



Baseball and Jews: A Bibliography



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FOR YOUNGER READERS:

Chapman, Fern Schumer. *Is It Night of Day?* (Farrar Straus Giroux (Macmillan), 2010; ISBN: 978-0374177447). Based on the author's mother's experiences, this is an honest and moving account of a 12-year-old girl who escapes Nazi Germany to a lonely and challenging existence on Chicago's South Side. Edith is inspired by Hank Greenberg. (Grades 5-8)

Hamill, Pete. *Snow in August*. (Grand Central Publishing, 1999; ISBN: 978-0446675253). This is the story of the unlikely friendship between an Irish Catholic boy and a rabbi who recently emigrated from Prague. Interlaced with Hamill's realistic descriptions of violence and fear are scenes of remarkable poignancy: the rabbi's first baseball game, where he sees Jackie Robinson play for the Dodgers; Michael's introduction into the mystical world of the Cabbala and the book's miraculous ending. Hamill is not a lyrical writer, but he is a heartfelt one, and this story of courage in the face of great odds is one of his best. – *Amazon.com* (Grades 9 and up)

Konigsburg, E.L. *About the B'nai Bagels*. (Atheneum, 1971; ISBN: 978-0689206313). Mark Setzer has a lot on his mind. He's worried about his upcoming bar mitzvah, and he misses his best friend, who's moved to the rich side of town and started hanging out with the obnoxious kid they used to make fun of. Mark doesn't need the aggravation of his mother signing on to manage his Little League team. But if "Mother Bagel" complicates Mark's life, she's great for the team. Suddenly, they're winning games and headed toward the championship. The problem is, Mark has some information that could change everything, and he doesn't know what to do with it. He's a friend, a teammate, and the manager's son -- can he be all these and still be true to himself? (Grades 5-8) (Many other editions available)

Matas, Carol. *Rosie in Chicago: Play Ball!* (Simon & Schuster, 2003; ISBN: 9780689857157). In this sequel to *Rosie in New York City*, Matas's spunky heroine has moved with her family from New York to Chicago, though the Chicago setting plays little role in the story: the events of the entire novel take place during the nine innings of a single back lot baseball game, in which Rosie, disguised as a boy, helps out her brother's struggling team by playing right field. The story is enriched by Coach Kobrinsky's constant spouting of Talmudic wisdom: "Which is the better teacher, success or failure?" Or, "You have to do what is right. The rest will follow as it will." – *Children's Literature* (Grades 3-6)

McDonough, Yona Zeldis. ***Hammerin' Hank: The Life of Hank Greenberg***. Illustrated by Malcah Zeldis. (Walker Books for Young Readers, 2006; ISBN: 0802789978). Despite parental opposition, physical awkwardness, and anti-Semitism, Hank Greenberg worked hard and demonstrated strength of character as he blazed an incredible career in baseball in the 1930s and 1940s. The book is beautifully illustrated with colorful folk art, and it includes Hank Greenberg's vital statistics, a chronology and a glossary. (Grades 2-5)

Michelson, Richard. ***Lipman Pike: American's First Home Run King***. Illustrated by Zachary Pullen. (Sleeping Bear Press, 2011; ISBN: 978-1585364657). Lipman Pike's father, a Dutch immigrant, runs a small haberdashery in Brooklyn, New York, though Lip is more interested in watching the ball players than working behind the counter. His mother doesn't approve—Jewish boys should be paying attention to more sensible matters. But when Lip is barely a teenager, he's invited to join the Nationals Junior Club and play first base. When he hits his first pitch over the right fielder's head, Lip knows baseball is the sport for him. Michelson chronicles the meteoric rise of one of baseball's earliest (and unsung) champions. (Grades 1-4)

Portnoy, Mindy A. ***Matzah Ball***. Illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn. (Kar-Ben, 1994; ISBN: 978-0929371696). Aaron must bring a bag lunch to the baseball game during Passover, but while his friends are off at the concession stand, something wonderful happens. (Grades K-3)

