

BAIS YAAKOV MIDDLE SCHOOL

Summer Reading List – Judaica Books – 2026

Atkins, Rachel. *Crisis in the Country*. Fraidy, Perry, and Rina are excited to attend their first year at Shalom Junior High, a boarding school in the English countryside: inspiring shiurim, warm staff — and their secret midnight nosh fest and lighthearted pranks. But to their surprise, one student is bitter and distant from day one. What's behind her bad attitude? And Mr. Crocks, the school's grim-faced, grumpy old neighbor, blames the school for all his troubles. Why does he keep calling the police? In this upbeat novel, join the girls of Shalom Junior High as they catch a mysterious vandal, tackle stampeding cows, and cope with many more crises in the country.

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...

Burstyn, Rochel. *Made You Look*. Not everything is how it seems. That's what Yossi Katz realizes when the city's new toy store is in trouble, his suspicious neighbor can't get her story straight, and an absurd art craze overtakes the community. While trying to make sense of all the strange happenings, he stumbles across something that shakes the very essence of his identity. Will the carefully woven tapestry of his family's secrets unravel? This optical illusion of an adventure is a reminder that there's always more than meets the eye.

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.

Cohen, Dina et al. *Smart Cookie: A Girl's Guide to Food*. "What does it mean to 'eat healthy'? Is it the same as going on a diet?" "What can I do if I'm unhappy with my size?" Access to food has never been so easy, yet eating well has never been so complicated. As a girl or teen, you've probably felt confused about how and what to eat. Smart Cookie, written by three dietitians, will help you successfully care for your body and mind. "Sometimes I feel like eating even when my stomach isn't hungry. Why is that?" "Where does exercise fit in?" By the time you're finished reading this book, you'll feel confident about how to eat well and know what to do if you're ever feeling down about your body. You'll learn how to be smart about food and become healthy from the inside out.

Emanuel, Zahava, with Rabbi Shraga Freedman. *Talk of the Town*. Everywhere you go, you make a difference. On the streets, in class, and even when you're alone. People are watching, looking, and waiting to see... What are Jewish kids about? How do they act toward others? Why do they live the way they do? Kalman the Kiddush Hashem Kid, alongside an unforgettable cast of characters, answers these questions and more. Experience life in Elmvile through vivid and true-to-life comics. It's the *Talk of the Town*.

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

Harari, Efraim. *Exploring the Wondrous World of Bizarre Beasts*. A fun journey of discovery, as well as a celebration of the One who created so many different things, all with such precision and care. The binturong. The great potoo. The gerenuk, echidna, fossa, and dugong. No, these are not made-up words; these are real creatures from the animal world! And just like their unusual names, these creatures have some of the most bizarre characteristics. From animals that look like a mixture of three different animals to creatures with humongous eyes or weird bills and mouths, this book is your go-to source for a sampling of the strangest, yet most fascinating, fish, reptiles, and mammals that Hashem created. The pages in this book offer us a chance to deepen our awe and gratitude, and to realize that even the oddest of creatures bear the signature of their Creator.

Jakubowicz, M. ***Down to Business***. Running a simchah hall was never supposed to be the kids' job. But when the Walter parents are stranded in Eretz Yisrael after an unexpected medical emergency, their family business, Ateres Gittel, is suddenly in trouble. Messages are piling up, bookings are down, and a flashy new simchah hall is stealing the spotlight. With their mother recovering far away and their father unable to return, Blimi, Noach, Didi, and even little Momo step in. They mean well. They work hard. They also have no idea what they're doing. Alarm systems blare. Schedules clash. Customers complain. Secrets slip. And the competition keeps closing in. Can the Walter kids keep their family's business afloat -- without wrecking it first?

Kohn, Chana Devora. ***Search the Light***. Naples, in 1847, is a battlefield for the soul. Divided in loyalty and trust, the Loewy family grapples with themselves. Wings of political unrest sweep across Europe, pushing Clara, Rosetta, and Judah to choose: To fight change, or embrace it? To confront pain, or ignore it? To disregard the truth, or be ready to die for it? In the hazy shadow of the Enlightenment, this city nestled between Mt. Vesuvius and the Mediterranean Sea witnesses their struggle. Originally serialized in the Binah as *Shades of Light*, this story gives a window into the hearts of those forced up against their truest selves, and the light that comes shining forth from that sacred place.

