New Books For Children from Israel

SPRING 2017

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ona really loved the coat that her great grandmother bought her when she was only a year old. She liked it so much that she gave it a name, Sam, and refused to part with it. She wore it all the time, went everywhere with it on, and she never took it off, even not at night when she went to sleep. But Rona grew bigger, and the coat stayed small. Nevertheless, even when pieces were cut out of it and it got dirty and shabby, Rona wouldn’t give it up. What could be done to wean Rona away from Sam? Her experienced pre-school teacher wanted to help and came up with an idea to solve the problem once and for all, but her suggestion wasn’t accepted. And so, when her fourth birthday was approaching, Rona was still going around with Sam, although there was nothing left of it, just the collar and a strip of cloth with a few buttons attached to it. Mom and dad decided that the time had come to put an end to this and that at her birthday party, Rona would at last be without that thing she called Sam.

Will Rona give Sam up or will she find a way to keep it?

An original and thought-provoking story, for kids and their parents, about wanting to keep forever things that we loved as children, about what gradually dissipates and vanishes from our lives as we grow up, and about the human need to remember childhood and its symbols.

Illustrations: Efrat Levy
Daniella Carmi

How I Got Myself a Pony

Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2016. 24 pp.
AGE: 3-6

What’s the easiest way to learn the letters of the alphabet? Daniella Carmi’s method is simple, fun, creative and edifying. The little boy who is the main character of the story learned all the letters, and even got himself a horse... It all happened when his parents went on holiday and left him with his grandpa. The old man had a worthwhile proposition: for each letter his grandson learned, he would get a living gift whose name began with that letter. The boy is excited, and each day he learns a new letter, asking then for big animals that can’t be raised at home, like a lion (aryeh) for the first Hebrew letter (aleph), and other wild and wonderful beasts like a leopard, a tiger, a jaguar, a dolphin and a peacock. But instead his grandpa buys him little animals, like a hamster and an aquarium fish. And what about a mammoth? That’s the animal the boy loves most in the world, but grandpa explains that there aren’t any more mammoths in the world. “It’s a pity you don’t like little animals,” grandpa says. “Little animals are also important to our planet.”

The boy gives up on getting the animals he thought his grandfather had promised, but he is in for a surprise. One morning he sees a magnificent pony in the yard. In the coming days grandpa brings more large and fascinating animals. By the time the boy’s parents come back from holiday their home has turned into a zoo, and their son has learned all the letters of the alphabet.

Illustrations: Hilla Havkin

ADAPTED ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE
There's nothing scarier than getting lost and being alone. And that's what happened to one pink glove that fell out of the pocket of a little girl who was on her way to pre-school. The artist Hanoch Piven helps the pink glove, and shows us that the plain old world around us is full of opportunities for creativity, if we only know how to look and to pay attention. So, the glove complies with the wishes of different animals: The duck wants her to be a cockscomb, so he can masquerade as a rooster, a buck with only one antler wants her to be his other one, and she even helps a cow to suckle her calf. But the glove still misses her twin and the little girl who lost her. Full of energy and confidence in her own abilities, she decides to set out on a journey to find them.

Illustrations: Hanoch Piven

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Hanoch Piven was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1963, and came to Israel at the age of eleven. An artist, editorial caricaturist and illustrator of children's books, Piven studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Over the last 20 years, his colorful and witty illustrations have appeared on both sides of the Atlantic – in Time, Newsweek, Rolling Stone, the London The Times and the Swiss Die WeltWache, to name but a few. In Israel, Piven has gained great visibility due to his long collaboration with the daily Haaretz and the animated TV series he has developed. Piven has received a Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators of New York (1994), the Society of Publication Designers' Silver Medal, and the Parents Choice Gold Award for "Faces iMake", an Ipad App with more than 800,000 downloads and international recognition. His book What Presidents Are Made Of was elected one of the 10 Best Children's Books of 2004 by Time Magazine. Piven's book Purple Feather has been translated into English, Spanish and Korean.
Gil-ly Alon Curiel