Rinn, Miriam. ***The Saturday Secret***. (Alef Design Group, 1999; ISBN: 978-1881283263). Jason hates the restrictions his devout stepfather, David, imposes on the family. Why can't he play on the baseball team on Saturday afternoons? (Jason lies about where he is and secretly joins the game.) Of course, part of the family tension is not about religion but about a son's grief for his dead father and resentment of the replacement. Jason's reluctant bond with David grows. The ending, when David shows and tells of his love for Jason, is a tearjerker and makes us know that "following the rules in the Torah is not a substitute for doing the right thing." – *Booklist* (Grades 4-7)

Robinson, Sharon. ***Jackie's Gift: a True Story of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Jackie Robinson***. Illustrated by E.B. Lewis. (Viking, 2010; ISBN: 978-0670011629). When Jackie Robinson and his family moved onto Tilden Avenue in Brooklyn, many of the neighbors were not pleased to have blacks living on their block. Steve Satlow was thrilled, It was 1948, and he was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. As the December holidays approach, Steve helps the Robinsons decorate their huge Christmas tree. Jackie asks Steve about his family's tree, and Steve tells him that they don't have one. Wanting to repay the kindness of his neighbors, Jackie brings one to the house, not realizing that the Satlows don't celebrate Christmas. Based on a faux pas by the author's father, the book demonstrates the melting pot that is America, with an African-American author and artist creating a book about Jackie Robinson with Jewish content. (Grades 1-4)

Schnur, Steven. ***The Koufax Dilemma***. (iUniverse, 2001; ISBN: 978-0595199983). Left-handed pitcher Sandy Koufax is a baseball legend partly because of his blazing fastball and pinpoint accuracy and partly because he refused to pitch in a World Series game that was scheduled on Yom Kippur. In this involving sports story, fifth-grader Danny, too, is a left-handed pitcher with a good fastball, and he knows all about Koufax. But that doesn't help him with his dilemma when his team's opening game coincides with the first night of Passover. Danny's parents are divorced, and his mother insists that he attend a family Seder, which he strongly resists. In resolving the conflict, Danny relies less on Koufax's model than on the unusually understanding adults in his life. After

missing the game, the boy goes on to become a star pitcher who eventually helps his team win the league's championship game. – *School Library Journal* (Grades 4-6)

Schwartz, Ellen. ***Stealing Home***. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2006. 217 p. \$8.95. ISBN 0-88776-765-6. Nine-year-old Joey is a racially mixed orphan who is not accepted by his African-American peers or by some of the people in his grandfather's Jewish community in Brooklyn. Jackie Robinson's exploits on the baseball field and off inspire Bronx-born Joey to emulate the player's stoic attitude as well as root for the Dodgers. (Grades 3-6)

Sommer, Shelley. ***Hammerin' Hank Greenberg***. (Boyd's Mills Press, 2011; ISBN: 978-1590784525). This thought-provoking biography follows Greenberg from his service during WWII, his long career with the Detroit Tigers - where the nickname Hammerin' Hank came to life - and finally to his role as a baseball executive. Readers will experience the prejudice Greenberg endured, even as he made his way into the annals of baseball history: two-time AL MVP, 331 home runs, and first Jewish baseball player inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Archival photos add to the appeal of this amazing story. (Grades 8 and up)

Winter, Jonah. ***You Never Heard of Sandy Koufax?*** Illustrated by Andre Carillho. (Schwartz & Wade Books (Random House), 2009. ISBN: 978-0-375-83738-8). Koufax's rise from a Jewish boy in Brooklyn to one of the all-time greats of baseball as a Los Angeles Dodger is told through a narrator associated with the team. The conversational style is accessible to young readers and the excitement and respect builds through the narration. Koufax's story will hold the attention of non-baseball fans and non-Jews. The illustrations are magnificent—the contrast of colors and the motion of the players bring the story to life without overwhelming the text. Thank you for a glossary with baseball terms explained clearly enough for a non-fan to appreciate Koufax's statistics. (Grades 2-6)

