



2005

Angel Secrets: Stories Based on Jewish Legend

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Ackerman, Lara M. (2005) "Angel Secrets: Stories Based on Jewish Legend," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 26 : Iss. 4 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol26/iss4/6>

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Chaikin, Miriam. *Angel Secrets: Stories Based on Jewish Legend*. Illustrated by Leonid Gore. Henry Holt, 2006. ISBN 0805071504. \$18.95. 80 p.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Folklore;

Subject: Angels--Judaism--Juvenile literature; Legends, Jewish--Juvenile fiction; Midrash--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Mystical and mysterious, this book is an artful retelling of traditional Jewish legends. It brings to life specific angels, such as Raziel, Kasriel, Ya'asriel, Rafael, and Layla, and introduces Wheel angels, Angels of Forgetfulness, Guardian angels, Musician angels and countless others. Each defined class of angels has a specific purpose, a duty to perform in the divine task of "bringing Heaven closer to humans and humans closer to Heaven."

While neither text nor illustrations provide a clear understanding of the traditional sources, the book hints at rich and layered meanings in places and concepts such as the Prayer Path, the River-of-Angels, the Hall of Alphabet Angels, the Palace of Love, and the Evil Urge. Although *Angel Secrets* does not provide readers with a clear understanding of the legends, it may spark interest and invite them to find out more on their own. An index provides sources for some of the stories as well as information regarding the place of Midrashim in Jewish culture. Gore's illustrations are soft and impressionistic, subtly incorporating concepts introduced by the stories.