A Selected Bibliography of Grandparents in Jewish Children’s Literature* for Younger Readers

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A young girl, named for the grandfather she never knew, has many questions about him and where he is. Her mother uses pictures and verbal memories about him but the girl still has many questions. The author tries to answer them sensitively. Jewish customs relating to death are also included. The book is illustrated with watercolor drawings showing the mother holding her daughter close.


A grandfather prepares a sukkah on the roof of his apartment building over the protests of his disagreeable landlord. He celebrates the first days of Sukkot there with his five grandchildren but is then taken to court by his landlord. A wise judge settles the case. The grandfather always has his head covered (cap, kippah, or hat). On Yom Tov (holiday) he wears a bowler hat, a suit and a tie.


A grandfather who is a Holocaust survivor briefly explains the tattooed number on his arm to his seven-year-old granddaughter. His words provide a concise, clear and sad introduction to the Holocaust that blends the need to remember with the need to continue to live on. The black and white photographs evoke a feeling of love and understanding between the two. The grandfather is casually dressed, wearing a jacket but no tie or kippah.

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Mark learns about his grandfather’s love for his own grandfather, Avrum, when he receives a precious gift, a special **shofar**, handed down through the generations. An afterword with instructions for **shofar** blowing is included, as well as a glossary of the Yiddish and Hebrew terms used. The illustrations show the evolution of dress and customs from Eastern European **shtetel** life to life in the United States. Their colors and detail add to the beauty of the story. The great-grandfather has a long white beard and cap, while the modern white-haired grandfather wears a **kippah**, jacket and tie.


Rebecca loves visiting her grandma and listening to the stories she tells, but she is embarrassed by her grandma’s use of Yiddish in public. Rebecca is humiliated until Grandma shares a similar experience she once had as a little girl when she felt embarrassed by her immigrant father. The warmly expressive pictures capture the close relationship between a young child and her grandmother.


Grandpa Nick and his granddaughter share a loving relationship in spite of the fact that Rachel is Jewish and Grandpa Nick is Christian. Trying to explain these differences, Grandpa Nick retells the biblical story of Moses’ son Gershon and his Midianite grandfather, Jethro, as a model of a loving relationship between a grandparent and grandchild of different faiths. The soft watercolor illustrations display a loving relationship between the grandparents and their grandchild. The characters hug and smile together, enjoying sharing games and secrets. Grandpa Nick has flowing white hair; Papa Jethro wears a turban, has white hair, and a long white beard.


Told from the perspective of Eber, one of Noah’s grandchildren, this charming tale recounts a young child’s fear of a storm and his grandparents seeming annoyance with him. Noah is a white haired and bearded man. Eber looks happy and secure once in his grandparents’ bed.

Benny’s grandfather is a baker who bakes great bagels. Benny wants to thank God for the bagels, so he puts a dozen bagels in the aron kodesh (holy ark) and waits for Him to answer. Benny’s bagels are eaten by a poor man and Benny’s wise grandfather teaches him that by helping others Benny was indeed thanking God. Benny’s grandfather has grey hair and a beard. The cartoon-like illustrations show Benny’s sincerity and the last page shows the two walking off, looking up at the heavens.


In this book little Mollie learns about the holiday of Hanukkah while making potato latkes - each ingredient represents a different aspect of the holiday. Grandma knows how to cook and knows Jewish history. She teaches her granddaughter as her grandmother taught her. The book also includes a recipe for Grandma’s potato latkes. The Grandma wears an apron and has grey hair pulled back in a bun. She is a round woman drawn in soft woodcuts; the book is printed on Japanese rice paper and painted with watercolors.


This is one of a series of six adventure books of a Mary Poppins-type figure who appears to teach traditional Jewish values. She isn’t really a savta (grandmother in Hebrew) but the title suggests a wise and sometimes wacky personality. She participates in a number of adventures with children in an Orthodox milieu. There is a glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish words used. Savta Simcha is colorfully drawn as a tall, skinny woman with dimples, a floppy pink hat, an umbrella and an enormous black bag.

A granddaughter discovers that many items in her grandmother’s apartment are reference points for a good story. Her grandmother is reminded of traditional folk tales as she and her granddaughter spend time together preparing for Shabbat and holidays. The grandmother wears an apron when they spend time in the kitchen and a dress for sharing tea on the sofa. There are also some illustrations of holiday foods.