Yavin, T.S. ***All-Star Season***. (Kar-Ben, 2007; ISBN: 978-1580132114). Reuven wants to be a starting pitcher and make the All-Star team, while Avi wants to catch. As the season progresses they make a great "battery" (pitcher and catcher), and their team wins the league. But Reuven is determined to learn how to throw a curveball, and he injures his arm in the process. He must sit out the last games of the season and watch as his brother makes the All-Star team. By the end of the book, Reuven is happy for Avi and the boys agree to help each other in school and on the field. (Grades 5-7)

FOR ADULTS:

Alpert, Rebecca T. ***Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball***. (Oxford University Press, 2011; ISBN: 978-0195399004). "Deftly written and meticulously researched, *Out of Left Field* offers a unique perspective on the economic and social negotiations between blacks and Jews in the first half of the 20th century, shedding new light on the intersection of race, religion, and sports in America." See also:

http://www.religiondispatches.org/books/culture/4927/of_jews_and_baseball%3A_a_reflection/.

Blomberg Ron, with Schlossberg, Dan. ***Designated Hebrew: The Ron Blomberg Story***. (Sports Publishing, 2006; ISBN: 978-1582619873). Ron Blomberg's story is more than a baseball tale, but also more than a religious tale. In addition to being the first designated hitter in the history of Major League Baseball - an accident of fate - he was also the first significant Jewish player for the New York Yankees.

Boxerman, Burton and Boxerman, Benita. ***Jews and Baseball***.

Volume I: Entering the American Mainstream, 1871-1948. (McFarland & Company, 2006; ISBN: 978-0786428281). Covered are the many players, from Pike to Greenberg, as well as the managers, owners, executives, writers, statisticians, manufacturers and others who helped forge a bond between baseball and an emerging Jewish culture in America. Key reasons for baseball's early appeal to Jews are examined, including cultural assimilation, rebellion against perceived Old World sensibilities, and intellectual and philosophical ties to existing Jewish traditions. The authors also clearly demonstrate how both Jews and baseball have benefited from their relationship.

Volume II: The Post-Greenberg Years. (McFarland & Company, 2010; ISBN: 978-0786433575). Jews continued to flourish in baseball--new stars like Al Rosen, Sandy Koufax and Shawn Green debuted, and off the field the era brought more Jewish owners, executives, sportswriters, broadcasters, and even a commissioner. This book further demonstrates how and why Jews and baseball have continued to grow together.

Cohen, David. ***Matzoh Balls and Baseballs***. (Havenhurst Books, 2010; ISBN: 978-0982285343). Sportscaster Cohen interviews 17 Jewish former baseball players about their lives on and off the field.

Gordon, James. ***Pray Ball! The Spiritual Insights of a Jewish Sports Fan***. (Gefen Publishing, 1999; ISBN: 978-9652292193). This unique and exciting book, written by a rabbi, delivers a moral, ethical, and spiritual message through the curious medium of professional sports.

Kurlansky, Mark. ***Hank Greenberg: The Hero Who Didn't Want to Be One*** (Jewish Lives). (Yale University Press, 2011; ISBN: 978-0300136609). "This account of Greenberg's life is thorough, insightful and well-written. It achieves distinction by describing his character and career, setting them against the background of a turbulent era in Jewish history."—Morton Teicher, *Jewish Journal*
Kathe Pinchuck 8/11/2011

Leavy, Jane. **Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy**. (Harper, 2002; ISBN: 978-0060195335). Koufax refused to participate in the project, so Leavy has spoken to hundreds of people with something to share on the former Brooklyn/L.A. Dodger Hank Aaron, Joe Torre, childhood friend and Mets co-owner Fred Wilpon and even the old Dodgers equipment manager among them and their testimonies make for a rich baseball pastiche and an engaging look at the game's more innocent period.- *Library Journal* (also available in paperback)

