

# THE Newsfeed

There's always plenty going on at PJ Library. Here's a quick roundup of the latest news and events.

BY PJ LIBRARY STAFF

## Inspiring Jewish Families to Get Together

**THERE'S MORE TO PJ LIBRARY THAN BEAUTIFUL JEWISH BOOKS.** PJ Library helps to connect families within their local Jewish community and make joyful Jewish rituals accessible. That's why PJ Library offers Get Together, an incentive designed to encourage families to host small gatherings for Jewish holidays (or just everyday fun!). Welcoming guests, or *hachnasat orchim*, is a core Jewish value, and PJ Library aims to make it easy.

How does it work? When you apply to host a Get Together, you'll invite two or more other Jewish families for a Jewish-inspired social event: a Shabbat celebration at home, a picnic and PJ Library storytime at the park, a *tikkun olam* volunteering project, an adults-only social outing, or any other creative gathering you choose. PJ Library helps cover the cost.

The result? In 2023, more than 14,000 families in the US and Canada hosted or attended a Get Together. Last December alone, host families submitted a record 2,500 applications when PJ Library invited hosts to welcome non-Jewish families as guests for Hanukkah.

"Our Get Together was wonderful," shares Iyar Mazar of Boston, Massachusetts. "PJ Library provided the motivation and means to bring our families together and grow closer.



### Get Together gatherings spark Jewish joy.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACQUELINE SPERLING HOSSEINI, REBEKAH RAZ, AND MICHELE LINDER

It was a lovely time for the kids and very helpful for the adults to feel supported by others. I'm looking forward to hosting future events."

The Get Together program is currently offered in more than 160 communities across North America. To learn more, including how to support Get Together or bring the program to your community, visit [pjlibrary.org/gettogether](https://pjlibrary.org/gettogether) or email [engagement@hgf.org](mailto:engagement@hgf.org).

—By Rachel Zaimont

## Support for Jewish Kidlit Creators

The Jewish community worldwide felt the rise in antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment after October 7. Children's book authors were no exception. In response, PJ Library hosted three virtual support sessions for Jewish kidlit creators, offering guidance on how to navigate and respond to antisemitism online and in their industry.

Held between November and January, the sessions drew hundreds of registrants. Experts from the Anti-Defamation League shared tips on staying safe and empowered in virtual spaces. Authors discussed ways to have their voices heard at literary and educational conferences. Agents and publishers broached the challenges in the publishing world today.

"I have been struggling with how Jewish to keep my focus, and this reminded me to fully embrace Jewish themes proudly," wrote author and illustrator Erica Weisz. Added writer Vicki Kleinman, "This was a wonderful, heartbreaking, enlightening, love-filled, encouraging presentation. What helped the most was not feeling so alone."

—By Patrick Coyle



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## Celebrating PJ Library's 18th Birthday

This year, PJ Library marked an exciting milestone: 18 years of sending books to Jewish children around the world (18 stands for *chai* – Hebrew for “life”). To celebrate, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation offered grants to PJ Library communities across the US and Canada to host engaging family programs and help spread the word to even more potential subscribers.

Between December and June, nearly 40 communities hosted PJ Library birthday parties and holiday celebrations that attracted more than 3,000 families. Programs included group outings to children’s museums, zoos, and play spaces; PJ Library-themed birthday party festivities; and special appearances by PJ Library authors, storybook characters, influencers, and musical guests. It wasn’t only about the kids; communities hosted social events for the PJ Library parent crowd too.

“I’m super pleased with how our event turned out,” says Yael Dyckman, PJ Library coordinator in Eugene, Oregon. “It was a warm, festive afternoon and event attendees had a wonderful time. Many families commented, ‘Wow, I see a lot of new faces. Our community is growing.’”

—By Kayla Reisman

## A Free Book on Israel – for Adults



Early in 2023, with support from Micah Philanthropies, PJ Library founder Harold Grinspoon offered subscriber families a free copy of *Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth* by Noa Tishby. After the October 7 attack and amid the global surge in antisemitism that followed, he renewed the offer. The book, he felt, could help readers process the tragedy, understand Israel’s history, and provide context in difficult conversations.

The response was enormous: In just over a week, more than 17,000 families in the US, Canada, and the UK requested a copy (clearing our shelves!). PJ Library sent another 2,000 copies to young adults in partnership with Masa Israel Journey and Hillel International. In all, PJ Library has given away 30,000 copies of the book.

“I have never felt as connected to my Jewish identity as I have since the events of October 7, so I picked up the book and began reading,” wrote Andrea Reavis of Denver, Colorado. “For me it has been a revelation. It helps me feel less helpless. Thank you for arming me with this knowledge and for understanding how vital it is that our children are connected to Judaism.”

—By Rachel Zaimont

## PJ Library Debuts New Holiday Guides



Before Rosh Hashanah last year, many families were delighted to receive a copy of *A Time to Grow: A PJ Library Guide for Starting the Jewish New Year*. But what they didn’t know is that this guide is just the beginning. Next up? *A Time to Hope: A PJ Library Guide for Hanukkah Through Purim*, which we piloted this past winter.

Parents’ feedback on this latest guide has been glowing: “Beautiful, well thought-out, and most

importantly, useful.” “My family’s Jewish celebrations fall on me, and it gave me confidence to do rituals and activities with my kids. This guide made me proud to be Jewish.”

Thanks to donor support, *A Time to Hope* will be sent to families in October. And in the future, we hope to release more holiday guides, including *A Time to Gather: A PJ Library Guide for Passover Through Shavuot* and a two-book set on Shabbat called *A Palace in Time* (in development with initial support from the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation). We hope these new resources enrich family celebrations throughout the Jewish year.

—By Danny Paller