

Acclaim for

Canaan Tours
of
Jewish History

In the Beginning...

4 out of 5 stars 

Jewish Book World Magazine

"...the first in a series focusing
on Maya and Josh's Canaan

Dogs, Sephira and Shem and the
Kabbalistic journey on which
the dogs take their "owners" ...
Embedded throughout the text are
references to kabbalistic, historical
and Torah-based terms. These
terms are explained in text boxes
as well as a short glossary at the
end of the book... The story and
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students still in Hebrew school but
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"For kids in kindergarten through the early grades, these are critical years to gain a Jewish identity...the storyline is amusing and entertaining, the most striking feature would have to be the call boxes which appear every few pages. When words such as mishna, Rosh Chodesh, Tefillin, Talmud,...and Shabbat appear, they do so in a small shaded box. Turn to the next page and there is a detailed summary of what the word means.

...It represents an excellent educational tool for the child, but for the parent as well – especially if he or she reads to their son or daughter."

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"Having a series of books for young readers to keep them engaged in their Jewish identity, that's also enjoyable for the whole family, is a blessing for parents. Having a series of books for young readers that actually explores Jewish history and teaches a deeper understanding of Judaism is a gift for Jewish educators."

Cantor Michael Smolash, Temple Israel, West Bloomfield, MI

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CHILDREN'S REVIEWS



Canaan Tours of Jewish History: In the Beginning...

Ian D. Bier, James Duprie; Ian D. Bier, illus.

Melanie Chana Arnick, trans.

Purple Monkey Books, 2007. 199 pp. \$14.95

ISBN: 978-0-9802071-0-1

ISBN: 978155451014

"...the first in a series focusing on Maya

T and Josh's Canaan Dogs, Sephira and Shem, and the kabbalistic journey on which the dogs take their "owners." This first journey introduces Shem and Sephira as knowledgeable talking dogs that are able to travel through "anywhen."

When Maya does not take her

homework assignment for Hebrew school seriously the dogs find it imperative to show both

her and her younger brother Josh the significance of creation. In order to travel to that

time, they must first ask permission of the

council. Embedded throughout the text are references to kabbalistic, historical, and Torah-based terms. These terms are explained in text

boxes as well as a short glossary at the end of the book. The concepts range from Rosh Hodesh to a kabbalistic interpretation of pargode. The

story and characters are geared to young students still in Hebrew school but the ideas presented are often quite complicated and difficult.

The inclusion of the dogs allows for the thinly plotted story to be more personal and light so that the book may be understood on a basic time travel level as well as the more esoteric kabbalistic plane. For ages 9–12."

■ Spring 5769/2009

The Brothers Schlemiel

Mark Binder, Zvi Blum, illus.
Jewish Publication Society, 2008. 245 pp. \$19.95
ISBN: 978-0-8276-0865-8

In *The Brothers Schlemiel*, Mark Binder tries to capture the community of Chelm in all its innocence, foolishness, and humor. "In this work of fiction, history lives in the footnotes," he declares in his author's note. When history gets in the way of the story, it is easily modified. So it's clear from the start that there is nothing factual about this book, which traces the lives of the Schlemiel family and the community that surrounds them. Divided into forty-five chapters that were originally serialized in various Jewish newspapers in North America, the book's individual chapters work well on their own, making this a good bedtime read for adults and young readers. But it's the adults who will really get the humor written between the lines. "Only in Chelm could a father get so lost going to fetch the midwife that he misses the birth of his first child," Binder writes, poking consistent fun at the antics and idiocy of those who call Chelm home. It seems that everyone in the town is in slow mode, so the mix-ups are many and the potential for laughter abundant. Zvi Blum adds colorful caricatures to the pages that help make this lengthy book a light-hearted, whimsical read. LL



Canaan Tours of Jewish History: In the Beginning...

Ian D. Bier, James Duprie; Ian D. Bier, illus.