Leavy, Jane. **Squeeze Play**. (Doubleday, 1990; ISBN: 978-0385263009). A semi-autobiographical and hilarious debut about a female sportswriter's tribulations covering an expansion baseball team's first A. B. Berkowitz's troubles begin with a fundamental crisis ("alone with a locker room full of naked men I did not know") and get rapidly worse. The team is horrible, and while its corrupt televangelist owner soon forbids the players to talk to A.B., they continue to attempt to gross her out at every opportunity. Her editor demands headlines, no matter at whose cost, her boyfriend finds solace in the arms of a young copy aide, and her best source on the team--an aging All-Star catcher--is becoming romantically interested. This tale by a former sportswriter for the Washington Post will delight readers willing to accept a healthy dose of vulgarity with their humor, especially those who know and love the rhythms and complexities of the national pastime. - *Publishers Weekly* (also available in paperback)

Megdal, Howard. **The Baseball Talmud: The Definitive Position-by-Position Ranking of Baseball's Chosen Players**. (Harper, 2009; ISBN: 978-0061558436). "Howard Megdal's witty and informative book gives the definitive rabbinic commentary on the 160—Who knew?—Jews who played in the Major Leagues. These guys could pitch, field and hit. Plus, they loved their mothers." (L. Jon Wertheim, Senior Writer, Sports Illustrated and author of *Running the Table* and *Blood in the Cage*)

Smith, Mitchell, Ph.D. **Baseballs, Basketballs and Matzah Balls: What Sports Can Teach Us About the Jewish Holidays...and Vice Versa**. (Author House, 2009; ISBN: 978-1438917429) Among the chapters: Remembering Simpler Times: What central message of Sukkot is enthusiastically espoused by winning college coaches? Kindling the Light of Confidence: What Hanukkah teaches us about the kind of confidence that builds champions? A Purim Perspective on Competitive Anger: Why so many athletes lose their cool, just like the villainous Haman did, becoming their own worst enemies? Coach K and the Meaning of Passover: How Mike Krzyzewski's success explains the Exodus?"

DVDs:

The Chosen. DVD – 2003; VHS – 1982. Directed by Jeremy Kagan. Color.108 minutes. Why is this included? Because the protagonists' friendship develops as a result of a baseball injury.

Jews and Baseball: An American Love Story. 2011. Directed by Peter Miller. Color DVD, NTSC; 91 minutes. This documentary traces the Jewish involvement in the history of the sport from the game's earliest days, through the tumultuous war years to today's All-Star games. By analyzing various stages in this history, including how the legendary Sandy Koufax pioneered rights for players and Hank Greenberg's support of Jackie Robinson, the film demonstrates how Jews shaped baseball, and baseball shaped them. The film includes interviews with former player Al Rosen, sports historian Maury Allen, celebrity enthusiasts Larry King and Ron Howard, and all-stars Shawn Green and Kevin Youkilis, as well as a rare interview with baseball legend Sandy Koufax.
<http://jewsandbaseball.com/>.

The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg. 2000. Color DVD, NTSC; 90 minutes. Documentary by Aviva Kempner. As baseball's first Jewish star, Hammerin' Hank Greenberg's career contains all the makings of a true American success story. An extraordinary ball player notorious for his hours of daily practice, Greenberg's career was an inspiration to all and captured the headlines and the admiration of sportswriters and fans alike. This is the story of how he became an American hero.

Websites:

Center for Sport and Jewish Life - <http://jewishsport.org/> - The Center for Sport and Jewish Life is an independent initiative whose mission is to strengthen Jewish identity and Jewish community bonds by bringing to light the common journey and values found in sport and in Judaism. Of particular focus are *Ahavat Torah* (an affinity for Jewish learning/living) and *Ahavat Israel* (loyalty to the Jewish people).

Jews in Baseball – exactly what it sound likes (blog) - <http://jewsinbaseball.blogspot.com/>

Jewish Baseball News - <http://www.jewishbaseballnews.com/> - Jewish Baseball News tracks the performance of the 60+ Jews currently playing.

Jewish Baseball Players - http://www.baseball-almanac.com/legendary/Jewish_baseball_players.shtml - Baseball Almanac is attempting to honor the role of the Jewish baseball player by preserving their heritage here on this page.