

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fiction

Rachel Kamin, Director, Temple Israel Libraries & Media Center  
248/661-5700 • rkamin@temple-israel.org

**Atkinson, Chryssa. *Lindsey*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company 2001.**

Ten-year-old Lindsey is continually getting into trouble despite her well-meaning, impulsive efforts to rescue a classmate from bullies, cheer up her depressed uncle, help with her brother's upcoming Bar Mitzvah, brighten up her neighborhood, and spark a romance between two teachers.

**Avrech, Robert J. *The Hebrew Kid and the Apache Maiden*. Los Angeles: Seraphic Press, 2005.**

In the years following the Civil War, twelve year old Ariel Isaacson and his family are kicked out of their Arizona town by an anti-Semitic mayor and townspeople. They are forced to embark on a difficult and dangerous journey through the unsettled Arizona territory where they hope to connect with a Jewish community and celebrate Ariel's Bar Mitzvah.

**Bush, Lawrence. *Emma Ansky-Levine and Her Mitzvah Machine*. Illus. Iskowitz, Joel. New York: UAHC Press, 1991.**

For her twelfth birthday, Emma receives a special Mitzvah Machine, helping her discover her Jewish identity and the true meaning of becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

**Cohen, Barbara. *King of the Seventh Grade*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1982.**

Thirteen-year-old Vic hates Hebrew school and is indifferent to his upcoming Bar Mitzvah, until he is suddenly disallowed from participating in either.

**Curtis, Sandra R. *Gabriel's Ark*. Los Angeles: Alef Design Group, 1998.**

Because thirteen-year-old Gabe is mentally disabled and has special needs, his rabbi and family create an unconventional Bar Mitzvah for him, one centered around the story of Noah's ark.

**Elsant, Dr. Martin. *Bar Mitzvah Lessons*. Los Angeles: Alef Design Group, 1993.**

David's fear over his approaching Bar Mitzvah causes him to alienate five Rabbis who try to help him, but something surprising happens when he is placed in the hands of the eccentric former teacher Reuven Weiss.

**Goldreich, Gloria. *Season of Discovery*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1976.**

A young Jewish girl, in the year of her Bat Mitzvah, gains an understanding of herself and her people's past.

**Gould, Marilyn. *The Twelfth of June*. New York: Lippincott, 1986.**

Twelve-year-old Janis copes with her cerebral palsy and her changing feelings for her good friend Barney as he approaches his Bar Mitzvah.

**Kaufman, Stephen. *Does Anyone Here Know the Way to Thirteen?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.**

Despite the trials and tribulations that fill the eight months preceding his dreaded Bar Mitzvah, Myron learns a great deal about what it means to be a Jew.

**Mack, Tracy. *Birdland*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2003.**

Jazz, poetry, and film making in Greenwich Village are vivid counterpoints to the moving story of thirteen year old Jed, his parents, and their grief over the death of Jed's older brother. (A Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner)

**Martin, Ann M. *Abby's Lucky Thirteen*. Apple, 1996.**

Preparing for her Bat Mitzvah with her twin sister, Abby is falsely accused of cheating on a math test and suspended from school. (Baby-Sitter's Club #96)

**Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Turning Thirteen*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1988.**

Although initially afraid that she'll lose her best friend unless they prepare for their Bat Mitzvah together, Becky undergoes a change in her thinking that puts much more than her friendship in jeopardy.

**Provost, Gary. *Good If It Goes*. Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury Press, 1984.**

Twelve-year-old David, juggling the demands of Shrimp League basketball and preparations for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah, strives to please Kelly, his dream-girl classmate, as well as his ailing grandfather and traditional parents.

**Rahlens, Holly-Jane. *Prince William, Maximilian Minsky, and Me*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2005.**

In modern-day Berlin, thirteen-year-old Nelly Sue Edelmeister gains a greater understanding of herself and those around her as she develops her first crush, considers whether to go through with her Bat Mitzvah, and tries out for the basketball team. (A Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner)

**Satten, Sandra C. *In the Thirteenth Year*. Los Angeles: Alef Design Group, 1998.**

Every Bar Mitzvah boy feels a bit like an alien, but Isaac is afraid he might be turning into one!

**Shalant, Phyllis. *Shalom, Geneva Peace*. New York: Dutton, 1992.**

Thirteen-year-old Andi's life is changed when she befriends the glamorous, uninhibited Geneva Peace and her Hebrew school is taken over by a handsome rabbinic intern.

**Wolff, Ferida. *Pink Slippers, Bat Mitzvah Blues*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.**

Thirteen-year-old Alyssa tries to balance the conflicting demands of ballet training with finding her place as a Jew in today's world.

## OTHER RESOURCES:

Feinstein, Edward. *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building A Jewish Life*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.

A Conservative rabbi tackles ultimate issues matter-of-factly, setting Jewish commitment within a larger frame of spiritual development.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. *Bat Mitzvah: A Jewish Girl's Coming of Age*. Illus. Erika Weihs. New York: Viking, 1995.

A history and description of the Bat Mitzvah, the ceremony in which a Jewish girl marks her transition to adulthood.

Kimmel, Eric A. *Bar Mitzvah: A Jewish Boy's Coming of Age*. Illus. Erika Weihs. New York : Viking, 1995.

Provides historical background, explanations of ceremonial objects and rituals, and real-life Bar Mitzvah stories.

Salkin, Jeffrey K. *For Kids--Putting God on Your Guest List: How to Claim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.

A guide to preparing for the Bar or Bat mitzvah, discussing the history and significance of this rite of passage and putting it in perspective with the core spiritual values of Judaism. See also: *Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah* for parents.

Tabick, Larry. *Growing Into Your Soul: A Celebration of Jewish Life for Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. Irvington, NY: Hylas Publishing, 2005.

This thoughtful collection of poetry and inspirational reflections focuses on this important stage of a young Jewish person's life. Beautifully illustrated with classic works of art, it covers the main holy days of the calendar, looks at the cycle of life from birth to death, and includes ruminations on the most important values and virtues of Judaism.