Purple Monkey Books, 2007. 199 pp. \$14.95

ISBN: 978-0-9802071-0-1

Purple Monkey Books, a vanity press, presents the first in a series focusing on Maya and Josh's Canaan Dogs, Sephira and Shem, and the kabbalistic journey on which the dogs take their "owners." This first journey introduces Shem and Sephira as knowledgeable talking dogs that are able to travel through "anywhen." When Maya does not take her homework assignment for Hebrew school seriously the dogs find it imperative to show both her and her younger brother Josh the significance of creation. In order to travel to that time, they must first ask permission of the council. Embedded throughout the text are references to kabbalistic, historical, and Torah-based terms. These terms are explained in text boxes as well as a short glossary at the end of the book. The concepts range from Rosh Hodesh

Jan 1, 2009 13:09 | Updated Jan 5, 2009 10:16

The Human Spirit: Paws Zionism

By BARBARA SOFER

Amid the fiscal reports and prognostications that dominate end-of-the-year headlines comes a statistic that I always await with pleasant anticipation. The Immigrant Absorption Ministry announces how many former Israelis and future Israelis have come home to the land of our fathers and mothers during the past 12 months.

The figure for 2008 totals 24,000. As those who facilitate aliyah in the Jewish Agency and Nefesh B'Nefesh will attest, there's an elusive factor in immigration. The decision to pull up stakes and put down new roots is ultimately personal and sometimes quixotic. Nor is there a "typical immigrant." Each has a unique story, and an often unanticipated contribution to make to the fabric of this country.

A case in point is Myrna Shibolet, a veteran immigrant whose autobiography was published last week with the inspired title of *Tails of Sha'ar Hagai*.

American-born Shibolet is the country's premier breeder of Canaani dogs. She grew up without her own pet in Chicago, a city with 1,900 miles of concrete and asphalt alleys. But Shibolet got to know every dog on her block and played Lassie while her schoolmates collected Barbies. She promised herself that when she grew up she'd have as many animals as she could. As a teen, she joined a Zionist youth movement, but when the leader demanded a plan for aliyah from each of the comrades, she rebelled. No one was going to force her to do anything.

Yet here she is - the only member of her Chicago Zionist club - celebrating 40 years of living in Israel. Even if you're not a dog enthusiast, you may have noticed the official street sign marking the Sha'ar Hagai kennels 20 kilometers from Jerusalem on the highway from Tel Aviv. A sharp right turn, up a winding narrow road you'll find Shibolet and her dogs. Twenty-two, at last count, when I stopped by on Hanukkah.

On a post-college European trip with a friend, she suddenly changed her plans and spent a year here. Returning to the US, she secured her dream job - handling animals for show business. She prepared sheepdogs and terriers for Broadway shows, and managed the manger animals for the Radio City Christmas Pageant. Her pre-aliyah CV also includes a stint as a pre-photo shoot walker for a lamb and a duck down the streets of Manhattan, transporting llamas over the border from New Jersey and handling yaks for a country fair. Living in a New York apartment, she adopted two dogs and 10 cats.

But memories of Israel reached out to her. She kept remembering a particular ride on horseback through the Jerusalem forest. She had stopped along the way to eat figs straight from the tree.



This lassie came home.

It took a while to find good homes for all the cats. Shibolet packed her dogs and a riding saddle, and sailed. The year was 1969, a time of continued ebullience over the victory of the Six Day War. She quickly found other animal lovers, one of them the late Devora Ben-Shaul, who for so many years brought her friendly erudition about animals to the pages of this paper. Ben-Shaul knew about the concrete army barracks abandoned by the British in the foothills of Jerusalem that had the potential to become a dreamed-of center for dogs.

SHIBOLETH MOVED in. The barracks had no electricity, no telephone, no neighbor. The water in the taps turned out to have been standing since the Mandate; Shibolet escaped typhus because of her Chicago addiction to soft drinks. The bunker rooms were filled with fallen plaster, the dregs of old campfires and sheep droppings. Spiders, scorpions and rats had moved in long ago. The poet Rahel was inspired by the Kinneret, but Shibolet looked through the barracks' window and saw beyond the rubble. The panorama of the Judean Hills moved her. She decided it was home.