Shusha

Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2016. 30 pp.
AGE: 4-7

Princess Shusha doesn’t look like a fairy-tale princess. She has a mane of wild curls and a mischievous grin and she loves to draw and to dream. Little Shusha lives in a palace with her parents and her two sisters, who wear nice dresses and have neatly combed hair. Unlike them, Shusha collects leaves, watches insects, listens to the birds, and dreams that she’s a famous artist. When her birthday draws near and her room has to be cleaned and painted, Shusha is sent off to her grandmother. After three days Shusha goes back to the palace with a new set of paints granny bought her. When she opens the door of her room, it is empty and the walls are white. Shusha takes her new paints and begins painting on the walls, until suddenly she hears footsteps approaching. She gets a fright and hides away, because she knows it is forbidden to paint on the palace walls. One of the palace’s high officials enters with some of his helpers, and when they see the colorful scene to her surprise they break out in admiring exclamations. “A masterpiece!”—declares the high official. The King and Queen come, and they too praise the paintings. Shusha comes out of hiding; proud of his daughter the artist, the King gives her special permission to paint anywhere she may choose.

Gil-ly Alon Curiel’s book encourages creativity and individualism and deals with such questions as what it means to be an artist, what is creative freedom, and how to nurture a child’s talents.

Illustrations: Gil-li Alon Curiel
Deborah Omer (1932-2013) was born at Kibbutz Maoz Haim. She completed her studies in 1952 and became a teacher. In addition to more than 100 books for children and youth that she wrote and adapted, she published plays, radio scripts, a novel for adults and personal columns in several children’s magazines. Omer was one of the most prolific and popular children’s writers in Israel. She received many awards including the Yatziv Prize (1959), the Lamdan Prize twice (1967; 1981), the Ministry of Education Prize (1973), the Prime Minister’s Prize (1979), an Andersen International Honor Citation, the Ze’ev Prize twice (1981, 1991), the Janusz Korczak Medal, the Hadassah Prize (2002), the Ministry of Education Prize for Lifetime Achievement (2005), the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement (2006) and the ACUM Prize for Lifetime Achievement (2012).

The Missing Spice

AGE: 5-8

Rabbi Judah the Prince lived in the Land of Israel in the Second Century C.E., and was famous for his great wisdom. At that time the Land was ruled by the Roman Empire and one day the Emperor Antoninus, hearing about the wisdom of Rabbi Judah, decided to visit the Jewish leader. The honorable guest arrived at noon on the Sabbath, accompanied by his ministers, his counselors and his slaves, and Rabbi Judah the Prince invited them all to have lunch with him. The table was festively laid and the food was delicious, but cold, because the dishes had been cooked before the Sabbath. To Rabbi Judah’s great surprise, everyone enjoyed the meal so much that they asked for second helpings, and left nothing over. So Rabbi Judah invited Antoninus for another meal, and promised to prepare double the quantities of the food that the emperor had found so palatable. The feast took place on Tuesday, and when Antoninus and his entourage arrived, a table laden with fine dishes, fresh and hot, awaited them. Nevertheless, the guests ate only a little, and didn’t ask for more. When Rabbi Judah asked why, the emperor explained that although the food was tasty this time too, it was not as delicious as the first time. “Of course the food is less tasty today,” said Rabbi Judah. “At this meal, one spice is missing.” What spice was that? The taste of the Sabbath of course.

The Missing Spice is a well-known Talmudic legend about the importance of the Sabbath, retold especially for children by Deborah Omer.

Illustrations: Yael Albert

Photo © Avigail Uziel
A Feather of Love

Tel Aviv, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2016. 23 pp.
AGE: 5-7

A tale of love in springtime, featuring a vain peacock and a wise peahen, unfolds before the eyes of all the farm animals—from the tiny barn mouse to the big, bossy bull. The story is also about beautiful tail feathers that open into a fabulous fan, until one by one they are plucked out, teaching an arrogant bird a lesson in humility. But above all, this is a story about giving that is filled with love.

This is how it begins:

“It all started in the springtime,
When Peter Peacock met Paula the gray Peahen,
And thought that she was very beautiful.
He was so excited that he spread his tail feathers into a fan,
Shook them with pride, puffed up his chest, and shouted as loud as he could,
‘I am Peter Peacock! I am King of the Birds, because I am the most handsome bird in the world!’
‘I don't like show-offs!’
Squawked Paula the Peahen, and she turned her back and looked away.”

