

## BAIS YAAKOV MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Summer Reading List – Judaica Books – 2025

Aarons, Dassy. *Handle with Care*. When confident, popular Rina Meisels moves to Clover Hills, Massachusetts, in the middle of tenth grade, she knows it's not going to be easy. School is the last thing on her mind, and she's perfectly content to divide her time between playing mother to her younger siblings, trips to the hospital, and babysitting her neighbor's adorable kids. What she doesn't expect is to meet so many girls who truly seem to want to get to know her— but Rina isn't letting her guard down so fast. She is determined to maintain her cool, carefree façade at all costs. Things begin looking up when an unlikely friendship between her and a twelfth grader leads to her landing a huge role in the school production. But it all goes downhill fast, and when things hit rock bottom, Rina has no choice but to discover new reserves of strength inside of her.

Berendt, Meira. *Hidden Loyalties*. In a fictional world with multiple Czars each ruling over a different kingdom, mystery, suspicion, and intrigue fill the palace of Czar Arlavious. Why is Czar Dimitri so intent on his son gaining Czarevna Annalina's hand in marriage? Who is behind the sudden edict to expel the Jews of Atka? Is Luka a clone of his father, or does he have the backbone to make his own decisions, especially when his newly-formed friendship with Czarevitch Alik has shown him an entirely different—and so much better—way of rulership? And throughout all the drama, Devorah, a young orphan from the Jewish community who, through a series of unfortunate events, has been thrust into the role of the Czarevna's handmaiden, watches silently and wonders...Can she help out the Jews, in her position at the palace? Does she have what it takes to save the Jewish people of her town? Or will Dimitri's diabolical plans play out before she even has the chance?.

Berlin, Devorah. *Chasing Dreams*. Life is wonderful and predictable for Tehilla Steinhart — until one day she wakes up in a completely unfamiliar world. Everyone she's ever known has disappeared and the only thing familiar to her is her own face. After much searching and confusion, she comes to realize that there's something going on that is much more complicated than she could have ever imagined. Thrust into a situation that turned her life upside down, Tehilla is forced to confront herself and rediscover what she didn't even know was lost. Things will never be the same again. But maybe that's not so bad..

Braifolsky, Malky. *The Search is On*. Twelve-year-old twins Yochanan and Shifra are looking forward to an exciting trip to Eretz Yisrael with their grandparents. Little do they know that besides the many beautiful destinations on their planned tours, there are epic unplanned adventures waiting in the wings. Why is the dignified Italian doctor sitting next to them on the plane so eager to talk to them? How does an elderly woman in Bnei Brak have pictures of their great-aunt? And most importantly, will the twins solve the biggest mystery of all before it's time to return home?

Burstyn, Rochel. *Bundle of Joy*. Meet curious and adorable Pinchas Eliyahu. Of course, like all the other babies in the world, he keeps running into a slight problem: He has tons to say, but no one understands him. Except for his 11-year-old brother. Meet Yehuda, who has cochlear implants and hates being called cute. The new kid in his class doesn't seem to like him, his brother's science fair project might have been sabotaged, and their neighborhood is being plagued by a package thief! Join the Ledermans as they discover that their drooling little cutie patootie who can't even hold up his own head is actually much more brilliant than he seems. Enhanced by delightful comic strips, this story is a thought-provoking, fun, and relatable read.

Cohen, C.. *Guardians of the Flame*. Set in the rugged terrains of ancient Judea, this gripping historical fiction novel brings to life the confrontations between the Maccabim and the Greek forces of Antiochus. A revolt, under the dynamic leadership of Yehuda HaMaccabee, is taking shape. Despite overwhelming odds, a group of men rally to resist the merciless grip of Antiochus' ruthless henchmen. The stakes are high: the preservation of Jewish law, the sanctity of their land, and the very lives of every Jew in Judea—including their own. Amidst this turbulent backdrop arrives a nameless young man with a shadowy past. When he stops to heal a stranger, his fate becomes intertwined with the uprising. Reluctantly drawn into the fray, he must navigate the external darkness of war and the internal shadows of his history, all while grappling with a future where his survival is far from certain.

