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ISRAEL CORNER

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Connecting Hearts and History: Dr. King's Legacy and Israel

Did you know that Israel is the only country in the Middle East with [a street named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#)? Located in Jerusalem, Israel's capital, this street stands as a lasting tribute to his vision of justice. In Israel's beautiful Galilee region, you'll also find [The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Forest](#) and another forest dedicated to his wife, Coretta Scott King.

Each January, as we celebrate [Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#), we have an opportunity to reflect on the meaningful connections between Dr. King's life and Israel. These tributes underscore the deep bond between Dr. King's legacy and Israel.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote, *"The whole world must see that Israel must exist and has the right to exist and is one of the great outposts of democracy in the world."* He also powerfully stated, *"When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You are talking antisemitism."*

These words remind us of Dr. King's unwavering commitment to justice, truth, and the recognition of Israel's importance.

This month, as we celebrate Dr. King's life and work, we can help our children explore these connections in age-appropriate and meaningful ways.



1963 Civil Rights March in Washington, D.C.

Photo by [Unseen Histories](#) on [Unsplash](#)



JNF Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Forest in Galilee

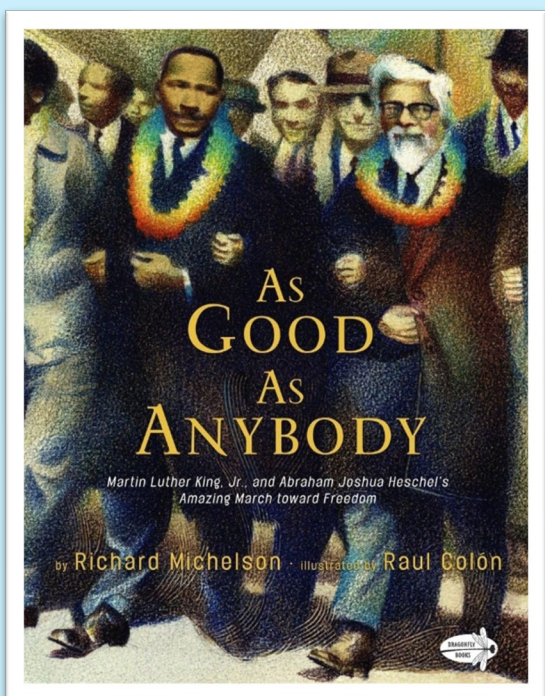
<https://archives.jewishmuseum.ca/lhmb7>

For our youngest children, music offers a beautiful pathway to Dr. King's vision of unity and peace. Hebrew songs such as [*Hinei Ma Tov*](#) (the lyrics mean, "How good it is for people to live together in peace") and [*Oseh Shalom*](#) (the lyrics mean, "May the one who makes peace in the heavens, make peace for us and all the people Israel") joyfully capture the spirit of togetherness and hope for a better world.

These songs can spark conversations about the importance of living in harmony and inspire curiosity about the diverse communities in Israel (a partial list of these communities is provided below).

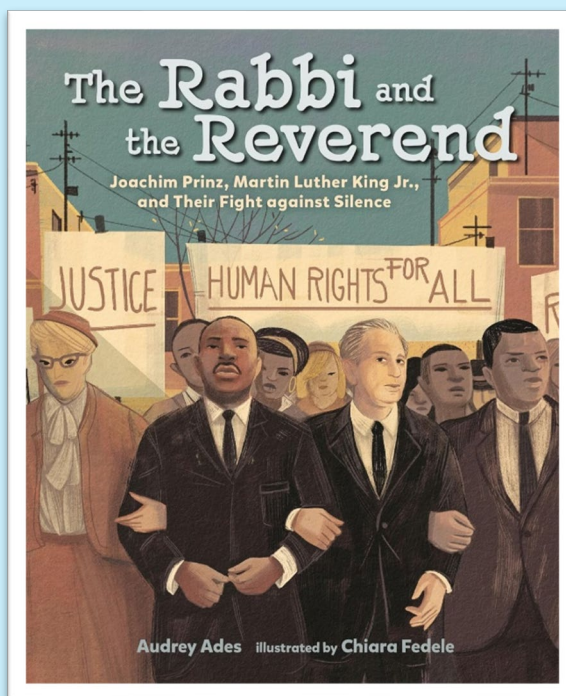
For older children, stories provide a powerful lens to explore Dr. King's legacy and his connection to the Jewish community.

Two excellent books include:



[As Good as Anybody](#) by Richard Michelson:

This poignant story highlights the parallel struggles for justice faced by Dr. King and [Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel](#), capturing their shared commitment to civil rights and their remarkable friendship.



[The Rabbi and the Reverend](#) by Audrey Ades:

A beautifully illustrated tale that delves into the bond between [Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath](#) and Dr. King, showcasing how their shared dedication to justice transcended cultural and religious differences.

While these books don't explicitly connect to Israel, they highlight the shared struggles and profound friendship between Dr. King and Jewish leaders.

Topics like segregation and the Holocaust may require thoughtful framing for younger audiences. Parents can "book walk" by skimming or summarizing parts of the story or offering age-appropriate explanations.

These books also open a window to discuss Israel as a place where Dr. King's message of justice and equality continues to resonate.

Dr. King's vision of unity invites us to celebrate the diversity that strengthens our communities. Families can explore Israel's vibrant Jewish communities, each contributing to the richness of the country's heritage.

For example, Israel is home to Jewish groups from the Middle East and North Africa (*Mizrahi*), Ethiopia (*Beta Israel*), Europe (*Ashkenazi*), India (*Bene Israel*), Russia, Spain and Portugal (*Sephardi*), and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (*Bukharian*).

Each group brings unique cultural traditions to Israel's vibrant mosaic. By engaging children in learning about these communities through music, recipes, or stories, we foster an appreciation for diversity, highlight its role in enriching our world, and inspire children to build meaningful connections with others.

For families looking to explore Dr. King's vision through music, older children might enjoy [Shed a Little Light](#) by the Maccabeats. This moving song beautifully celebrates his message of justice, peace, and light.

By grounding our conversations in Dr. King's powerful words, we honor his extraordinary legacy while helping our children embrace his dream of peace, unity, and love. Whether through songs, stories, or meaningful discussions, this month is an opportunity to connect Dr. King's vision to Israel and inspire the next generation to stand up for justice and truth.

[The Robert Russell Early Childhood Department of CAJE | The Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education](#) in Miami presents a new initiative aimed at enriching your children's understanding of Israel through engaging and thought-provoking content from a monthly article penned by two early childhood education experts: [Rabbi Dr. Meir Muller](#) and [Alana Gelnick](#).

[CAJE-Miami.org](https://caje-miami.org)



Music Selection:

