



Gershon's Monster: A Story For The Jewish New Year

Eric A. Kimmel (Retelling) , Jon J. Muth (Illustrator)

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Gershon was not always the best person he could be. True, the mistakes he made were common, ordinary things: a broken promise, a temper lost for no reason, a little untruth told here and there. But unlike most people, Gershon never regretted what he did. He never apologized or asked anyone's forgiveness. Why should he? Every year, on Rosh Hashanah, he would merely stuff his mistakes into a sack and cast them out to sea. Little did Gershon know, though, that his reckless behavior would certainly come back to haunt him. Was there still a chance for him to change?

Eric A. Kimmel and Jon J Muth capture all the drama and wonder of this traditional Hasidic legend, as they rekindle our hope for beginning the year anew.

Gershon's Monster: A Story For The Jewish New Year Details

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ISBN : 9780439108393

Author : Eric A. Kimmel (Retelling) , Jon J. Muth (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Literature, Jewish, Religion, Judaism, Folklore, Holiday



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From Reader Review Gershon's Monster: A Story For The Jewish New Year for online ebook

Malia says

This book is so profound, about the consequences of never taking real stock of your bad behavior, and how that affects future generations. I found it deeply, deeply affecting, and I can only imagine how much more impact it would have on people reading this as a part of their observance of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Clare says

I LOVE this book!

Robert says

Good retelling of a Hasidic story illustrated by Jon Muth. "We have returned to our best selves".

S10_Jessica Oster says

format: picture book

age: grades 1-7 but could be used for older students as well

protagonist: Gershon

Kimmel retells a traditional Hasidic legend for the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, which focuses on the need and act for repentance and forgiveness. Gershon is a man who does not pay much attention to the sins and mistakes he makes. He simply sweeps them (symbolized by little black monsters) down to the basement. On Rosh Hashanah, he puts whatever he has swept downstairs into a big black bag and carries it to the sea where he will discard them, symbolizing the casting and washing away of sins. However, he learns that it takes more than just the physical action of discarding his sins to truly repent and be forgiven.

This is a charming tale that stresses the value of true repentance and forgiveness. While the details reinforce Jewish beliefs, children of the Christian faith will also find value in the message of repentance and forgiveness. Even those of non-religious backgrounds would benefit from the message of understanding that mistakes and wrongdoings cannot just be ignored. The illustrations are well done and seem to accurately capture common clothing and looks without reinforcing specific religious or ethnic stereotypes. This would be a fun book for a world religion class when studying the Jewish faith and specifically for the Rosh Hashanah holiday.

L says

Retelling of a Hasidic legend - this beautifully illustrated story focuses on the importance of repentance. The monster that accumulates from our small misdeeds is a good image for teaching children. Kimmel's note following the story provides additional information on the Jewish traditions from the story.

Tom says

A very good morality story.

I'd love for Gershon to have learnt his lesson in a different way but the metaphor fits well in context I guess.

Karen says

Gershon is a man who is not necessarily bad, but he also is not a great man. He is selfish and ungrateful. He makes some mistakes, but he doesn't regret his mistakes. He literally brushes his mistakes aside until he takes his mistakes to throw them in the sea. Later, Gershon and his wife would like to have children, but they are unable to do so. He decides to seek the advice of a wise rabbi. The rabbi eventually tells him that he will have the children but all of his mistakes will come back and haunt him, by hurting his children. Will Gershon change his ways, or will he continue to act that same way?

This story, retold by Eric Kimmel, is a story to demonstrate what should happen on the Jewish New Year. This is a story that shows that we can not just brush aside our mistakes, but we need to feel regret for those mistakes, and we need to try to make ourselves our best selves. The author's note at the end of the story tells us more about this Hasidic legend. It also tells us the steps to take when we mess us to return to our true natural moral selves.