Illustrations: Liora Grossman

Published in German and French (Zurich, Kiriat Yearim); Spanish rights sold.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE
Lea Goldberg

The Lost Cricket

1950; Tel Aviv, Sifriat Poalim, 2016. 28 pp.
AGE: 4-7

An adventurous cricket gets lost in the country and can’t find his way home. He asks the help of all kinds of creatures that he meets. First is Mrs. Lizard, but she doesn’t even reply and slithers away between the rocks. What bad manners, thinks the cricket, but he doesn’t give up and asks a light-green chameleon. She changes color, but also doesn’t bother to reply. Frustrated, the cricket turns to a sparrow perched in an olive tree and asks politely: Perhaps you, from your tree-top, can see my home? But the sparrow doesn’t answer either, and flies off. Evening comes, and out of the dark a firefly appears. Despairing, our cricket asks for her help, and the kindly firefly switches on her light and escorts the cricket to town, all the way to his home.

In this lovely tale, Lea Goldberg sparks hope in the hearts of her readers: Even when all seems lost, and the world seems dark, someone will come to our rescue.

Illustrations: Naama Benziman

Lea Goldberg (1911-1970) was born in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia), and started writing Hebrew verse as a schoolgirl in Kovno. She received a PhD in Semitic languages from Bonn University, and immigrated to pre-state Israel in 1935. Goldberg was a renowned poet—a member of the Shlonsky group—as well as a successful children’s author, theater critic, translator, and editor. In 1952, she began teaching literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Later, she established the university’s Department of Comparative Literature and remained its chairperson until her death. Goldberg published nine books of poetry during her lifetime, novels, plays, non-fiction, and books for children. She was awarded the Ruppin Prize (1949), the Shlonsky Prize (1956), the Kugel Prize (1960), the Neuman Prize (New York, 1968) and the Israel Prize for Literature (1970).

Lea Goldberg’s work has been published in 15 languages.
Lea Goldberg

The Dream Magician

1949; Tel Aviv, Sifriat Poalim, 2016. 22 pp.
AGE: 4-7

The dream magician has a long red beard and great magical powers. By day, he lives closed up in his little house surrounded by a wall, and only at night, when all the children are asleep, does he venture out to do his magic. Then he wanders among the houses with a small magic mirror that glitters in the dark. And when he points it at a sleeping child's head, all the child's dreams are reflected in it. If the child dreams that he'll grow up to be an engineer or an architect, a craftsman or a daring sea-captain, the magician sees it in his mirror and writes it in his notebook. And he can also help children's dreams come true. But only if the child remembers his dreams forever. In other words, the dream magician can only make dreams come true if the child never gives up on them.

An enchanting story in rhyme for children and parents alike, about the link between dreams and ambition.

Illustrations: Niv Tishbi

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Lea Goldberg's work has been published in 15 languages.
Rakefet Ziv-Li

Batya Can’t Fly

Tel Aviv, Sifriat Poalim, 2015. 32 pp.
AGE: 4-7

Batya is an ostrich. She has wings and a beak, but she can’t fly. So is she a bird? The other birds say No, and they make fun of her. They don’t invite her to the Birds’ Club Ball, where a real prince is expected. “You don’t belong to our club!” the sparrow declares, and he flies away. Batya is sad: she so wants to fly, but she can’t. Also, she feels rejected and wonders what she really is. Just after sunset, when she’s really down, she meets a bear who plays the drum. She starts hopping to his drumbeat and the bear is amazed at her dancing skills. “I’ve never seen a bird who dances like you!” he says, and he encourages her to go to the ball. There she meets the prince, and he’s a penguin! He can’t fly either but, like her, he loves to dance! So, the two start tripping around the dance floor. All the birds clap their wings and praise Batya. And the sparrow even says she dances “like a princess.” Batya is so happy she’s floating on air!

A charming tale about being different, about how friendship boosts our self-image and helps us find hidden talents within ourselves.

Illustrations: Aviel Basil

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A charming tale about being different, about how friendship boosts our self-image and helps us find hidden talents within ourselves.

Illustrations: Aviel Basil

Rakefet Ziv-Li was born in Jerusalem in 1968 and lives in Kibbutz Rosh Hanikra in the Western Galilee. She studied musicology and psychology at Bar-Ilan University, and has an MA in Hebrew literature from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, as well as a graduate degree in music therapy. She works as a music therapist for children and youth at risk.

