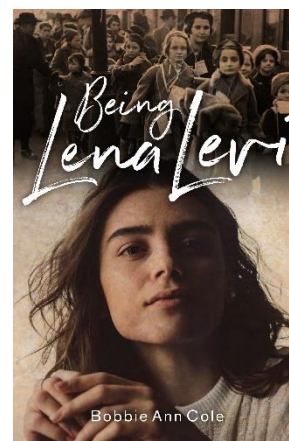


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**BEING LENA LEVI**  
by Bobbie Ann Cole

## Press Release

***How does a child refugee reconcile competing identities? Is Lena Jewish or Christian; Israeli, German or British?  
Set against the backdrop of post-War Britain  
Powerful Holocaust experience accounts  
Moves between Canterbury and newly formed Israel***



In the past few years 100,000s of child refugees have arrived in Europe.<sup>i</sup> How can these children hope to build new identities in countries that are so culturally and religiously different? In *Being Lena Levi*, we meet a child refugee from Europe's recent history which had to face exactly these questions. As globalisation marches on, the question of identity, both personal and national, frequently comes to the fore. Popular TV shows and websites tap into the fact that we are hard-wired to have a sense of who we are. The making and breaking of alliances, not just within families but also on the international stage, the increase in migration and the plethora of world religions and ideologies on offer all threaten to undermine our sense of self. In such a complex world, where can true identity be found?

Set in 1950s England and the newly formed state of Israel, *Being Lena Levi* is one girl's search for identity against the backdrop of post-War austerity in which both Canterbury and Israel need rebuilding. Having arrived as a toddler on the kindertransport in London, the now teenage heroine makes the shock discovery about her past and finds not only that she has two mothers but also that she is Jewish, not Christian. As Lena questions where she belongs and who she is, nature is pitched against nurture. Which will win?

**Bobbie Ann Cole says,** 'Every novel is in some way autobiographical. My heroine is forced to choose between Judaism and Christianity, which is what happened to me. The inspiration for this book was the biblical story of King Solomon who had to judge between two mothers claiming one child. Marlene is the product of both her mothers. She needs to know who that makes her. They need to come to terms with having to give her up. I also want my reader to understand something of the experience of Jewish children, both during and after the Holocaust, and I want to take people back to the impetus behind the creation of the State of Israel.'

The mysterious stranger who rushes to embrace teenager Marlene Roberts as she arrives home from school one day is her mother. The exotic 'Mutti', a German Jew and Holocaust survivor, is the mother she never knew she had. Years earlier, Mutti had sent the infant Marlene to England for safety but now she wants her daughter – her 'Lena Levi' – back. This means Mum isn't mum and can no longer be trusted. But neither, it turns out, can birth mother Mutti, whose past has left her volatile and deeply damaged. It also means Marlene isn't the properly English Anglican she thought, but Jewish Lena Levi. To find out who she really is she must try to resurrect a younger self she barely remembers as she follows Mutti to her home on a kibbutz in the newly formed State of Israel. For Marlene Roberts, being Lena Levi is going to be the adventure of a lifetime.

### **About the author:**

Bobbie Ann Cole has lived and worked in Israel with her husband, Butch, a Canadian. They now live in Canterbury, England, where she is a storyteller and teacher as well as a writer. Her first two books, both memoirs, became Amazon no.1 bestsellers. *Being Lena Levi* is her debut novel.

**For review copies and media enquiries contact Nicki Copeland: [info@instantapostle.com](mailto:info@instantapostle.com)**

***Being Lena Levi*** by Bobbie Ann Cole (ISBN: 9781912726097) is published by Instant Apostle and is available on 19th September 2019 from Christian bookshops, bookstores and online retailers. Fiction, 224pp, £8.99.

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children/data&oq=\\*+https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-](https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children/data&oq=*+https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-)

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