The illustrations, by Jon J. Muth, are done in watercolor and go along very well with the story. The monsters, which are Gershon's misdoings, are scary little creatures, and I like how those misdoings were visible. This shows us that our misdoings are seen by others, and hopefully ourselves, and we need to make sure that we take care of these. We need to truly get rid of them, not just push them aside. I also like Gershon's expressions throughout the entire book. They show how indifferent he is about his mistakes, but also the wear and tear the misdoings have on this man.

I would recommend this story to 2nd-4th graders, and even though it is a Jewish story, I would recommend it to anyone. It has a great message about being the best person that you can be, and how to correct your mistakes if (when) you do make one.

Teri says

Good! Particularly liked the description of how to right a wrong at the end of the book. Once again, we're all a lot more alike than we are different.

Amy Layton says

This is another absolutely beautiful book about Jewish traditions as retold by Kimmel and illustrations by Muth. Together, the two create an effective and breath-taking tale filled with reflecting and changing one's actions, as well as what it means to finally learn from the consequences. This should certainly be on your

radar for next year's Jewish New Year!

Review cross-listed here!

Sherene says

This is a wonderful book - a very clear message about being your best self. Gershon is a man who sweeps his mistakes away, literally... he never apologises, never takes responsibility for wrong-doings, never makes amends. Instead he sweeps them into a HUGE sack once a year and dumps them in the sea. But one day, those he loves the most are in danger from the monsters Gershon has created.

It's beautifully told, superbly illustrated and carries a very good message without preaching. I've read this to a class of lower primary recently (5yo-8yo) and you could have heard a pin drop. I've also read it to older students with success (9yo-12yo); they want to talk about what it means to be your best self and how to own up to your mistakes in a way that doesn't feel too excruciating.

Debra Thacker says

One of my children's favorite books.

Angela Bailey says

Title / Author / Publication Date:

Gershon's Monster: A Story for the Jewish New Year. / Eric Kimmel. Jon Muth (ill.) / 2000.

Genre: Nonfiction: Folktales.

Format: Picturebook - print.

Plot summary:

"When his sins threaten the lives of his beloved twin children, a Jewish man finally repents of his wicked ways. Retelling of a Hasidic legend featuring Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer" (NoveList).

Considerations or precautions for readers advisory:

Judaism, forgiveness, selfishness, sin

Review citation:

"Despite its obvious moral, the story flows well, and Kimmel's language glows, while retaining the flavor of a traditional tale. The watercolor illustrations work well, with the baker's sins represented as small, black, ghoulish monsters and the beast created from the sum of his misdeeds as a looming, serpentine sea monster. Muth brings Gershon to life with a truly human expressiveness. The characters are depicted with the traditional Hasidic side curls and tallith hanging out of their shirts, rooting them firmly in the Jewish tradition. Kimmel's light hand makes the lessons easy to take, and despite repetitions of the message, the telling remains an enjoyable read."

(Amy Lilien-Harper in School Library Journal).

Section source used to find the material:

ALSC: 2001 Notable Children's Books.

Recommended age: Ages 4 - 8.

Karen Maurer says

LOVE THIS BOOK so much!

Lynn Davidson says

Gershon would never apologize or ask forgiveness for anything because he had no regrets for his actions or mistakes. He didn't feel he had to, so he bagged them all up once a year and threw them into the sea. When he was warned that his way of handling it would one day cause him much grief, he ignored the possibilities - until that day arrived!

Fabulously told story and wonderful illustrations.

Cheryl says

A simple story, but both entertaining and profound. Jon J. Muth, author of Zen Shorts and several other wonderful picture-books, created illustrations that are a perfect fit. The demon-like creatures are just scary enough, Gershon is all-too-human, and every character, mood, and scene is exactly as it should be. I have loved many books by Kimmel and always admire the illustrations - he's done a wonderful job of choosing the right artist each time. And the grace and luminosity with which he tells the stories is unparalleled. I will, of course, continue to look for more by both of these talented creators, and to highly recommend them to all of you.