So the Windy City girl rolled up her sleeves, swept the place clean and, with the help of friends, laid pipes and built the kennels on the hillside. When she married and had a daughter, Sha'ar Hagai became their family home. Not even a spell overseas in Malawi, when her husband was assigned there by the Foreign Ministry and where she had a house full of servants, tempted her to forsake her green pastures. Eventually, the fortress on the hill got water and electricity. Today, it's a tidy, modest country home with the cold icy cold in a refrigerator. Trophies and grandkid photos decorate the walls.

Her Chicago childhood fantasies of Lassie translated into a lifetime love of collies, who follow her wherever she goes in Sha'ar Hagai. But living in Israel, she deepened her passion for Canaani dogs.

SOON AFTER arriving, Shibolet had met the venerable Austrian animal behaviorist Rudolphina Menzel, who had immigrated in the 1930s from Vienna. Prof. Menzel was recruited by the Hagana to train dogs for military service, but the animals she'd known in Vienna salons had a hard time adjusting to pre-state challenges. She began working with the tougher, wilder indigenous breed, the so-called pariah breed everyone called Canaani. The challenge was in domesticating them.

Canaani dogs grow to the size of German Shepherds. They have triangular heads and a piercing bark. They're smart, fiercely loyal, and make superb guard dogs.

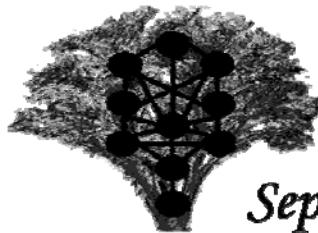
This indigenous breed has been around since the Bible, says Shibolet. There's even a Canaani dog cemetery in Ashkelon. The Canaani managed to survive for thousands of years on its own, living by its wits and surviving in the wild and on the fringes of civilization by hunting and scavenging. But the breed was in danger of extinction and needed to be bred.

Shibolet took up Menzel's challenge. She collected Canaani dogs from the wild and by negotiating with Beduin, who use them to protect valuable camels. Over the years, her pure-bred Canaanis have become stars, first locally, and then in international dog shows. Sha'ar Hagai is the world center for breeding Canaani dogs. You'll often see the blonde, blue-eyed Shibolet and her pups flying with the hi-tech crowd at Ben-Gurion Airport.

In a paraphrase of the Zionist mantra that we come to Israel "to build and to be built," she says, "What Israel has given me is the possibility to discover myself and resources within that I never would have known I possessed under other conditions."

And it's all because of the magic of some figs growing wild in the Judean Hills.

Press Release

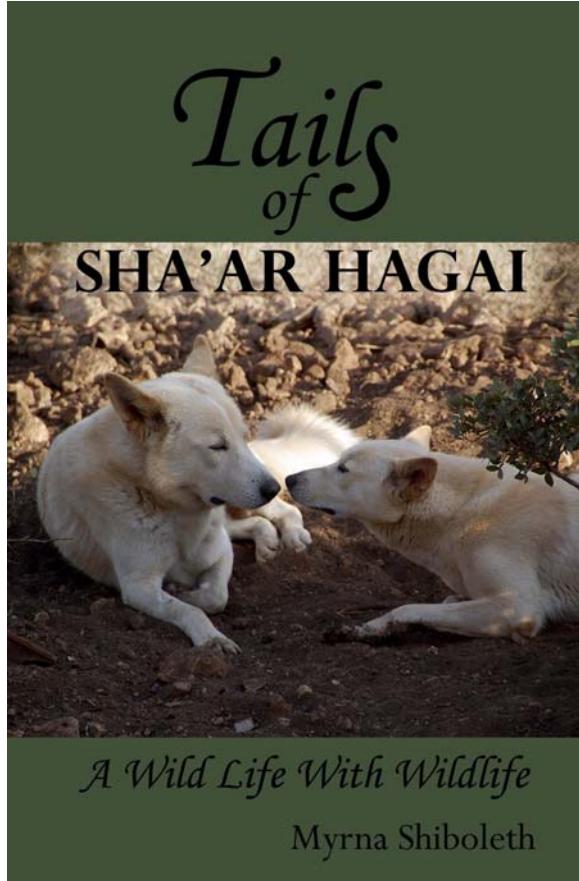


Sephирот Press™

11.30.2008 - 11:59pm ET

A New Book from *Sephирот Press* Tails of Sha'ar Hagai: A Wild Life with Wildlife. By Myrna Shibleth

