

Inspiration Through Creativity: Two Jewish Women In Art

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Ann Koffsky

Ann Koffsky is an artist, illustrator, and author who has written and illustrated over 30 of her own books. She also produces monthly coloring pages that she distributes to the public free of charge.

For some people, art is unavoidable. Koffsky knew she wanted to be an artist from the time she was in kindergarten. She went through school trying to push art off as a hobby, but she could never shake her passion. Eventually, she graduated from Stern College for Women with a degree in studio art and went on to study at the School of Visual Arts for a year.

After school, Koffsky displayed her work at shows and worked illustrating cards for Hallmark, Costco, and Papyrus. She became a writer when she wrote and illustrated her first children's book for Shulsinger Judaica.

"The reason I was writing was to draw," explained Koffsky. Eventually, however, Koffsky began writing with no pictures at all, accumulating bylines in publications such as Jewish Action and the Times of Israel.

But visual arts were still an intrinsic part of her life. In 2013, she joined Behrman House Inc. as an editor. There, she edited three coloring books and contributed to one. In addition, Koffsky wrote/illustrated various children's books: *Frogs in the Bed: My Passover Seder Activity Book*, *Kayla and Kugel's Almost Perfect Passover*, and *Noah's Swim-a-Thon*.

Her latest book, *Judah Maccabee Goes to the Doctor*, is illustrated by Talisha Shipman and will be available in the fall of 2017.

"It feels good to share your art," remarked Koffsky. "It's no fun to draw something for yourself and put it in the closet." Adept at paper cuts, Koffsky also makes *ketubot* for weddings and has painted a mural in her shul.

Perhaps her most widespread artistic contribution has been her monthly coloring sheets. Available at no cost, each sheet centers on a Jewish theme or idea drawn in pen and ink. Koffsky explained that her coloring sheets have reached people all over the country who have limited access to a Jewish community.

"[Art] is a great thing for your *neshama* and the world," explained Koffsky. "It is so fulfilling on so many different levels." But the positive response to her work is only part of what makes art so important to Koffsky. "When you are an artist, you know that whatever you create is something no one else can create," she said. To Koffsky, it is her unique vision that makes her work meaningful.

"It makes you feel important," she added.

