

**Book Title: Black Bird, Blue Road**

**Author: Sofiya Pasternack**

**Reviewed by: Daniel Arun Santhosh, 13**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**

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**Note: The summary is of the entire book so if you don't want the ending spoiled, I recommend reading just the first paragraph and the last paragraph 😊**

In the book *Black Bird, Blue Road*, In the Jewish empire of Khazaria, in the city of Atil, Pasternack writes about two siblings, Ziva bat Leah and her brother, Pesah. Pesah is a leper and Ziva is determined to save him and his brilliant mind, she believes that if Pesah survives, he could find a cure for leprosy. Ziva is ever hopeful, until her Uncle Sabriel announces that Pesah could make the people around him sick. He's going to send Pesah to a colony! Ziva is terrified of her brother dying and heads for Constantinople, the Christian, sometimes enemies of Khazaria. Ziva and Pesah continue their stolen wagon ride when on their first night they meet bandits. While their wagon is being ransacked, they meet a mysterious boy who convinces them to break a certain bowl for help. He is revealed to be a half-sheydim boy who was bound by a spell. He travels with Ziva and Pesah and tells them about the city of Luz. In Luz the Angel of Death is not allowed to tread.

The closing chapters of the book describe Ziva and Pesah entering the city of Luz, but Pesah is weak. They are welcomed into the city but soon realize that there are no books in the city, no food either! There was no need for it. The people also say that the Angel of Death does not care for sickness or cures. He will take Pesah once he steps out of the city. Once Rosh Hashanah comes, the people send a woman out of the city of Luz. The Angel kills her. They dance and celebrate at the sight and Ziva is disgusted. Ziva decides to bargain with the Angel. The Angel tells Ziva that her brother is not dying of leprosy but that it is making him weak and that he is dying of pneumonia, a lung infection. Then she realizes that she had caught it. Ziva had caught the disease. A white spot on her wrist. The Angel agrees to cure Ziva if Pesah dies today, and he does. He walks out of the city.

The first section of the book highlights the love Ziva has for Pesah and how amazing she thinks her brother's mind is. The beginning of the book also shows an intricately woven world with Jewish aspects throughout it. I found the book truly a breath of fresh air, the book highlights Jewish myths and culture while still being an enveloping page turner. I recommend checking your local library for this book. I also really like the use of a narrator. I wish to check out more of her books soon. The book might not be appropriate for younger readers because of details relating to Pesah's disease but I would recommend this for readers from the ages nine to twelve (I also feel that older readers would also enjoy reading it too.)

*Final Rating: 9.2/10*

**Recommended Titles:**

Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes,

Restart by Gordon Korman

Dry by Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman

The Ranger's Apprentice: The Ruins of Gorlan by John Flanagan

Projekt 1065 by Alan Gratz