

LIGHTING THE WAY: A GIFT FOR GENERATIONS

By Rachel Berezin

PJ LIBRARY ENDOWMENT LEAD AND
REGIONAL ADVANCEMENT OFFICER



Just as a person lights one candle from another and the original flame is not diminished, so too, we are never lessened when we pass on our eternal "flame" to another person. (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:20)

When my mother stood up in front of our friends and family on the afternoon of my bat mitzvah, she proudly gave me one of the most special, meaningful gifts I have ever received: my great-grandmother's necklace.

My great-grandmother survived the Khmelnytsky pogroms (which occurred from 1917-1921 in modern-day Ukraine and represented the largest and most violent antisemitic massacres prior to the Holocaust) and immigrated to the United States in 1921. When she arrived in this country, her father gave her a necklace to celebrate her bravery. This necklace is now a family heirloom that has been handed down to the oldest daughter in every generation. It signifies the importance of carrying on the beautiful traditions and values of the Jewish people and reminds me that each generation plays a key role in passing down our stories and sharing our values with those who come after us.

In 2005, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation launched a children's book program called PJ Library to bring Jewish stories and traditions into the homes of families raising Jewish children. In the ensuing 16 years, tens of thousands of people have joined with Harold Grinspoon to support PJ Library, and together we have gifted more than 49 million PJ Library books to families around the world. With each book read to a child, we keep alive our unique Jewish experience. The stories of the Jewish community are a precious gift to be preserved and passed on, like a cherished family heirloom.

Today, PJ Library reaches the homes of more than 670,000 Jewish children around the globe.

It is an exciting milestone, but it highlights that there are still many Jewish children yet to serve. To ensure that PJ Library continues to stand as a pillar of Jewish family engagement for more families, we will need to increase our investment today and into the future.

If you have ever met Harold Grinspoon, you've heard him express his love of the Jewish people and his commitment to ensuring that our stories and traditions are shared with future generations. He continues to invest in PJ Library to advance its important mission. Now Harold Grinspoon is making another groundbreaking investment in PJ Library to help secure its future.

I am excited to share news of a new initiative to help PJ Library community partners build endowments to ensure the future of PJ Library for the families they serve. This two-year pilot initiative offers matching funds to inspire current and after-lifetime gifts of any size for building a PJ Library endowment fund in participating communities. Our hope is that Harold's lead gift and continued generosity will inspire communities to secure endowment funds for PJ Library so that families continue to receive books and resources for generations to come. We have launched the new initiative in nine communities and will expand to other regions starting in spring 2022.

This year, as I reflect on the celebration of Hanukkah, the tradition of lighting the menorah hits me in a different way. The miracle of Hanukkah was not just that the oil lasted for eight days; the true miracle was that the Maccabees chose to light the menorah. Their act was a testament to the Jewish future. When I think about Harold Grinspoon and the many generous PJ Library endowment donors, I am touched by the number of children and families who will continue sharing our Jewish stories for many years and generations to come. I hope you will be inspired to help pass on our stories.

PJ Library is a precious gift to Jewish families around the world, and you, too, can help pass on the Jewish story by endowing PJ Library. By including PJ Library in your will or estate plan, your generosity will help keep PJ Library free and accessible to families raising Jewish children so that they can continue to share Jewish stories and traditions with future generations.

Bequests, retirement plan assets, life insurance gifts, donor advised funds, and cash gifts are some of the ways you can make a lasting gift to the next generation. To learn more about PJ Library endowment giving, please contact Rachel Berezin at rberezin@hgf.org.

PARTNER Spotlight



From a very young age, I was intrigued by letters. When I was very young – about 4 – I used to stop people on the street to ask them what sounds the letters made. Before long, I found myself curious about words and then developed a love for stories and books.

If I wanted to read, I had to figure out how to get myself to the library. By the time I was 6, I was walking a kilometer by myself to get to the library, one of the most treasured spaces for me growing up. There I could learn more about any topic that interested me or get lost in a good story.

My neighbors receive PJ Library, and each month I see the joy it brings them when the books arrive at their doorstep. You can't imagine what it would have meant to me to receive the gift of books at my home every month as a child.

When I learned there were matching funds available for PJ Library endowment gifts in Montreal, I could only think about how much I love children and books. I'm thrilled to be able to support PJ Library so that children continue to receive books right in their own homes each month. I feel good knowing families in Montreal will benefit from my gift for generations to come.

Sharon Steinberg
Montreal, Quebec

PJ Library is a wonderful program that gives parents tools to easily teach their children about Jewish values. As parents to young children, we love observing the joy and excitement that comes with receiving books from PJ Library in the mail. Often, our 3-year-old daughter's nightly book selection includes at least one PJ Library book. In addition to enjoying the stories, we appreciate that the books typically include suggested activities, and we have really enjoyed teaching our children about Jewish holidays through them.

We decided to support the program financially because we wanted to ensure that Jewish families continue to benefit in the way we have and instill in their kids the values and knowledge contained within the PJ Library book collection. By delivering these books to families throughout the whole Jewish community, PJ Library gives parents a template they can use to educate their children. PJ Library books create an easy and regular touch point to teach children about their Judaism and help to pass our stories to the next generation.

Catherine and Daniel Singer
Overland Park, Kansas

