



Have I Got a STORY For You!

The Creation of PJ Library's New Podcast

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IN EARLY 2017, A COLLEAGUE ASKED ME WHETHER I LIKED PODCASTS, and I very near fell out of my chair – I love podcasts. Little did I know this question would kick off a process that would lead to the creation of the podcast series that PJ Library families are currently listening to on repeat.

One of my favorite parts about working for PJ Library is bringing wonderful, new stories to families. Long before I worked for PJ Library, or became a parent myself, I remember curling up with my niece, reading a brightly colored bedtime story about a beautiful chicken alone in New York City. She'd crack up as I gave all of the characters voices and demand, "Again! Again!" (Eventually, a rule was made that Auntie Alli could not do storytime at bedtime because little L would get too riled up.)

I'm obsessed with stories and not just picture books. I love filmmaking and theater, and I love listening to a good story. My devices are all loaded with podcasts, and as I visit with friends or take family trips with my sons and nephews, I'm likely to find the kids sitting around a tablet or a CD player (remember those?) listening to stories – drawing, asking questions, and shushing each other to hear the next part.

But it's more than just my love of storytelling that got me excited about creating a podcast for PJ Library. In my work, I'm creating content that is relevant to how families spend their time together, adding a bit more Jewishness to their daily lives. And so, when parents are already turning to podcasts and audio stories to keep their kids occupied, it made sense that PJ Library could occupy that space too. Similar to how Jewish stories take over bedtime, a PJ Library podcast of Jewish stories could take over road trips.

Initially, we developed three pilots with creators and organizations outside of PJ Library, and after a year of research and production, we assembled a focus group of PJ Library families, compiled feedback, reviewed what we learned, and began budgeting for what would come next.

We learned that parents are hungry for audio content that keeps their kids engaged. Parents told us that they wanted stories that felt familiar and had simple, easy-to-reinforce messages about Jewish values. Kids echoed those sentiments but were also pretty passionate about quirky sound effects and original music. For me, the biggest learning throughout

the process was that most of the work could be done in-house. With writing help and a team of contractors for sound design and recording, we could focus on doing what PJ Library does best – finding fantastic Jewish stories to bring into the homes of listeners.

And so, *Have I Got A Story For You!* was born.

In each episode, families are introduced to a classic Jewish folktale or story that's been updated with a contemporary twist. In addition, each story has its own resources page on the PJ Library website (also gotastorypodcast.com) with more information about the source material as well as activity ideas, PJ Library books the family might enjoy, and more. In doing this, the podcast easily fits into the content PJ Library is already creating, including the books, in-the-envelope activities, and resources on the PJ Library website.

You can check out season one on gotastorypodcast.com. Make sure to subscribe for special previews and news about season two, due out in 2020.