Gross, Sara Miriam. *Invisible Tribe*. A collection of stories that explore the tough, messy, and even funny situations that children who have lost a parent sometimes find themselves in... Moshe is going to a new summer camp where nobody knows what happened to his father. Should he tell? Three different relatives think they're hosting Temima's bas mitzvah. Little do they know that Temima is almost ready to cancel everything! Everyone his age is leaving shul and Shimshi is supposed to stay for Yizkor. Now what? "This should be on the bookshelf of every yeshivah, Bais Yaakov, and shul. It is a much-needed gift to our generation." —Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, Rav Khal Bais Yitzchok

Heller, Esty. *Power Tools*. Living with her large family in a squishy, stuffy basement for so many months, waiting for their new house to be completed, Lani is dismayed when construction grinds to a halt...on account of her very own

sister. Victim of her boss's intimidation and intolerable behavior, Riva is hurt to no end at the bullying her young daughter is experiencing...at the hands of her niece. Join the sisters as they tiptoe over the construction debris. Between funds that run dry, anniversary plans that turn cagey, breakfast packages that run late, and neighbors who scandalously overstep their boundaries, there's a lot of tricky navigating to do. In *Power Tools*, popular novelist Esty Heller weaves an intricate, suspenseful story about construction—of houses and homes; about bullying—of children and adults; and about relationships—in fiction and in real life.

Kagan, Adina. *Wavelengths*. Atara Halpern has been having nightmares, but they're the least of her worries right now. Her mother, diagnosed years ago with lupus, suffers a devastating stroke, and suddenly Atara's firm grip on her organized life begins slipping. Her father, consumed with work, just doesn't seem to get it; Chaviva, her best friend, is struggling with her own family issues; and chessed-project-obsessed Rochie Pearlstein can't seem to leave them alone. And then, when her closest brother, Yo, begins shidduchim, Atara is afraid she'll lose him forever. Though her circumstances have set her on an entirely different wavelength than that of her peers, Atara is determined to still keep things under control. However, when her defenses become battered by one storm after another, Atara begins to realize that control is the one thing she never had. If she's to survive these storms, that's something she must learn to accept. *Wavelengths* is a heartfelt, captivating, positive yet sad novel appropriate for mature readers who can handle that.

Katz, Esti. *The Travel Egg*. Nine-year-old Libby fries herself a sunny-side-up egg for dinner — and suddenly finds herself in a strange and totally mixed-up world. Maybe eating it was a big mistake. Eggs aren't supposed to be purple! In this new world there are adults with gold eyes, money that has six sides, and children with green hair and red skin. But the weirdest thing is that four of these children think Libby is their mommy! Where did the magic mirror disappear to? How can you find a travel egg? And when, oh when, will she ever get back home? Come along with Libby to a colorful world that will stretch your imagination. This exciting journey will remind kids that it's wonderful to be a child, and remind mothers that being a mommy is also a wonderful ride!

Krohn, Rav Kalman. *Stories Told By Rav Kalman Krohn* (volumes 1, 2, and 3). When Rav Kalman Krohn told a story, he had everybody spellbound. As his thousands of avid listeners can attest, this tremendous tzaddik and talmid chacham had the rare ability to weave true stories of yesteryear that kept adults and kids alike at the edge of their seats in suspense, while simultaneously inspiring their hearts and firing their souls. Rav Kalman's stories are saturated with *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos*, and Torah lessons. Many of the stories Rav Kalman related are not well-known, yet they are all sourced in *mesorah* and the *sefarim hakedoshim*. And they are all action-packed, full of heart-stopping twists and turns that may well cause readers to get the goosebumps! Sink yourself into these amazing true tales, and let their power - and that of Rav Kalman's own neshamah - capture and enrapture you.

