Bucknell University, Bertrand Library Exhibit: Jewish Children’s Literature, January-February, 2011 (Rivka Ulmer)

Jewish children’s literature may be defined as an ethnic and national literature, often based upon religious concepts and sacred texts of Judaism. The books entertain children while engaging them in playful experiences of Jewish concepts. Since Hebrew, Yiddish, and Biblical primers and textbooks were also written for children, and reach as far back as the Middle Ages and in all likelihood as far back as the Biblical period, it is difficult to determine when books for Jewish children were first introduced. The samples shown in this exhibit are mainly from the United States. Several books were created for a generation of immigrant children who studied traditional values in order to perpetuate the “chain of tradition.” Other books are richly illustrated and engage the mind in a playful way. Another category of books specifically address the celebration of Jewish Holidays (or: Holy Days) in the Diaspora. Since the festival Hanukkah is celebrated around Christmas, it gained enormous importance in the United States, resulting in a multitude of books and emphasizing gift giving. The illustrations of the books range from 1960’s styles to elegant works of art. Some of the authors were scholars or famous people.

This exhibit shows Jewish children’s literature concerning the following areas of Judaism: Hebrew Bible; Rabbinic Bible Interpretation, Philosophy, Kabbala (mysticism); Ethics; Jewish Holy Days and Festivals; History; Literature; Story Books; Hebrew, Yiddish and Bible primers.

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/culture/2/Literature/Jewish_American_Literature/Childrens_Literature.shtml


http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature/v003/3.mendelsohn.html
A) The Hebrew Bible and Biblical Stories


... is for Moses.

To the stream he was brought,
So no one could kill him
As Pharaoh had sought...
The illustration shows the Cave of Mahpelah, which was purchased by Abraham to bury his wife Sarah. The Cave of Mahpelah in Hebron is the burial place of the Hebrew Matriarchs and Patriarchs.


B) Rabbinic Interpretation, Philosophy, and Kabbalah (Jewish Mysticism)

Based upon a *midrash* that suggests that Adam was confused and fearful when he experienced darkness.
The whole day long Adam was busy enjoying all the things that God had made for him. Suddenly, he felt a cool chill in the air. He looked up and saw his friend, the sun, change before his eyes.

It had been such a bright, yellow sun. Now it was a fiery red ball. It moved lower and lower in the sky, and its warm friendly light grew dimmer and dimmer. Adam watched the heavens anxiously. He saw the sun sink slowly, slowly. First, only a part of it seemed to be swallowed up by the earth. Soon half of it was gone. Then a tiny sliver, a rosy glow, was all that was left. And even as Adam stared, it disappeared. The sun was gone.
(4) Maurice Sendak, *Where the wild things are: 25th anniversary edition, 1991* by Maurice Sendak (Bucknell University: Call Number 823 .S47 W454 Juvenile Collection). Although the author claims the monsters in the book are some of his relatives, it is likely that some of the monsters represent primordial “beasts” (Behemoth and Leviathan) that will play a role at the End of Time.

21. 1 KINGS [5-8]

THE RESOLVE TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

When Hiram, king of Tyre, heard that Solomon was anointed king after the death of his father, he sent his officers [to congratulate him], for Hiram had ever been friendly to David. Then Solomon sent a message to Hiram, saying: "You know that David, my father, could not build a temple in honor of the Lord, his God, because of the wars which surround him. But now the Lord, my God, has given me tranquility on every side. There is no adversary nor evil occurrence. I am resolved, therefore, to build a house to honor the Lord, my God.

Now the house which I am to build is to be great, for our God is greater than all gods. Who is able to build Him a house, for the heavens cannot contain Him? Who am I to build Him a house? I build a house only to hallow it to Him, a place to burn before Him incense of sweet spices and for the burnt-offerings every morning and evening, on the Sabbath, on the new moon, and the festivals.

Now send me men skilled to work in gold and silver, in bronze and iron, in purple, crimson and violet stuffs, and who know how to engrave. Also command men to cut the cedar-trees of Lebanon, and my servants shall be with your servants, I will pay the hire of
(10) Charles B. Chavel, *Holidays and Festivals* (New York: Schulsinger, 1956). Chavel was a rabbinic scholar; he translated medieval philosophical works. In this book he explains the Holy Days from a learned perspective; the book also contains a section on ethics. The illustration and the text refer to the mourning customs on the Ninth of Av of the Jewish calendar; both Temples were destroyed on this date (The First Temple in 586 Before the Common Era and the Second Temple in 70 Common Era)
C) Ethics


ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Born Dorothy Karp in Highland Falls, N. Y., Mrs. Kripke was educated in the New York City public schools, at Hunter College, and received her M.A. in English from Columbia University. A graduate of Talmud Torah and Hebrew High School, Mrs. Kripke holds the degree of Bachelor of Hebrew Literature from the Seminary College of the Jewish Theological Seminary. After teaching English briefly, she became the wife of a rabbi, and the mother of three children. In this challenging career she is frequently confronted with the situations that called forth her previous books for children, and with the questions that resulted in this book for the inquiring child. Now a resident of Omaha, Nebraska, Mrs. Kripke has frequently been heard on the lecture platform before synagogue, Zionist and other groups, and her scripts, published and unpublished, have been presented at numerous conferences and meetings.

