For my first Kid Librarian book review, I chose to read *Bridge to America* by Linda Glaser. It is about a young, Jewish boy named Fivel living in Poland in 1920, during the aftermath of World War 1. It begins in his Shtetl or village. He lives with his Ma, brother Benyomin, and his sisters Kvola and Hannah, while his Pa is in America trying to make enough money to send for the family. To begin with, during the winter, a wealthy man comes to his family’s one-room house and wants to take Fivel because his wife wants “a good little boy.” Fivel is scared throughout most of the book that his mother will send him away, even though she declines the man’s offer in the beginning. The family, along with most in the Shtetl rely on a mensch, Beryl, who is a baker. He warms families’ soup pots, gives them Shabbos candles, challah, and more. During the middle of the book the Cossacks, who are Russian soldiers, come and raid the shtetl. After that, it’s up to their Pa to bring them to America. Will Fivel and his family make it through the winter or will Pa send for them?

The book’s theme is to never lose hope, which is seen throughout many stories that involve the classic plot of a Jewish family in Europe sending the father to America so they can come for a better life. An important value that is both general and Jewish is to remember who you are. The last thing that Fivel’s Sunday school teacher said was “Don’t ever forget who you are.” This relates because later in the book, when he moves, he begins to think of himself as someone else, when he gets another name. Specifically when he thinks “[my] teacher's words made real sense (...) Who am I?” “Who am I” is said with regards to his name Fivel, and his new name. A few Jewish values discussed in the book were to perform mitzvot and keep Shabbos. Beryl the baker was a mensch and performed many mitzvot. In Judaism, performing mitzvot, which are good deeds, are important.

I want to talk about how this story relates to me on a more personal level. I’m sticking to my roots by having my Bar Mitzvah in the Jewish homeland, Israel. By having it there, I can
truly experience the culture of Israel, visit different historical sites such as Masada, which was
were the Jews made their last stand against the Romans, the Western Wall, which is the only
remaining part of the Second Temple, the Red Sea, which was crossed as part of the Exodus, and
learn more about my heritage. To conclude, I’m excited to learn more about my heritage in Israel,
when I go for my Bar Mitzvah in June.