Panski, Chaya Sara. *Everything Emunah*. For the first time in history, why didn't Korea vote against Israel in a UN vote? How did a sudden storm erupt to save a boy who held tight to his belief? How did an out-of-the-blue phone call change a whole family's summer? The answers are inside — as well as dozens of other fascinating stories. The tales are captivating, entertaining, and inspiring. Enter a world where Everything is viewed through the lens of Emunah.

Rosman, Bracha. *Crazy About Moo*. Mr. Moo, Liba's beloved stuffed cow, gets into the zaniest messes. Follow along as Liba, her brother Chaim, and Mr. Moo confront a swarm of angry sharks, search for a lost diamond ring, tame an explosive toddler, and more - anything but smooth sailing. Popular author Bracha Rosman has created a collection of upbeat, uproarious escapades that are sure to brighten your mood.

Samet, Rochel. *Shades of Normal*. When Mimi's atypical sister Kayla joins her class at the beginning of eleventh grade, Mimi is determined that no one guess the connection between the two of them. Kayla, on the other hand, is set on making friends in her new environment - and Mimi and her circle seem to be perfect candidates. With her tight-knit group of friends entangled in conflict, and academic expectations increasing as seminary applications near, Mimi has enough on her plate - without needing to protect her sister from the class queen or help her find her place in a social scene all-too-complex for Kayla to navigate. All Mimi ever wanted was to fit in. To be normal. What is normal, anyway? Does it really matter? And - how much will Mimi give up in order to achieve it?

Scharff, P. *Struggle to Survive*. Bentzy Milstein's long road to recovery overlaps with the rapid onset of dementia in his grandfather, Dr. Nossan Milstein, a beloved Beitar dentist. Meanwhile, in Iran, the commander of the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards, General Esmail Qaani, is working on an apocalyptic project that will "solve" Israel's ability to ever retaliate again. *Struggle to Survive* is a unique novel that blends a true, emunah-filled story with a multifaceted suspense plot. Other books by this author include *Mind Games* and *Pillars of Smoke*.

Tanenwald, Ruti. *Sisters of the Snow*. Annette and Caroline are best friends, and non-identical twins, or maybe they're just sisters— until one day they're not even that. Follow them as they unravel the past and struggle to build a future, despite the roiling secrets. Other books by this author include *Thanks to Her* and *Once a Bride*.

Summer Reading List – General Works -2025

Applegate, Katherine. *Odder*. Odder the otter spends her days off the coast of central California, practicing her underwater acrobatics and spinning quirky stories. She's a fearless daredevil, curious to a fault. But when Odder comes face-to-face with a hungry great white shark, her life takes a dramatic turn, one that will challenge everything she believes about herself—and about the humans who hope to save her. Inspired by the true story of a Monterey Bay Aquarium program that pairs orphaned otter pups with surrogate mothers, this poignant and funny tale told in free verse examines bravery and healing through the eyes of one of nature's most beloved and charming animals. Another good book by this author is *The One and Only Ivan*.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *A Little Princess*. Alone in a new country, wealthy Sara Crewe tries to settle in and make friends at boarding school. But when she learns that she'll never see her beloved father again, her life is turned upside down. Transformed from princess to pauper, she must swap dancing lessons and luxury for hard work and a room in the attic. After spending her life showered in love and affection, gifts, and riches, can Sara learn to survive in a place where everyone treats her like a servant? Another excellent classic by this author is *The Secret Garden*.

Fforde, Jasper. *The Last Dragonslayer*. In the good old days, magic was indispensable; it could both save a kingdom and clear a clogged drain. But now magic is fading. Drain cleaner is cheaper than a spell, and magic carpets have been reduced to pizza delivery. Fifteen-year-old founding Jennifer Strange runs Kazam Mystical Arts Management, an employment agency for magicians — but it's hard to stay in business when magic is drying up. Then the visions start, predicting the death of the world's last dragon at the hands of an unnamed Dragonslayer. If that's true, everything will change for Kazam — and for Jennifer. Because something is coming. Something known as... Big Magic.