Hana Goldberg

If I Were a Lion

Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2016, 20 pp.
AGE: 2-5

If I were a lion, what would it be like? A little boy tries to imagine himself as a lion, a shark, a baboon and various other creatures, even a tiny ant. It’s fun to be a lion, no need to explain why, but it’s also fun to be a small, weak animal like a bird, because a bird flying in the sky or sitting in a tree has real advantages over everyone beneath him. Altogether, an animal is free to do whatever it likes—a baboon, for example, doesn’t care that you can see his bottom. No one tells the shark to get out of the water, or tells the frog that he’s being stupid when he jumps into a puddle. And it’s great to be an owl—you don’t have to go to bed and you can make up stories all night long. But after the little boy considers all the advantages of being someone else, he concludes that what he likes most is just being himself.

A mischievous story in rhyme, full of fun situations, that deals with identity and strengthens a child’s self-esteem.

Illustrations: Aviel Basil

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

Hana Goldberg was born in Haifa, Israel. She did her military service as a journalist during the Yom Kippur War, and after her discharge, she studied philosophy and English literature at Haifa University. She then worked as an editor at various magazines. Later, Goldberg became a successful lyricist, working with some of the biggest names in Israeli popular music. She also wrote her own column on children’s literature for Israel’s web portal Ynet. From 2002 to 2005 she was chairperson of the Board of Directors of ACUM, Israel’s society of authors, composers and music publishers. At present, she holds creative writing workshops.

Goldberg has published a number of bestselling novels, children’s books and collections of poetry. She has written hundreds of lyrics, many of which have become hits in Israel. In 2015 she was awarded the ACUM Prize for Lifetime Achievement.
Nava Semel was born in Tel Aviv in 1954 and has an MA in art history. She has worked as a journalist, art critic, and TV, radio and recording producer. Semel has published novels, short stories, poetry, plays, children’s books and TV scripts.

Many of her stories have been adapted for radio, film, TV and the stage in Israel, Europe and the USA. Her novel, *And the Rat Laughed*, has been made into an opera. It will also be a feature film, directed by David Fisher. Semel is on the board of governors of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum.

Among Semel’s many literary prizes: the Women Writers of the Mediterranean Award (1994), the Austrian Best Radio Drama Award (1996), the Rosenblum Prize for Stage Arts (2005), and Tel Aviv’s Literary Woman of the Year (2007). Her y/a book, *Love for Beginners*, received the One of the Best Seven Prize awarded by Radio Germany (2010) as well as the Educators and Scientists Association Award (Germany, 2010). Rights to Semel’s books have been sold abroad in 11 languages.

**Sheindel’s Candles**

Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, forthcoming.

AGE: 7-10

For little Sheindel, the world was full of beauty. She loved picking flowers, skating on the frozen river in winter and gazing at the clouds changing their shapes in the sky. Sheindel and her family lived in a little village, a Jewish shtetl, in Europe. For hours on end she would watch her father the blacksmith at work, as he made different tools out of molten metal. One day he made a pair of candlesticks that came out all crooked. He wanted to scrap them, but Sheindel stopped him and said that she thought they were lovely. She lit candles in them every Sabbath eve, and never parted from them, even when she grew up, got married and had a daughter named Rochele. The candles in the crooked candlesticks lit up the little cradle and Sheindel hoped that her daughter would also learn to like things with flaws. Then there came days of darkness and evil. Sheindel’s husband was shot dead; the only synagogue in the village was burned down, and the Jews were driven away and herded together into a ghetto. There were no candles to light, but Sheindel and Rochele kept on blessing the light although darkness covered the earth.

Nava Semel’s story is one of memory and continuity and the need to seek out beauty in a world where there is so much ugliness. Sheindel’s great-granddaughter, Nava, didn’t know her, but the candlesticks survived and now, when Nava lights them and prays that the darkness won’t return, she imagines the little girl in the shtetl waving at her.

Illustrations: Gilad Seliktar

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**Taking Wing** *(Mercurium Trilogy, 1)*

[under the name: Huan B. Landi]

*a fantasy novel*

Tel Aviv, Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, 2016. 318 pp.

AGE: 13 UP

Erlinda can’t sleep: tomorrow her childhood will be over and she’ll be a Flyer. She’ll leave the nest where she’s been raised with her age group; new winglets on her ankles will enable her to fly, and she’ll know what her mission is.

Erlinda lives on the planet Mercurium, to which her human fore-fathers migrated from Earth. They set up a colony, protected by a special dome, and have developed the ability to fly. But not all the migrants joined the colony: outside the dome live the Grounders, those humans who refused to develop winglets and are ground-bound. The Flyers see them as enemies and stay away from them, but they need a spy to go into enemy territory. This is Erlinda’s mission.

