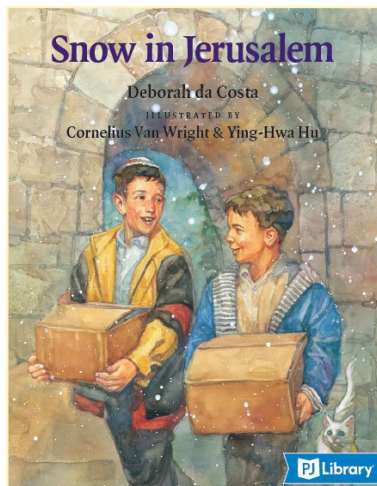


Snow in Jerusalem

written by
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illustrated by
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What does peace look like?



HANDS ON!

Animal Advocacy

One of the many things that Avi and Hamudi have in common is they're both good at taking care of Snow the cat! Tza'ar ba'alei chayim, caring for animals, is an important Jewish value. Jerusalem happens to be filled with stray cats, but there are many ways for you to practice tza'ar ba'alei chayim no matter where you live.

If you have pets, feed them before you eat. It's actually Jewish law! And it might help keep them from begging at the table, too.

Contact your local animal shelter to see what they need. Some shelters can use old blankets for kennel bedding, or old stuffed animals for dog toys. There are often volunteer opportunities, too.

Offer to help older neighbors walk their dogs, if need be. This is a kindness not only to the dog, but to the owner, too -- and you'll probably enjoy yourself as well.

If you and your family are able, consider fostering a dog or cat. Many shelters need to find temporary homes for certain animals before they can place them in a forever home.

The Center of the Universe

Avi and Hamudi have a lot in common. They both live with their families in Jerusalem's Old City, an ancient walled section of Jerusalem. They both like cats -- especially one particular cat. And when they find themselves in conflict with each other, they both react with anger. Eventually, however, both boys are also able to come to the same realization: They're going to have to learn how to work together to protect the creature they have both come to love. While the subtext of this story is clearly the Middle Eastern conflict between Jews and Arabs, it is as familiar and universal as any conflict between two children. Avi and Hamudi show us that ultimately they both think, want, and need the same things. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/snowinjerusalem.

Peace Be With You

Avi and Hamudi also have related languages in common. Avi speaks Hebrew to the little cat named Snow, while Hamudi speaks Arabic. One can easily see the similarities between the two languages: the Hebrew word shalom, "peace," is strikingly similar to the Arabic salaam. Speakers of both languages use these words as greetings and partings, literally wishing everyone peace, all day long. The word shalom is actually derived from another Hebrew word that means "whole," which hints at the idea that until we are all able to live in peace, none of us is truly whole.

Like Snow in the Desert

The appearance of snow, a rare occurrence in Jerusalem, marks a turning point in this story. At that moment, the cat runs off to care for her newborn kittens, and the two boys become allies in a search for her. What is it about snow, especially those first magical flakes, that softens the hard edges of life? The snow falls indiscriminately, and beneath its blanket, we can see beyond our differences. When the snow melts, we'll still be left with whatever challenges we faced before the flakes fell, but for one crystalline moment, we may get a glimpse of what the world looks like when we can acknowledge our shared humanity.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

THE illustrations in this book are beautiful depictions of the Old City. Look closely. What different languages do you see written on signs and storefronts? What different styles of dress do you notice? How does the Old City look similar to where you live, and how does it look different?

BOTH boys in this story love the cat named Snow. What do you think they like about Snow? Do they enjoy taking care of Snow? Why?

DO you think Avi and Hamudi will continue to be friends? Why or why not?