Flanagan, John. *Ambush at Sorato*. This is the seventh book in the *Royal Ranger* series, which is a continuation of the *Ranger's Apprentice* series. Rangers Will and Maddie are in Toscana on a diplomatic mission when word comes of a cavalry force crossing the northern border and marauding through the countryside. At the behest of the emperor, the rangers head north to investigate. They discover that the invaders are a group of Temujai searching for a place to penetrate and invade. Will and Maddie must split up to gather forces and information in order to push the Temujai back once again. The rangers must step up and lead their allies to victory, despite the danger of one of their greatest enemies.

Forman, M. L. *Slathbog's Gold*. The first book in the *Adventurer's Wanted* series. No one but fifteen-year-old Alex Taylor seems to notice the small sign tucked into the corner of Mr. Clutter's bookshop window: Adventurers Wanted. Apply Within. Upon entering the shop, Alex is swept away to a faraway land filled with heroic warriors, mysterious elves, and hard-working dwarves. Alex becomes the eighth man in a band of adventurers seeking the lair of Slathbog the Red, an evil dragon with a legendary treasure. Along the way, Alex and his new friends must battle dangerous trolls and bandits, face undead wraiths, and seek the wisdom of the Oracle in her White Tower. Alex's adventure takes him to distant and exotic lands where he learns about courage, integrity, honor, and friendship. Other books in the series include *The Horn of Moran*, *Albrek's Tomb*, *Sands of Nezza*, and *The Axe of Sundering*.

Garland, Sherry. *The Silent Storm*. Thirteen-year-old Alyssa has not spoken since witnessing her parents' drowning during a hurricane. Three years later, another hurricane is heading toward the island, and Alyssa must come to terms with her parents' deaths to save her grandfather and brother. This book will have appeal for lovers of the outdoors as well as anyone who appreciates an exciting story.

MacHale, D.J. *Voyagers: Project Alpha*. This is the first book of a six-book sci-fi series where each book is written by a different author. A global competition is under way to determine which four kids will join a secret mission to save the world by finding a new, special power source. Project Alpha is a contest of physical challenges, mental puzzles, and strategic alliances. The battle is fierce. Who will lead the team? Who will pilot the most complicated space ship ever built? Who will be a friend? An enemy? And how will they survive over a year stuck on a space ship together? Other books in the series include *Game of flames*, *Omega rising*, *Infinity riders*, *Escape the vortex*, *The seventh element*.

Mahoney, Kristin. *Elfie Unperfect*. Elfie Oster was sure that Hampshire Academy was going to be the perfect school for her. She was sure about it right up to the minute she got expelled. On her first day. It was all a terrible misunderstanding, but until she can find a way to fix things, Elfie has to go back to Cottonwood Elementary for fifth grade. Where she's never really fit in. Or had friends. It is not a perfect situation. And then it gets worse. Her babysitter gets really sick, and her aunt and uncle aren't speaking. Sometimes when everything goes spectacularly wrong, you figure out what truly matters—and what doesn't. This terrible, horrible, surprisingly hilarious year may just be the best thing that's ever happened to Elfie.

Myklusch, Matt. *Order of the Majestic*. The first book in a trilogy. Twelve-year-old daydreamer Joey Kopecky meets a magician, Redondo the Magnificent, and makes a shocking discovery: magic is real, but sadly, there isn't much left in the world. It may be too late to save what little remains, but for the first time in his life Joey wants to try to do something big. Soon he's swept up into a centuries-old conflict between two rival societies of magicians - the Order of the Majestic, who fights to keep magic alive and free for all, and the dark magicians of the Invisible Hand, who hoard magic for their own evil ends. For Redondo and the Order to survive, Joey must inherit the lost legacy of Harry Houdini. Will he prove himself worthy, or will the Invisible Hand strike him down? The answer will depend on Joey's ability to believe, not just in magic, but in himself.

