



HAMMERIN' HANK

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This story introduces Hank Greenberg, baseball superstar and the first Jewish inductee to the Hall of Fame. Greenberg's story takes place at a time when "outsiders" were breaking through barriers in American professional sports.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Ometz Lev – Courage

Jewish history is filled with examples of men, women, and children who exemplify the value of *ometz lev* (Hebrew for "courage"; literally, "strength of the heart"). When Hank Greenberg stood up for his beliefs and refused to play baseball on Yom Kippur, he joined the ranks of people who, through their actions, make powerful statements about what is important in life. He became a Jewish hero.

As you read this book with your children, you may consider some questions about the nature of courage and heroism. For example, what attributes make one capable of courageous action? Does a hero have to be physically strong? Do other people have to recognize those actions for them to be heroic? Can one choose to be heroic – and do heroes ever act in hopes of fame?

A trip to the library or an online search can unearth many stories of heroic people. Examples of Jewish courage include Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's march for civil rights with Martin Luther King, Jr., and the daring parachute rescue missions of Hannah Senesh during World War II. Heroes – both famous and everyday – are all around us.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Jewish Sports Figures

Jews have been involved in sports for about as long as there have been sports – and contemporary Jewish athletes continue to make names for themselves in the athletic world. You don't have to go back to Hammerin' Hank's days to find Jewish sports heroes. Discover with your child some of the fascinating American sports figures in recent years who also happen to be Jewish. To note just a few:

- Amy Alcott, who had 29 wins on the LPGA tour
- Sasha Cohen, winner of the 2006 Olympic silver medal in figure skating
- Mitch Gaylord, who received the first perfect 10.0 score in gymnastics and won 4 Olympic gold medals in 1984

Of course, Jewish athletes don't live only in America – they are all over the world. Israel holds its own Olympic-style events, the Maccabiah Games. Look up online videos of the Maccabiah Games with your child to see hundreds of Jewish athletes on the field, court, and track – and get inspired to get out there and play!