Erlinda has always known that she’s different—there’s a rumor that her parents were traitors, and she doesn’t know what happened to them. Now she discovers that only she can be a spy, because she can make her winglets invisible. So, after training, she sets out for the unknown, leaving behind her beloved Omine. Yet Omine, a graduate of a military academy, will lead the attack against the Grounders. Nobody knows about his doubts, or his love and fear for Erlinda.

Although *Taking Wing* takes place in a distant, imaginary galaxy, this clever and gripping novel deals with issues that concern us in the here and now.

**Huan B. Landi is the pseudonym that Nava Semel has chosen for her new trilogy.**

**COMPLETE ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS**
Alex Paz-Goldman was born at Kibbutz HaMa’apil in 1955 to Holocaust survivor parents, and grew up in Ramat Gan. He currently lives in Tel Aviv. He has a BSc in computer science from the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, and an MA in child and youth culture from Tel Aviv University. In his life and work he combines technology and literature: he has worked as development manager at a hi-tech telecom company, and he is a children’s author. Paz-Goldman has published books for youth; he has also published short stories in Einayim, the most popular children’s magazine in Israel, and other magazines.

Paz-Goldman’s first book (with Iris Argaman), has been adapted for the stage. Both this and his second book, The Lost Spy and the Green Robe, are recommended for youth by the Ministry of Education.

When Motti and Reuven, age 12, discover that a mysterious stranger has infiltrated their neighborhood, they’re sure that he’s a cunning, cruel spy and they don’t hesitate. They call on their detective skills acquired from adventure books, and together with Aviva, Reuben’s pretty sister, they set out to stop the dangerous enemy. But the mission becomes more and more complicated.

The story takes place in Israel in the mid-1960s, when espionage affairs were rocking the country and setting people’s imaginations afire. But is the lonesome, skinny old man that the kids are following actually a spy? Slowly, another picture begins to emerge. A number of Holocaust survivors live in the neighborhood, and Motti himself is the son of a couple who lived through the Nazi era in Europe. His talkative father wants to talk about his experiences in the concentration camps, but his mother remains silent, bent over her sewing machine all the time. They both want their son to be a regular kid, a Sabra without any complexes. Surprisingly, the youngsters’ adventure deepens awareness of Motti’s family story and how the past affects life in the present.

The story of the “second generation” is told here in a way that it never has before. This is an entertaining, humorous and exciting book whose surprise ending reveals the olds wounds beneath Israeli life.

The Lost Spy and the Green Robe is the first book in a series.

Illustrations: Michel Kichka

COMPLETE ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN PROGRESS. PARTIAL TRANSLATIONS AVAILABLE IN FRENCH AND RUSSIAN.
Daniel Shalem was born in Jerusalem in 1969. He graduated from the Religious Kibbutz Movement’s yeshiva (rabbinical school) and later studied practical engineering and carpentry. At present, he works as a carpenter at the Jerusalem Science Museum, building exhibits. Shalem writes for both adults and youth and has a large collection of old travelogues.

Golem

Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2016. 245 pp.
AGE: 10-14

It is summer vacation in Jerusalem. Danny and his three friends are at a loose end when interesting things start to happen, and it’s all thanks to old Neumann. Neumann lives in a lovely old house in the neighborhood, and he asks the youngsters to clear up his storeroom, which is full of dusty books. Behind one of the cupboards they find a mysterious old tin box, which fires their imagination, and Neumann reveals its story. “Have you heard about the Golem of Prague?” he asks, and then he tells them the famous legend of how, 400 years ago, the Rabbi of Prague, known as the Maharal, created a man-like figure with magic powers, out of dust. But the Golem, which was supposed to obey its creator, got out of control and rampaged through the city. Finally, the Maharal managed to destroy it and he put the dust from which it was made into a tin box. Is this a legend? Not necessarily. During the Second World War, the box fell into the hands of a Czech Jewish partisan. Before he died, he gave it to Neumann who brought it with him to Israel after the war.

In Shalem’s thrilling story, the Golem comes alive again in Jerusalem. Although at first the kids swear they won’t touch the dust, they can’t resist the temptation… But they don’t know that when you mess with supernatural powers, you pay a heavy price.

An original and scary fantasy tale fashioned from one of the building blocks of Jewish culture.