Ponti, James. *The Sherlock Society*. Siblings Alex and Zoe Sherlock take their last name as inspiration when choosing a summer job. After all, starting a detective agency has to be better than babysitting (boring), lawn mowing (sweaty), or cleaning out the attic (boring and sweaty). Their friends Lina, an avid bookworm, and Yadi, an aspiring cinematographer, join the enterprise, and Alex and Zoe's retired reporter grandfather offers up his aquamarine Cadillac convertible and storage unit full of cold cases. The group's first target is the long-lost treasure supposedly hidden near their hometown Miami. Their investigation into the local doings of famed gangster Al Capone leads them to a remote island in the middle of the Everglades where they find alarming evidence hinting at corporate corruption. Together with Grandpa's know-how and the kids' intelligence—plus some really slick gadgets—can the Sherlock Society root out the conspiracy?

Ponti, James. *City Spies*. The first book in a series where five kids from all over the world become real-life spies! Join the mission for mystery, action, and tons of laughs. Other books in the series include *Golden Gate*, *Forbidden City*, *City of the Dead*, *Mission Manhattan*, and *London Calling*.

Sands, Kevin. *Children of the Fox*. The first book in an exciting trilogy that includes *Seekers of the Fox* and *Champions of the Fox*. This magic-infused fantasy brings together a ragtag group of kids to pull off a crime so difficult, countless adults have already tried and failed. Lured by the promise of more money than they've ever dreamed of, five young criminals are hired to steal a heavily guarded treasure from the most powerful sorcerer in the city. There's Callan the con artist, Meriel the expert at acrobatics (and knives!), Gareth the researcher, Lachlan, who can obtain anything, and Foxtail, whose mysterious eyeless mask doesn't hinder her ability to climb walls like a spider. Though their shadowy backgrounds mean that they've never trusted anyone but themselves, the five must learn to rely on each other in order to get the job done. However, as Callan has been warned most of his life, it's best to stay away from magic. It can turn on you at any moment. Faced with these unsurmountable odds, can the friends pull off this legendary heist, or has their luck finally run out?

Townsend, Jessica. *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow*. Morrigan Crow is cursed. Having been born on Eventide, the unluckiest day for any child to be born, she's blamed for all local misfortunes, from hailstorms to heart attacks--and, worst of all, the curse means that Morrigan is doomed to die at midnight on her eleventh birthday. As Morrigan awaits her fate, a strange and remarkable man named Jupiter North appears. Chased by black-smoke hounds and shadowy hunters on horseback, he whisks her away into the safety of a secret, magical city called Nevermoor. It's then that Morrigan discovers Jupiter has chosen her to contend for a place in the city's most prestigious organization: the Wondrous Society. In order to join, she must compete in four difficult and dangerous trials against hundreds of other children, each with an extraordinary talent that sets them apart--an extraordinary talent that Morrigan insists she does not have. To stay in the safety of Nevermoor for good, Morrigan will need to find a way to pass the tests--or she'll have to leave the city to confront her deadly fate.

Valente, Dominique. *Starfell: Willow Moss & the Lost Day*. Willow Moss's small magic has always seemed unremarkable. But when the most feared witch in the land of Starfell appears on the Moss family's doorstep looking for help, it's not Willow's talented sisters she seeks, it's Willow. Because Willow is a finder of lost things—and Moreg Vaine says that last Tuesday has gone missing. Willow and Moreg set out on a perilous journey across the wilds of Starfell, looking for what they've lost. If they don't discover what happened to the missing day, the repercussions could be devastating for the entire kingdom. Can Willow find the day, to save the day? Other books in the *Starfell* series include *Willow Moss & the Forgotten Tale*, *Willow Moss & the Vanished Kingdom*, and *Willow Moss and the Magic Thief*.

Verne, Jules. *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Set off on a globe-trotting adventure with the meticulous Phileas Fogg as he embarks on a daring race against time to travel all the way around the world in just eighty days. With his loyal servant Passepartout, Fogg faces thrilling challenges and unexpected obstacles across diverse cultures and landscapes. This classic novel blends excitement, ingenuity and a spirit of exploration. First published in English in 1873 (!), *Around the World in Eighty Days* is still an excellent book for today's reader.