Joseph’s grandfather is a tailor and creates a very special baby blanket for Joseph. When it gets worn he uses the remaining material to make Joseph a coat. His grandfather uses the material for additional gifts as the material gets more and more tattered. Joseph learns the value of his grandfather’s love through these gifts and has a clever idea of how to preserve them. Set in a shtetel, the illustrations show a loving white-bearded grandfather.


Isaac and Ellie have two very modern grandmothers (who play golf and tennis). What is emphasized in the book are both their similarities and their differences - as one grandmother is Jewish and one is Christian. The book simplifies the issue, comparing their religious differences to the fact that the grandmothers play different sports or live in different states. Each grandmother shares her holiday celebrations with her grandchildren. Both dress in modern clothes. Above all, the book stresses the fact that both grandmothers love their grandchildren very much.


Using rhyme and cumulative verse, a child and his grandfather plant a tree for the holiday of *Tu B’Shevat*. The story ends years later when the little boy, now a grandfather, plants a seed with a grandchild of his own (a granddaughter). It also includes “10 Great Ways to Celebrate *Tu B’Shevat*,” as well as a short introduction to the holiday. The bright color illustrations depict a warm season for planting (possibly in Israel) where tree planting is possible on *Tu B’Shevat*. 
Nathan goes shopping to purchase a Hanukkah menorah of his own but when his grandfather takes him shopping, everything is too expensive. His grandfather explains what it is to bargain and explains the time when peddlers sold things from carts and bargaining was expected. The expanded edition includes notes explaining the origins and traditions of lighting the Hanukkah menorah. The two-page spreads are painted in winter tones with splashes of color. Nathan is drawn as wide-eyed and the grandfather and shopkeeper exude the wisdom of their years.

Julie’s grandparents tell her how and why they came to America and about their early life here. Her grandfather’s memories are wildly imaginative and are contradicted by Grandma’s no-nonsense recollections. The exciting color illustrations are mixed media and upgrade the black and white drawings of the earlier edition.

Abby and her family move to Israel but Abby shares many of her new experiences with Grandma by phone, writing letters, using email and sending pictures via the computer. Grandma and Abby share a special relationship across the distance from America to Israel. This technologically savvy Grandma can use the computer to “visit” with her family in Israel. The book includes an explanation of and sources for “making aliyah” as well as the importance of rain in Israel. Grandma has a grey bob haircut and a positive attitude. She is often pictured smiling. She and her granddaughter miss one another and brightly colored illustrations convey a loving and joyful relationship.

Nana’s home is the center of the weekly family Friday night Shabbat celebration. Her granddaughter, Jennie, learns how to prepare for the Shabbat while spending a day with her. Nana shares each step patiently with her impatient granddaughter and they share a loving relationship. Nana is dressed modestly with her hair pulled back in a bun. The clothing styles suggest that the story takes place in the early 20th century. All the men wear kippot and several have short beards. The watercolor illustrations are detailed, with balanced, bright colors. The PJ Library (http://www.pjlibrary.org/) edition offers ideas for including young children in preparing for Shabbat.


Jessie and her grandmother live in a small village in Eastern Europe. Her grandmother insists that Jessie learn to read and to write and to sew. Then Jessie travels to America alone but saves her money from sewing lace clothing to buy a ticket for her grandmother. The story of immigration and assimilation is enhanced by the highly emotional and touching illustrations. The faces of the main characters tell a story of hope, courage, and love.


Two grandmothers argue over whose latke recipe is better. With the help of an itinerant peddler the problem is cleverly solved. Grandma Yetta and Grandma Sophie wear long skirts and lace-up boots; one has a scarf around her shoulders and the other a kerchief on her head. Both wear aprons and end up happily knitting by the stove.


Jacob, Shira and their Zayde each try to buy honey for Bubbe’s *Shabbos kugel*. But a bear steals their honey. Bubbe then goes to buy honey herself and invites the bear for Shabbos dinner. The illustrations are bright and colorful, however, the bear, is very large, has big white teeth, and might frighten young readers. Bubbe is a great cook, wears an apron, and her hair is in a bun. A recipe for Bubbe’s *Shabbos kugel* is included.

Dealing with Alzheimer’s disease is difficult for adult family members but even more so for children. In this book a little girl begins to notice the signs of the disease as her grandmother’s Shabbat soup begins to taste very different when the family goes to the grandparents’ home for Shabbat dinner. The black and white illustrations relay the sadness of the situation. The grandfather has a short white beard and walks with a cane. The grandmother was the chief cook, wears a modest dress and apron, and looks fine though the story describes her illness.


In this book, relatives come to the children’s home for the seder. This story presents an extended family that includes two grandmothers and two grandfathers. One grandpa leads the seder and the grandmothers serve chicken soup and matzah balls. The book includes a brief summary of the story of the holiday and has colorful upbeat illustrations.