I thoroughly enjoyed Myrna's Shibleth's book *Tails of Sha'ar Hagai*. As the first Canadian owner and breeder of Canaans in the 1970's, I was nevertheless amazed at the new insights Myrna provided me about this unique breed. Her adventures travelling around the world to show her Canaans and Collies, her trips into the Israeli desert visiting Bedouin tribes looking for Canaan puppies of pure, wild stock are a thoroughly enjoyable read. All the hard work of setting up the kennel, the triumphs and tragedies of the dog world make this a unique story. I couldn't put it down as each chapter drew me more into Myrna's fascinating world and really, her life story. - Art Horovitch, Canaan Dog Breeder, Former President, Canadian Canaan Club.



... Myrna managed to foster, raise, train, and to love many kinds of living thing, with the hyena perhaps the most extreme. Like Myrna, her book is unique. It is a wonderful collection of personal adventures, the dirty work of raising animals and building a farm, the glory of stage and screen, romance, and more loveable animals than you can count. Myrna's Israeli sense of irony is outrageously funny, if you realize what she is saying with a straight face. Endowed with an inborn ability to relate to animals, she doesn't really talk about her methods, I suspect because it is so obvious to her how to get animals to perform for her. In building Sha'ar Hagai, she shows determination, flexibility, and an instinct for survival. Perhaps only in Israel could she have found the context that would permit her to do some of the wild and crazy things that she relates in the book. After having a Canaan dog, the next best legal way to have fun is to read her story. - J. Halberstadt – Author, Publisher, New Technology Publishing Inc.

To Purchase: please contact the publisher or go to 

DURHAM, NH – November 30, 2008 – In *Tails of Sha'ar Hagai*, Myrna Shibleth takes us with her on an extraordinary journey; as she emigrates from the United States, pioneers in Israel, lives and travels in Africa and Europe, and establishes the breed known as Israel Canaan Dogs. In episodes that are alternately hilarious and poignant, we join her as she struggles to set up home in a bullet-ridden, abandoned concrete bunker, and build a life shared with family, friends, and a variety of furred and feathered companions. From desert-living wild dogs, to Baba the hand-raised hyena; Ricky the overly curious raccoon, Shusha the fox and Um Fathi, the local village witch, *to her work with Assistance Dogs*, she shares her stories, and gives insight into both struggle and strength. Every one of these amazing characters teaches us something about what it means to be human.

Tails of **SHA'AR HAGAI**

About the Author

Myrna Shibleth is an animal behaviorist, world champion dog breeder and dog show judge, and is acknowledged as the authority on Canaans, one of the few remaining breeds of feral dogs. She lives and breeds dogs at Sha'ar Hagai in Israel.

Tails of Sha'ar Hagai: A Wild Life with Wildlfe (Sephilot Press; \$19.99; ISBN: 978-0980207118) is available on November 30, 2008. For more information about the book, please visit www.Sephilotpress.com.

About Sephirot Press

Sephirot Press, located in Durham, NH, makes its debut as a publisher with Tails of Sha'ar Hagai. With a mandate to publish Jewish-themed books, Sephirot Press has projects under development to engage the reader in modern Jewish life..

For more information please contact:

Paula M. Diamond, M.Ed
Publisher, Sephirot Press
www.sephirotpress.com

Jewish Books for Young Readers Press Release

Purple Monkey Books™

An Imprint of Sephirot Press™



For the developing adult inside each child;
And the enduring child inside each adult™

Press Release

2.18.2008 - 11:59pm ET

A New Book from Purple Monkey Books CANAAN TOURS OF JEWISH HISTORY #1: IN THE BEGINNING... By Ian D. Bier and James J.B.N. DuPrie

“A great way to teach otherwise disenfranchised kids, and a marvelous tool for further enriching the Jewish education of both committed and alienated.” - Rabbi Gershon Winkler, Author of Magic of the Ordinary: Recovering the Shamanic in Judaism and Kabbalah 365: Daily Fruit from the Tree of Life