ABOUT THE ARTIST
Born in Harkow, Russia, Bobri studied at the Harkow Art School, left Russia after the Revolution, began a long period of travel. Having been a set designer in Russia, he now did the décors and costumes for the Ballet Russe of Constantinople. In an abandoned Turkish mosque he made an important archeological discovery of a Byzantine mural. He became a skilled performer on the guitar during his stay with gypsies in the Crimea, and in later years in the United States founded the Society of the Classic Guitar and edits the Guitar Review. Once in America, Bobri moved quickly up to his place as a top notch advertising artist. He did the murals for the Habibi night club in New York, and other cafes. His work has appeared often in world annuals of advertising art.
D) Jewish Holy Days and Festivals


(3) *Chanuka Gelt Storybook* (New York: The Jonathan David Co., 1955). Illustrator: B. Hebard. During Hanukkah it is customary to play, sing, and “gamble.” The drayedel is inscribed has *Nes gadol hayah sham* (“a great miracle occurred there”—this refers to the Hanukkah miracle of a tiny vial of oil burning in the Temple for eight days after the Maccabees were able to defeat the Roman Syrians and to re‐establish Jewish rituals, see Books of Maccabees in the Apocrypha section of the Bible). In Ashkenaz (“German lands”) the inscription is read: N= Nimm (take all the pennies); Gib (give one penny); Halb (take half the pennies); and S=Setz It’s your turn. “… Best of all, there is place for relatives and friends to insert your Chanukah gelt (money) as a Chanukah gift.” [From the introduction]

(14) Eileen Bluestone Sherman, The Odd Potato: A Chanukah Story (Rockville: MD: Kar-Ben Copes, 1984. (Illustrator: Katherine Janus Kahn). The book tells the tale of an odd potato that is used to make latkes (potato pancakes), a traditional Hanukkah food from Eastern Europe. The
Rachel looked everywhere for the Chanukah menorah.

(19) Lily Edelman, *The Sukkah and the Big Wind* (United Synagogue, 1956), Illustrator: Leonard Kessler. One of the three pilgrimage festivals commemorating the wandering in the desert and the final harvest. Also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or the Festival of Ingathering. People eat their meals in a *sukkah* (hut) during this festival.

(11) Dorothy K. Kripke (pseudonym, Dorothy Karp), *Debbie in Dreamland: Her Holiday Adventures* (National Women’s League of the United Synagogue of America, 1960). Illustrator: Bill Giacalone. The illustration shows the main character, Debbie, in a *sukkah* (a booth or hut) that people build during the harvest festival of Sukkot. The text states: “So the *Sukkah* is to remind us of the way the Children of Israel lived when they wandered in the wilderness.” (P. 20)
(7) Hyman and Alice Chanover, *Pesah is Coming!* (United Synagogue of America, 1956). Illustrator: Leonard Kessler. Passover requires enormous preparations: cleaning the entire house and getting rid of Chametz ("leaven"); cooking the Passover meal. Passover is a holiday commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. The holiday also marks the beginning of the harvest season.

(17) Miriam Chaikin, *The Seventh Day: The Story of the Jewish Sabbath* (New York: Schocken, 1980). Woodcuts by David Frampton. The Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, is a day of rest and spiritual enrichment.
E) Jewish History


F) Jewish Literature

35) H.N. Bialik, *Hamelekh Shlomoh umalkat Sheva* [King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba] (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1927).

G) Story Books

(26) Mel Silverman, *Hymie’s Fiddle* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960). Illustrated by the author. This is the story of Hymie, a Jewish boy in New York City, who wants to become a violinist.
H) Hebrew

I) **Yiddish**

(24) Yankev Levin, *Der Anfenger* (The Beginner) (New York: Hebrew Publishing, 1925. Stories in Yiddish, the major language of East European Jews. The pictures illustrate a story entitled “The mouse who is trying to find a mate.” There are illustrations relating to Jewish life, e.g., children in a Jewish summer camp and a strike in the garment district.