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.

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.
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