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Just when you think you’ve seen every pirate book out there, along comes Schlemiel the Pirate, the klutzy scallywag who mixes pirate slang with Yiddish. After accidentally losing an arm and a leg, ramming his ship on a rock, and having many more misadventures, Schlemiel is desperate to find the treasure he promised his crew. Will Schlemiel’s bad luck change? We hope so.

OY VEY! IT’S CAPTAIN SCHLEMIEL AND THE SEARCH FOR TREASURE

Written and illustrated by Mira Reisberg

Captain Schlemiel was the klutziest, unluckiest, pirate captain ever.

“We’ll give you three chances to find the treasure you promised us, or we’ll choose a better captain,” said his crew. [Illo note: Parrot saying Schlemiel and klutzy mean clumsy]

But no sooner did they pull out of port, than Captain Schlemiel tripped on a rope, released their pirate flag, and sent his pet parrot Polly flying. Soon, an enemy ship was in hot pursuit.

“That was your first chance!” the crew shouted, running to row their way out of danger.

“I’m sorry,” Captain Schlemiel said. “I promise I’ll make it up to you by finding more treasure than you’ve ever seen.”

After they escaped, Captain Schlemiel started searching for a fancy schmancy ship full of silver, gold, and all the other treasures pirates love.

He looked North to South, and East to West.

And just as the crew began kvetching loudly, Captain Schlemiel spotted THE ship! [Illo note: Parrot saying kvetching means complaining]

"Treasure ahead!” he shouted, not noticing the huge rock in front.

“Aaaargh!” the crew cried, as the ship crashed right into it. “That was your second chance!”

Feeling verklempt, Captain Schlemiel stumbled back to his cabin, bumped into his desk, and knocked Polly off his shoulder.

“Oops!” said Captain Schlemiel, as Polly swatted Schlemiel’s papers onto the floor. [Illo note: Parrot saying verklempt means overcome with emotion]

And that’s when he saw it! Captain Schlemiel picked up the piece of paper. Then he turned it upside down.

“What mazel!” he shouted. “A treasure map! We don’t need a fancy schmancy ship after all!” [Illustration note: Show map with Meshuggah Mountains, Kleiner Creek, Vilde Valley. Polly saying Mazel means luck, meshuggah means crazy, Kleiner means small, and vilde means wild ]

Captain Schlemiel called his crew.

"I know I've been a klutzy, unlucky captain,” he said, “but with patience and your help, I believe we can find the treasure on this map and become rich beyond our wildest dreams. Are you with me?’’

“Aye, Aye!” shouted the crew, although some moaned, “Oy, Oy!” [Illo note: Parrot saying Oy oy like oy vey means oh no!]

Captain Schlemiel studied the map carefully and steered the ship to the island.

As soon as they landed, he yelled, “All we have to do is follow the directions!”

But as hard as they tried, they couldn’t find any treasure. The crew began to kvetch again, “We’ll never get rich!”

Captain Schlemiel kept patiently looking. Finally, he pointed and yelled, “Look! X marks the spot!”

The crew came running over and began to dig.

Soon they hit something hard. It was the top of a truly beautiful treasure chest.

The chest contained more treasure than they’d ever seen. But there was also something else. A book more valuable than all the silver, gold, and jewels in the world. Captain Schlemiel read the cover and some of the stories out loud. The crew laughed and cried and hugged each other. [Cover says, “The Joy of Chesed.” Polly says, Chesed, pronounced Hesed, is a Jewish value meaning loving kindness.” Show the words love, kindness, caring, support, friendship, family, community, strangers, helping, beauty, magically wafting out of the book - crew with their arms around each other crying]

“Mazeltov, Cap’n!” they cheered. “From now on you’ll no longer be Captain Schlemiel, the klutzy, unlucky, pirate captain. We’ll call you Captain Mazeldik!” [Polly saying Mazeltov means congratulations, and Malzeldik means lucky]

That night, they talked about their treasures and celebrated with a bonfire. They sang pirate songs, and danced pirate dances, ready to live happily ever after with their dear Captain Mazeldik, the kindest, most loving, and luckiest pirate captain ever. [Show dancing singing and dancing pirates]

A bit about Pirates

Back in ye olde pirate times, things were run much more democratically than most people know. The crew voted for their captain and often had a say in where they were going. Pirates were very diverse; there were women pirates and pirates from many walks of life. While pirates were often thieves, some pirates actually did good, sometimes freeing captives and helping others escape terrible places.

About Jewish Pirates in History [Yes there’s cool info about Sephardic pirates from the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Iberia. It’s fascinating.

A bit about the Author/Illustrator

Mira Reisberg grew up in Melbourne, Australia, speaking Yiddish as her first language. She’s grateful that humor is the blues of the Jews, helping her family overcome great sadness and difficulties. She now lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband Guy and their two naughty cats.