy piped up. He knew the make of the car, its color and even the first two digits of its registration number. Yes, that was Noah! And the information that he gave the police led straight to the hit-and-run driver.

Since then, everyone knows that there’s a smart kid living in the neighborhood, and his name is Noah!

Illustrations: Omer Hoffmann

Nira Harel was born in Tel Aviv in 1936. She has worked as a teacher, journalist, children’s magazine editor, and chief editor for children’s books at Am Oved Publishers. Harel has published almost 60 books for children. She has received the Ze’ev Prize (1986), an Andersen Honor Citation (1994), the Prix Éspace Enfants (France, 1998), a citation from the Fondation Éspace Enfants (France, 2000), the Fania Bergstein Prize (2002) and the Prime Minister’s Prize (2007).

Harel’s books have been published in Arabic, Chinese, Danish, English, French, German, Hindi, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Catalan and Urdu.
Yona Tepper

**Hadas’s Secret Flight**

Tel Aviv, Sifriat Poalim, 2011. 36 pp.
AGE 3-6

“Why didn’t Grandpa and Grandma come to my birthday party?” Hadas asks after the guests leave.

“They live very far away, on the other side of the ocean,” her dad reminds her. “But they love you a lot and they’ve sent you a present.”

This is the beginning of a story about how Hadas, who lives in the United States, misses her grandparents who live in Israel. But Hadas is lucky. In the present her grandparents have sent, there’s a little fairy. And late at night, when her parents are sound asleep, the fairy gently wakes Hadas, sprinkles fairy dust on her and takes her on a magical flight to her grandparents’ house in Israel. And there, she gets to have a wonderful birthday party with them and all her cousins!

Illustrations: Raaya Karas

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**Eyal’s Monster Catcher**

Tel Aviv, Sifriat Poalim, 2010. 34 pp
AGE 3-6

At night, little Eyal is scared of monsters. But you can defeat even a monster with three heads, if you do it right.

Eyal comes to his grandparents’ equipped with a “monster catcher”—a pine branch with three cones. He is sure it will take care of him, but he is worried anyway. He wakes up at night and suddenly he sees a huge, black three-headed monster snarling over his head. Grandpa and Grandma can’t calm him down. Then Grandpa remembers that the same monster used to scare Eyal’s dad when he was a kid. And how did his dad catch him? With a lasso! So Grandpa goes to fetch his old monster catcher, but by the time he comes back, Eyal has fallen asleep in a safe place—his grandparents’ bed.

Illustrations: Karen May Metcalfe

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**Yona Tepper**

was born at Kibbutz Dafna in 1941 and studied education and creative drama. She taught for many years and later became school principal. She is currently editor for children and youth at Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House. Tepper has published almost 50 books for children and youth. She has been awarded the Prime Minister’s Prize (2001), the Ze’ev Prize twice (1995, 2005), an IBBY Honor Citation (2007) and the Israel Ministry of Science and Culture Award (2008).

Her books have been translated into English, German, Korean and Arabic. Most recently, *Passing By* has been published in English (*Kane Miller*).