

L'Chaim

By L. Louis Albert, ACSW
Director Federation
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"My father is getting older. He's going to be eighty five years old this year, bless him. For all of his life he worked hard and managed to save \$15,000. We've pleaded with him to enjoy the money, to spend some on himself, but he insists on holding tightly to it. That money is for a rainy day when I'll really need it, he'll tell me. Meanwhile, he barely scrapes by on his Social Security income."

For a generation who lived through the Depression it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to give up the security which that nest egg represents. The harder you push the greater the resistance. The other side of the coin is that a hospitalization or a major illness will run through that money faster than you'd ever believe possible. So what to do?

I regularly encourage older adults to relax and spend a little of their savings for their enjoyment. Sometimes that permission is needed to use the telephone for a few

extra long distance calls or to buy some new clothes. If giving presents to family and friends is a pleasure then go ahead. You might consider making a trip to visit a special grandchild or even indulge that lifelong wish to visit Israel on a local mission tour.

Have you ever heard someone say, "When I retire I want to ... Next year we'll do ... Once the children are grown and on their own we can ..." When it comes to issues of life and health there can be no guarantees that tomorrow will ever come. Planning ahead for possible needs or crises is important, but so is the ability to take pleasure in the relationships and opportunities available to us in the present. As individuals we often worry and plan for the future, but as Jews we're also taught to enjoy our lives in the present, too.

Issues like this are very common as families deal with the aging of a parent. If you know of someone who is going through this kind of situation then encourage them to call Jewish Social Services for some help.

Lag B'omer Picnic

On May 1, Lag B'Omer, a picnic, was held at the Lubavitch Residence. It was arranged by Rabbi Yossi Groner and Mrs. Eleanor Weinglass.

Parents and children enjoyed delicious Glatt Kosher hot dogs that Lior Schwartzman and Simcha Bar Lev busily prepared. The participants enjoyed Sephardic music, played games and

some took their best shot with the basketball.

The theme of the picnic was Lag B'Omer and its lesson. Stories about Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai were told of how they resisted Roman oppressions and encouraged the study of Torah through unity.

It has been a tradition that on this day Jews rejoice and take their children out to the

field. Indeed, our picnickers fulfilled that tradition.

The outing was in response to a call from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, who called for outings to be held all over the world. Reports came into Lubavitcher headquarters in Brooklyn, N.Y. that more than one million Jewish children participated in Lag B'Omer parades and outings all over the world.



More than 30,000 people gathered near Lubavitch World Headquarters in New York for the Lag B'Omer children's parade, carnival and fair. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, addressed the crowd and was heard live around the world. Upper right, the Rebbe on the reviewing stand on the steps of Lubavitch Center, Upper left, one of many colorful floats portraying Jewish themes. This one depicts the unity of the Jewish people through their representative letters in the Sefer Torah. Below, a section of the huge crowd. Lubavitch sponsored hundreds of similar parades all over the world involving hundreds of thousands of children and adults.



Jewish Books in Review

is a service of the JWB Jewish Book Council,
15 East 26th St., New York, N.Y. 10010

Suggested Summer Reading for Children

The Castle on Hester Street. By Linda Heller. Jewish Publication Society, 1930 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. 1982. \$8.95. Ages 5 to 8.

Gooseberries to Oranges. Barbara Cohen. Illustrated by Beverly Brodsky. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1982. \$10.50. Ages 7 to 10.

Call Me Ruth. Marilyn Sachs. Doubleday, 245 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017. 1982. 134 pp. \$11.95. Ages 8-12.

King of the Seventh Grade. Barbara Cohen. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. 1982. \$9.50. Age 9 and up.

Reviewed by
Rita Berman Frischer

Do you remember an old

KING OF THE SEVENTH GRADE

by Barbara Cohen



television show which opened with a wide-angle shot of a huge metropolis? The camera zoomed in on one neighborhood, one street, one window in one building, and finally followed the story of one person among the millions the city contained. Well, make the city New York, the neighborhood the Lower East Side, and the time the early 1900's during the massive wave of immigration. Then, let three talented children's book authors tell the stories and you have the first three books I am reviewing.

Two are picture books, widely different but alike in their skillful and affectionate presentation. For children 5 to 8, Linda Heller's *The Castle On Hester Street* combines a warm grandparent/grandchild relationship with humor, as Julie's Grandpa regales her with tall tales about his journey from the Old Country and his early days in New York. He had, he says, a singing goat for transportation, Teddy Roosevelt as a welcoming committee, and a castle on Hester Street in which to live. Grandma Rose, the pragmatist, listens, shakes her head and tells her version of the past: an overcrowded boat, inspectors on Ellis Island, and an ordinary tenement home. But she and Grandpa agree on the basic and best truth: in America they had each other and were free to live as they wanted. Heller's flat, stylized pictures are just right for this blend of nonsense, good sense, and nostalgia.

In *Gooseberries To Oranges*, for ages 7 to 10, author Barbara Cohen and illustrator Beverly Brodsky present the first-person memories of Fannie, who traveled to rejoin her papa in America when she was only eight. This book contains none of Grandpa Sol's glossing over of unpleasant truths, but is told in a straight-forward manner and, although not the finest work produced by award-winning author Cohen, it is an involving tribute to the courage and adaptability of all the little girls who found suddenly one day, that America had become "home." Brodsky has evoked the Lower East Side effectively, softening somewhat her heavily dramatic style.

Marilyn Sachs, another award-winning author, has presented quite a different picture of the immigrant experience for 11 to 14-year-olds in her novel *Call Me Ruth*. Set in 1908 the story emphasizes the strain of acculturation on family bonds. It describes how newly arrived young Rifka, emulating her rigidly conservative American teachers, determines to become "Ruth" an "ideal American," and grows more and more ashamed of her timid, greenhorn mother, Faigel. But when widowed, Faigel, determined to fight exploitation, becomes a Yiddish-speaking firebrand and leader in the Garment Workers' Union, her daughter's initial horror turns to a grudging pride and she struggles to resolve the conflict between her two worlds. This is a sensitive and honest book about mothers and daughters, courage and change.

Prolific Barbara Cohen takes us from the past of *Gooseberries To Oranges* to the present in one leap in her new and exceptional novel *King Of The Seventh Grade* (for ages 11 and up). Thirteen-year-old Vic hates Hebrew School, hangs around the mall with his pals, shoplifts occasionally for kicks, and tries to find a place for himself while shuttling between his divorced parents. He is truly a child of our times, and Cohen doesn't quibble about it, an honesty some may find disconcerting. However, when Vic suddenly is disallowed from becoming Bar Mitzvah, his reactions aren't those he expected. And when he gets in trouble with the law, he finds an unexpected ally in Rabbi Auerbach as he struggles to understand himself and what it means to become a Jew and a mensch. *King Of The Seventh Grade* is a prince of a book for today's child by a talented and seemingly tireless author.

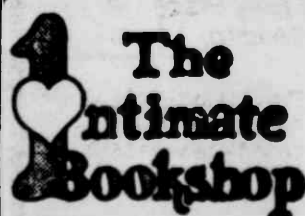
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