



In response to the tragedy at the synagogue in Pittsburgh and to rising anti-Semitism in the United States, the Association of Jewish Libraries offers this series of book lists for young readers. Books read in youth impact future outlooks, and it is our hope that meeting Jews on the page will inspire friendship when readers meet Jews in real life. This is the second in a series of book lists intended to provide children and their families with a greater understanding of the Jewish religion and its people.

List #2 features stories that take place in synagogues, that feature rabbis and other clergy, and that demonstrate a selection of Jewish rituals. Look for these titles in libraries, bookstores, and online.

Book List #2: Synagogues, Clergy & Jewish Ritual

PICTURE BOOKS

[The Bedtime Sh'ma](#) by Sarah Gershman, ages 3-6

This beautifully illustrated adaptation of a traditional good night blessing is a wonderful introduction to one of the oldest and most fundamental of Jewish prayers.

[Bubbe's Belated Bat Mitzvah](#) by Isabel Pinson, ages 4-8

When Naomi convinces her 95-year-old great-grandmother that it's not too late to participate in Jewish communal ritual by becoming a Bat Mitzvah, all the cousins pitch in to help Bubbe study with the rabbi and celebrate her big day at the synagogue. Based on a true story.

[Drop by Drop](#) by Jacqueline Jules, ages 5-8

Second-century sage Rabbi Akiva learned to read at the age of 40 with the encouragement of his wife, and went on to become a great scholar. This is an inspirational tale of perseverance and loyalty.

[In God's Hands](#) by Lawrence Kushner & Gary Schmidt, ages 5-8

The rich man's hands bake the bread and place them in the synagogue, and the poor man's hands receive the bread. But it's God's hands that created the connection between them. Based on a traditional folk tale.

[New Year at the Pier](#) by April Wayland, ages 5-8

Izzy's favorite part of Rosh Hashanah is Tashlich, a joyous ceremony in which people apologize for the mistakes they made in the previous year and thus clean the slate as the new year begins. The rabbi and cantor accompany their congregation outdoors to symbolically toss their sins into the water.

[How It's Made: Torah Scroll](#) by Allison Ofanansky, ages 6-9

More than 100 full-color photographs and interviews give a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at scribes, artists, and craftspeople who work with parchment and gallnut ink to hand-create Torah scrolls, Judaism's holiest text. The newest book in the series is [How It's Made: Hanukkah Menorah](#).

[What You Will See Inside a Synagogue](#) by Rabbi

Lawrence A. Hoffman & Dr. Ron Wolfson, ages 6-10

Full-page photos and informative descriptions explain what happens in a synagogue, the ritual objects used, and the roles played by clergy. This comprehensive primer makes understanding Judaism easy.

[Regina Persisted](#) by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, ages 8-12

In 1935, after years of hard work and struggle, Regina Jonas became the first woman ever ordained as a rabbi. Her story inspires us to pursue our dreams and to persist even in the face of great challenges.

CHAPTER BOOKS

[Wise and Not So Wise: Ten Tales from the Rabbis](#)

by Phillis Gershator, ages 7-11

These folktales use the teachings of ancient rabbinic sages to answer questions and teach moral lessons, using humor, wonder, and magic.

[All Three Stooges](#) by Erica S. Perl, ages 10-13

Middle schooler Noah deals with the suicide of a beloved adult, the estrangement of his best friend, and his upcoming bar mitzvah all at the same time. A kindly rabbi and supportive Hebrew School help him learn to cope in a genuine and even humorous way.

[Confessions of a Closet Catholic](#) by Sarah Darer Littman, ages 10-13

Justine's family gives her confusing messages about how to be Jewish, so she sets out on an exploration of Catholicism, Judaism, and the meaning of religion. When Bubbe (Grandma) has a stroke Justine worries that God is punishing her for breaking the rules, but frank discussions with a priest and a rabbi, as well as with Bubbe, finally set her on the road to finding her Jewish spiritual self.

[Tough Questions Jews Ask](#) by Rabbi Ed Feinstein, ages 11+

With insight and wisdom—and without pretending to have all the answers—Rabbi Feinstein encourages young people to make sense of the Jewish tradition by wrestling with what we don't understand. He respectfully and humorously tackles questions like "Why does God let bad things happen?" and "What is the meaning of life?"

[Playing with Matches](#) by Suri Rosen, ages 12-18

In this hip and funny Orthodox Jewish story, 16-year-old Raina accidentally gets swept into the secret role of matchmaker in her close-knit Toronto community. Readers will be vastly entertained while learning a lot about Jewish marriage traditions.

[Strange Relations](#) by Sonia Levitin, ages 12-18

Teenage Marne visits her uncle, a Chasidic rabbi. His Orthodox practices are foreign to Marne, who was raised in a more liberal Jewish tradition. As she settles into her new-found family's daily routine, she begins to think about spirituality, identity, and finding a place in the world in a way she never has before.



THE "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR" SERIES

The Love Your Neighbor series of book lists was created by the Association of Jewish Libraries to grow readers' understanding of the Jewish religion and its people.

The Association of Jewish Libraries, established in 1966, promotes Jewish literacy through enhancement of libraries and library resources and through leadership for the profession and practitioners of Judaica librarianship. The Association fosters access to information, learning, teaching and research relating to Jews, Judaism, the Jewish experience and Israel.

AJL is an affiliate of the American Theological Library Association, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the American Library Association.

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