Krohn, Rav Kalman. ***Stories Told By Rav Kalman Krohn*** (volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). 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.

Lisker, Bashie. ***Lie of the Land***. When Rivi Greenberg learns that her estranged father has passed away, she expects complicated grief and a strained reunion with her brother, Gabe. She doesn't expect mysteries, deceptions, and a shocking revelation that leaves them reeling. Who was their father? What has he done? And who are they? As Rivi and Gabe dig into the secrets of their childhood, they find themselves unraveling a tangled web of their father's making—one that might solve a mystery from decades past. In the process, they trigger a new threat that will catapult them from a sleepy frum town to the depths of the Amazon rainforest. Someone else knows their father's secret and will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

Neiman, Esther Malky. ***The Land Girls***. A beautifully written historical novel set during WWII, *The Land Girls* paints a moving and realistic picture of England's home front, as it explores what the realities of war meant for young women at the time. The girls all yearn for the day their country will emerge victorious from this war, but in the meantime, each must reach deep within herself to attain her very own victories as well. This book was originally serialized in Hamodia, under the title *Land Girls for the Win*. A sequel to *Following the Piper*, the book can also be enjoyed on its own.

Rosman, Bracha. ***Look Both Ways***. In this suspenseful sequel to *Don't Look Back*, Peri and Shimi Sanders are finally living a tranquil life in Israel... or so it seems. Their visit to Wrigley Lake to meet their newborn granddaughter quickly spirals out of control when Mr. Moskowitz's mysterious nephew arrives, bringing with him more questions than answers. To add to the confusion, Peri and her friends notice they're being followed. *Look Both Ways* is a thriller of danger, intrigue, family ties, loyalty, and—at long last—the triumph of good over evil.

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?

Spero, Rabbi Yechiel. ***The Miracle of Me***. What if one of the most routine moments of your day held the key to deeper emunah, gratitude, and connection to Hashem? In *The Miracle of Me*, bestselling author Rabbi Yechiel Spero opens our eyes to the wonder hidden within the simple berachah of Asher Yatzar. Drawing on timeless Torah sources, profound insights, and—most memorably—heartwarming, unforgettable stories, Rabbi Spero shows how this brief daily blessing reflects the extraordinary wisdom of the human body and the constant chessed of the Creator. From inspiring real-life accounts of yeshuos and refuos to moving stories of ordinary people discovering extraordinary faith, each page resonates with meaning and inspiration.

Summer Reading List – General Works -2026

Beatty, Robert. *Serafina and the Black Cloak*. For as long as Serafina can remember, she and her pa, the estate's maintenance man, have secretly lived in the basement of the grand Biltmore estate. None of the rich folk upstairs know that Serafina exists; she must take care never to be seen. However, when children at the estate start disappearing, only Serafina knows who the culprit is: a terrifying man in a black cloak who stalks Biltmore's corridors at night. Following her own harrowing escape, Serafina risks everything by joining forces with Braeden Vanderbilt, the young nephew of the Biltmore's owners. Braeden and Serafina must uncover the Man in the Black Cloak's true identity... before all of the children vanish one by one. Other books in this series include *Serafina and the Twisted Staff*, and *Serafina and the Splintered Heart*.

Beatty, Robert. *Willa of the Wood*. Willa, a young night-spirit, is her clan's best thief. She creeps into the cabins of the day-folk (humans) under cover of darkness and takes what they won't miss. It's dangerous work--the day-folk kill whatever they don't understand--but Willa will do anything to win the approval of the *padaran*, the charismatic leader of the Faeran people. When Willa's curiosity leaves her hurt and stranded in the day-folk world, she calls upon the old powers of her beloved grandmother, and the unbreakable bonds of her forest allies, to escape. Only then does she begin to discover the shocking truth: that not all of her day-folk enemies are the same, and that the foundations of her own Faeran society are crumbling. What do you do when you realize that the society you were born and raised in is rife with evil? Do you raise your voice? Do you stand up against it?