“Having a series of books for young readers to keep them engaged in their Jewish identity, that's also enjoyable for the whole family, is a blessing for parents. Having a series of books for young readers that actually explores Jewish history and teaches a deeper understanding of Judaism is a gift for Jewish educators.” Cantor Michael Smolash, Temple Israel, West Bloomfield, MI

“For kids in kindergarten through the early grades, these are critical years to gain a Jewish identity...While the storyline is amusing and entertaining, the most striking feature would have to be the call boxes which appear every few pages. When words such as mishna, Rosh Chodesh, Tefillin, Nehev, Talmud, Midrash, Kabbalah and Shabbat appear, they do so in a small shaded box. Turn to the next page and there is a detailed summary of what the word means. ...“It represents an excellent educational tool for the child, but for the parent as well – especially if he or she reads to their son or daughter.”

Mike Cohen, Tribune Bureau Chief, Jewish Tribune, Canada.

To Purchase: 

DURHAM, NH – February 19, 2008 – [Canaan Tours of Jewish History #1 : In the Beginning...](#) is the first in a series of chapter books aimed at children in grades 3-6. Designed to teach Jewish history, it combines the fun of fantasy with traditional Jewish interpretations of biblical stories and themes to bring the wonder of Jewish traditions alive.

[Canaan Tours of Jewish History #1](#) ***In the Beginning...***

Maya and her younger brother Josh are regular children, trying to live normal American lives while learning about and maintaining their Jewish Identities. Sephira and Shem are the children's Canaan dogs, a breed indigenous to the land of Israel.

When Maya gets frustrated with her Hebrew school report on the first Jews, Abraham and Sarah, the siblings discover that Shem and Sephira are much more than just regular dogs. As a matter of fact Sephira is a Talmudic scholar, and Shem is a student of Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition.

Sensing Maya's frustration with understanding the events that make up Jewish history and her lessening connection with her Jewish identity, the dogs decide that the only way to teach the kids the deeper meaning of Judaism is to share with them the oral traditions, and show them the events described in the Torah firsthand.

The four of them embark on a fantastic journey to the Negev desert in Israel and visit the Canaan Sanhedrin, where they learn about the first six days of creation– from a Canaan dog's point of view. From there, they move on to witness the final act of creation – the creation of the first human.

[Click here to read an excerpt from Canaan Tours of Jewish History #1: In the Beginning...](#)

About the Authors

Ian D. Bier went to Jewish day school, was an active member and leader in Habonim-Dror, a Labor-Zionist youth movement, and spent one year living in Israel on a kibbutz in the Negev desert and traveling around the country. After milking cows on kibbutz, he got interested in the ancient connections between Jewish holidays and traditions, and the physical land of Israel, the environment and seasonal cycles. He has been a Dean and an associate professor at the graduate school level, and published on using Quality Control principles for curriculum development to improve student learning. He is a board member of THINK! Education, an educational non-profit 501c(3). He continues to study the aboriginal and mystical traditions of Judaism.

James J.B.N. DuPrie has been a university professor, a computer executive, and studied with the Chabad Lubavitch. He teaches and tutors in the Hebrew-school program at his temple, and for Hebrew and B'nai Mitzvot preparation. He also runs adult education classes such as Hebrew,

challah making, and kosher cooking. He is actively involved in Jewish life, serves on the ritual committee of his synagogue, runs the Brotherhood, and organizes holiday events. He is the founder and a board member of THINK! Education, an educational non-profit 501c(3). He continues to study the Talmudic literature.

CANAAN TOURS OF JEWISH HISTORY #1: IN THE BEGINNING... (Purple Monkey Books; \$14.99; ISBN: 978-0980207101) is available on February 11, 2008. For more information about the book, please visit Canaanhistory.com.

About Purple Monkey Books

Headquartered in Durham, New Hampshire, Purple Monkey Books is an imprint of Sephirot Press. Purple Monkey Books publishes children's books that use humor and adventure to make children want to learn. For more information, please visit Purple Monkey Books

For more information please contact:

[Paula M. Diamond, M.Ed.](#)

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