Jordan and the Dreadful Golem, written by Karen Goldmen, tells a story of a boy named Jordan and how he and his friends use magical gifts to overcome a Judaic mythological enemy. Jordan and his friends live in a village called Kfar Keshet. His village was founded by a woman known as Miss Sara. Sometimes Miss Sara names a child. When she does this, the infant's name has to do with a gift that they will receive around age 13, or Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. However, sometimes they find their gift earlier. An example of this is a three year old girl named Eden. Eden can create animals that she dreams up. Jordan wants his gift to be flight. Jordan, his brother Ziv, and their friends Noam and Ellah go camping in the woods. There, they witness a mysterious man create another man out of clay. They see he has a tattoo on his hand which looks like a moon with a star above it, like Lavan who is rumored to be a magician. They also see he has a silver headdress and white robe. Then they see this strange man open a big book and see sparks coming from it. They hear him sing a single line repeatedly "Golem, golem of the world, stand up straight and help me." He then kneads pieces of dirt together to make parts of the golem’s body. After some time, he suspects someone is watching and looks around near the kids’ hiding spot. After not finding anything, the man goes back to his work. He holds his headdress in front of him and mutters, then lightning zaps the dirt pieces. The dirt pieces begin to form a man. Scared, Jordan, Ziv, Noam, and Ellah head back to the campfire.

When they get back home the next morning they immediately go to Miss Sara as they believe she will be the only one who will understand what they saw. When they talk to her, she tells them that this man is Lavan and that he is her brother. She says that his original name was Isaac, but he changed it. She told them about her childhood and how when her mother died, Isaac wanted to create a golem to replace his mother, and that he changed his name as a memorial to her.

When Jordan finds his gift he is told by Miss Sara that he can only use it when someone is in danger or to help someone; if he uses his gift at any other time he will be in trouble. Once school starts, Jordan and Ziv help out at Eden's dad's zoo to earn money. While working there, Jordan begins
to become suspicious of another person working there, Mordechai. They believe that he may be the golem. This is because Mordechai lets out one of Eden's creations and puts it in the wheat field. This creature breathes fire and sets the field ablaze. Mordechai uses this as a distraction to try to kidnap Eden. Jordan also gets suspicious of Chaim who is the school security guard because he takes swabs which have been in people's mouths, even though they are supposed to go into the Med-Safety Trash container. Jordan realizes that the swabs contain DNA and if Chaim takes it to Lavan he can learn more about their possible gifts. One night before a test, Jordan realizes he left his book at school and attempts to break into the school with Ziv and Noam. Jordan and Noam have gifts, and they try use them to break in. Because the rules they received regarding their gifts state that if no one is in trouble, they can't use their gifts, the break-in fails. Ziv gets locked in the school while Jordan goes to get help. Once they get out, it's up to Jordan to find out who the golem is and figure out how to defeat him in time. Read *Jordan and the Dreadful Golem* to find out how Jordan and his friends defeat the golem.

*Jordan and the Dreadful Golem* contains multiple themes and Jewish values. One theme included is to never give up hope. This is shown when Jordan believes that he can find the golem. Specifically, he believes that Mordechai and Chaim may be the golem. It is also demonstrated when Jordan, Ziv, Ellah, and Noam believe that they can defeat the golem. This is shown when the kids try to devise a plan for killing it. Another theme that is demonstrated is to keep close things, close. When Jordan pulls out his treasure box, which contains items that are special to him, and when his friends and brother see the items, he gets embarrassed and agrees to get rid of it and its contents. His friends persuade him to do this because Miss Sara says he has to focus on his gift and his gift only. At first, he kept close objects close, but after his friends saw them, he decided to get rid of them. The book displays Jewish holidays such as Yom Kippur and Sukkot. Jordan and Ziv build a sukkah and are really proud of it. Also, Miss Sara studies the Kabbalah, which is an ancient Jewish text. The book also talks
about a golem, which is part of Jewish mythology. To conclude, the book’s themes are to never lose hope and to keep close things, close. Some of its Jewish values include celebrating holidays and studying Jewish texts. Finally, the book incorporates Jewish mythology with the creation of a golem.

One way the book related to my life is that the characters live near the Golan Heights which is a place I visited when I was in Israel. Additionally, the kids who were named by Miss Sara discover their gifts around age 13, which is Bar/Bat Mitzvah age and I just had mine. During the Bar/Bat Mitzvah we celebrate adulthood and finding gifts we have around that time makes sense.