This workbook guides children from the immediacy of shiva through the entire year of mourning. It combines sensitive, down-to-earth guided exercises with places to write, draw, list, and express feelings. It includes a glossary of customs and practices.


Grandpa runs a hotel (that is not profitable) in the mountains for the family - all the grandchildren love to spend their summers there. The illustrations present a happy extended family. Grandpa has a long white beard and wears a kippah and grandma wears a modest dress. The rest of the family do not wear anything specifically Jewish.

There are two grandfathers in this story. The first grandfather is Adam’s grandfather, who lives in Czarist Russia. He recounts that the name Adam has been in the family for generations and gives Adam his prayer shawl. Grandson Adam then comes to America and has children and grandchildren of his own. The second grandfather Adam also shares the family traditions. He imparts the name Adam and the prayer shawl to his grandson, linking the generations. They create the feelings of hope and optimism in the new land. Both grandfathers value, take pride in, and love their Jewish traditions.


In the Russian *shtetel* Great-Grandma Anna and her Quilting Bee friends create a quilt from hand-me-downs that is used in life-cycle and family events from one generation to another. Her great-granddaughter Patricia tells the story of the quilt and its many uses. The great-grandmother and the *shtetel* women are dressed in long dresses and *babushkas* (kerchiefs). In the United States Great-Grandma Anna also wears an apron and shawl. Simple black and white illustrations make the brightly colored quilt stand out.


Through this tender evocation of a young girl’s memories of her grandmother, the young reader is introduced to the child’s feelings of loss when her grandmother dies. She remembers walks in the park, storytelling, and Shabbat candle lighting. The sensitive black and white photographs bring to life the deeply loving relationship between the two. The photos show hugging, holding hands, and the sadness of the child mourning her grandmother.


Rivka wants to celebrate Thanksgiving but her immigrant parents and Bubbe are not sure what to do. Bubbe urges Rivka to follow the custom of asking the wise rabbi to decide a difficult problem and he says no to Thanksgiving. Rivka writes to the rabbinical court and relates, in moving words, why Jews have special reasons to be thankful and should therefore celebrate Thanksgiving. And the court agrees with Rivka! The soft watercolor illustrations of the 20th century Lower East Side depict Rivka and her grandmother in a loving respectful relationship despite their differing views.

Zissie’s *Zaydeh* (grandfather) “didn’t like children and all of her cousins were afraid of him.” Zissie lived in the Yiddish milieu of the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the 1930’s and the story takes place in the Eldridge Street Synagogue during *Simchas Torah*. Zissie does not have a strong Jewish background and is unfamiliar with the holiday and its customs. It is her *Zaydeh* who brings her into the celebration, both dispelling her fear of him and sharing his joy at the holiday. Though the grandfather in this story does not have patience for young children, his love of Jewish tradition and his joy of dancing at *Simchas Torah* bring out the best in him. As his personality develops, his demeanor becomes more lively. The many Yiddish terms used in the book are explained by a glossary in the back and two Jewish women’s traditional cake recipes are included: Bubbah Sheynel’s Jewish apple cake and Tante Golda’s apricot jam cookies. The color illustrations portray the grandfather wearing a suit, sporting a short grey beard and being somewhat stern. The illustrations reflect his pride in his granddaughter and joy in dancing with the *Torah*. Tiny Bubbah Ruchel wears a house dress.


This upside–down flip book includes two rhyming stories of wonderful Jewish grandmothers and grandfathers in one volume. It includes the most common terms for Jewish grandparents: *saba, savta, bubbey, nanny, granny, zaydeh* and *pop*, as well as grandma and grandpa. A glossary is included. The large color illustrations show caring and loving animals in the grandparent roles as the book goes through the calendar year.


The story takes place in an Eastern European *shtetel* at the end of the 19th or the early 20th century. Buba Leah was a great aunt who “was as old as a grandmother” and her grand-niece, Chava, narrates the story. Buba Leah’s role in the family was that “she described the special holidays or explained Jewish history.” She baked the challah for *Shabbat* and always missed her “paper children” in America. Buba Leah conveys the bittersweet feelings of a mother whose children have immigrated to a far-away land. The letters she
receives are precious and are her “paper children.” The full-color illustrations convey a warmth and tenderness between the generations. Buba Leah is dressed in traditional peasant garb, with grey hair braided away from her face, wearing a shawl and babushka. The black and white drawings of the grandfather and the shtetel become full color as we move to America. The men of the older generation wear caps and kippot in synagogue, and the grandfather has a long white beard. The modern generation grandfather has a short white beard and he and his grandson wear bright blue kippot in most of the drawings.