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *A Little Princess*. Alone in a new country, wealthy Sara Crewe tries to settle in and make friends at boarding school. 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*.

Durst, Sarah Beth. *Even and Odd*. Even and Odd are sisters who share magic. Lately, though, it seems like that's the only thing they have in common. Odd doesn't like magic, and Even practices it every chance she gets, dreaming of the day she'll be ready to be a hero. When the hidden border between the mundane world the sisters live in and the magical land they were born in shuts abruptly, the girls are trapped, unable to return home. With the help of a unicorn named Jeremy, the girls discover who is responsible for the magical mess. Even realizes that she can no longer wait until she is ready; she needs to be a hero now. Other good fantasy novels by this author include *Spark*, *The Stone Girl's Story*, *Journey Across the Hidden Islands*, and *The Girl Who Could Not Dream*.

Hood, Susan. *Lifeboat 5*. A novel-in-verse based on true events and real people. When Nazi bombs begin to destroy Bess Walder's hometown of East London, Bess convinces her parents to evacuate her and her younger brother, Louis, to Canada aboard a ship. On the journey, she meets another evacuee, Beth Cummings. Bess and Beth have a lot in common--both strong and athletic, both named for Queen Elizabeth, both among the older kids on the ship, and both excited about life in Canada. The girls cling together for dear life when their ship is torpedoed by Nazis and their lifeboat capsizes. They spend nineteen hours in the Atlantic Ocean, waiting for rescue. How can the girls find the courage to persevere against the odds?

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*.

Levine, Karen. *Hana's Suitcase*. In March 2000, Fumiko Ishioka, the curator of a small Holocaust education center in Tokyo, received an empty suitcase from the museum at Auschwitz. On the outside, in white paint, were the words "Hana Brady, May 16, 1931, Orphan." Fumiko and the children at the center were determined to find out who Hana was and what happened to her all those years ago, leading them to a startling and emotional discovery. The dual narrative intertwines Fumiko's international journey to find the truth about Hana Brady's fate with Hana's own compelling story of her life in a quiet Czech town, which is shattered by the arrival of the Nazis, tearing apart the family she loves. This suspense-filled work of investigative nonfiction draws in young readers and makes them active participants in the search for Hana's identity.

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***.

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.

Nielsen, Jennifer A. ***Rescue***. A World War II story of espionage and intrigue, as one girl races to save her father and aid the French resistance. After following a trail of blood in the snow, Meggie finds an injured British spy hiding in her grandmother's barn. Captain Stewart tells her that a family of German refugees must be guided across Nazi-occupied France to neutral Spain, whereupon one of them has promised to free Meg's father. Captain Stewart was meant to take that family on their journey, but too injured to complete the task himself, he offers it to Meg, along with a code from Papa to help complete the mission. As the Nazis flood Meg's village in fierce pursuit, she accepts the duty and begins the trek across France. Leading strangers through treacherous territory, Meg faces danger and uncertainty at every turn, all the while struggling to crack her father's code. The message, as she unravels it, reveals secrets costly enough to risk the mission and even her own life. Can Meg solve the puzzle, rescue the family, and save her father?

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, London Calling*** and, just released this year, ***Europa***.

Riley, James. ***The Revenge of Magic***. Thirteen years ago, books of magic were discovered in various sites around the world alongside the bones of dragons. Only those born after “Discovery Day” have the power to use the magic. Now, on a vacation to Washington, DC, Fort Fitzgerald's father is lost when a giant creature bursts through the earth, attacking the city. Fort is devastated, until an opportunity for justice arrives six months later, when a man named Dr. Opps invites Fort to the government run Oppenheimer School, to learn magic from those same books. But life's no easier at the school, where secrets abound. If Fort doesn't find out what's hiding within the Oppenheimer School, more attacks will come, and this time, nothing will stop them! The next books in the series are ***The Last Dragon, The Future King, The Timeless One, and The Chosen One***.

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***.