Rosie does not remember her Grandpa Reuben but her Grandma wears her clothes inside-out to help her remember him and the way things were in the past. The inside-out clothes also help her remember to buy enough oil to fry the potato latkes for Hanukkah for the whole large family. Jolly, round-shaped Grandma wears a white apron and she and the family members are drawn brightly and joyfully.


Bubby and Zaide are two of the role models mentioned in this book. They are singled out as examples of people who are fair and honest and who perform mitzvot (commandments). The bubbys hair covered with a kerchief and wears an apron as she kneads the challah. Zaide wears a butcher’s apron and kippah and has a beard.


Isaiah loves his grandparents and misses his grandfather who recently died. He wants to find out where heaven is and his Grandma tries to help him. She patiently shows him the places where his grandfather volunteered and teaches him that God and heaven are often in the places you’d least expect, but especially are in our hearts. The illustrations are large brightly colored watercolors. The grandmother has strawberry blond hair, wears glasses, walks with a cane, and is dressed in contemporary clothes. Several illustrations show her with Isaiah in close conversation, being together in a loving relationship.

Grandma and Grandpa are the first of the relatives to arrive for the seder. They come for a sleepover visit, bringing their suitcases. They help with the seder preparations. Grandma checks on the chicken soup, and Grandpa leads the seder even though Uncle Harry, the magician, steals the attention of all. After the children find the missing matzoh, Grandpa gives each grandchild a beautiful book about Passover and the children give him the special matzoh to share with the whole family. The bright colorful illustrations bring to life the many relatives who attend the seder. Grandma wears an apron and works in the kitchen. Grandpa wears glasses and a suit, a tie, and a kippah.


This is a rhyming tale showing Bubbe and Zayde’s love for their granddaughter. The illustrations are joyful and colorful. The grandparents take their granddaughter on outings and adventures. The grandparents are dressed in modern clothes and the grandmother is pictured in one scene wearing pants. The CD has one song, **Bubbie’s Baby.** It is upbeat, and uses rhythmic melody to create a happy mood.


Grandma Karen loves to tell her grandson, Owen, family stories, especially at Hanukkah. She tells him one story for each night of Hanukkah. This modern, unconventional grandmother is dressed in tall boots and a cowgirl dress with a kerchief. She has grey hair and her latkes “usually tasted like fried cardboard.” The book includes a summary of the Hanukkah story, Hanukkah blessings, and a glossary. The colorful, cartoon-like illustrations are clever and add to the interest of each story.

A young girl and her grandmother attend a Reform Friday evening service. The understanding grandma knows how hard it is for a young child to participate and stay awake in the adult service so she tempts her granddaughter with thoughts of the cookies at the *Oneg Shabbat* (reception after services). The relationship between them is close as the granddaughter recalls the wonderful times they have shared together.

“... I'll always picture grandma and me sharing favorite things. I love going to temple with Grandma. It's sweeter than cookies.” The grandma has white hair and wears a small hat; she and her granddaughter wear nice outfits for the service. The soft watercolor illustrations convey their gentle and touching relationship.


This is a moving, poignant and detailed story for children about Jewish funeral and burial practice. It is accompanied by concise and meaningful explanations for parents for the most frequently asked questions asked by children, and answers to the most frequently asked questions by parents. A glossary is included. The illustrations are pencil drawings on a grey background. The faces of the characters show the sadness they feel.


*Bubbe* Isabella invites many animal guests to spend *Sukkot* with her but they are more interested in eating the *sukkah* than her lemon cake! *Bubbe* Isabella is depicted in soft colors, wears a dress, long apron and shawl, and her hair is combed back in a bun.

Pearl’s grandpa dies and she wonders how she will get along without him. But her grandma, mama, papa, relatives, and friends comfort her. The book includes a section on “Burial and Mourning Customs from Around the World.” Pearl and her family are drawn as sheep, but they are portrayed wearing regular people clothing. All of the detailed illustrations create a mood of love and tenderness. They are on opaline parchment in watercolor. Endpapers are handmade from the bark of a fig tree and pressed marigolds.


Bubbie and Zaydie are hosting the Passover seder. Bubbie is in charge of making the *charoses* - except other family members keep adding their own special ingredient to the recipe! And the *charoses* is atrocious! Bubbie is a busy homemaker who cleans house and cooks simultaneously. She wears an apron and enjoys her family’s company.