

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

AJL's Sydney Taylor Awards for Children's Literature*

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It is a special pleasure to present the Sydney Taylor Book Awards tonight. We are honored to have with us members of the late Sydney Taylor's family, Ralph Taylor—the author's husband—who sponsors the awards, and their daughter, Jo Marshall. We also have two of the "characters" from Sydney's memorable *All-of-a-Kind-Family*—two of Sydney's sisters—Henrietta, the mischievous Henny, and Gertrude, known as "baby Gertie" till little Charlie came along. Welcome! We feel we know you from these books that were a part of our childhood and are a part of our children's childhood!

A little eight-year-old girl came rushing into our library one afternoon two weeks ago as I was preparing to close. She was clutching *Ella of All Of A Kind Family* and said "I want to return this, but I need the next one in the series." We walked over to the shelf and went over the titles, but she had read them all. The girl was extremely disappointed. She didn't want to try any of the other books or authors I suggested, but picking up *All Of A Kind Family* said "I'll just have to start at the beginning again!"

Another anecdote: my library page, who happens to be a senior in high school, was supposed to be checking in and reshelving books. She seemed to have gotten bogged down in her task, and the books were piling up, so I went to see if she had a problem. There she was with her nose buried in *More All-of-a-Kind Family*. She looked up and said, "I loved these books when I was a kid" and checked it out to reread at home.

Sydney Taylor's books embody the virtues the Committee looks for in its honored books—strong Jewish values, a lively literature style, and a good story.

(Continued on p. 47, col. 1)

*Remarks at the banquet of the 22nd annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries, held in Livingston, New Jersey, June 23, 1987.

Jewish Children's Books Too Good to Miss: Selected List of 1986 Contenders Association of Jewish Libraries Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

I. Picture Books For the Youngest (Early Elementary Grades)

*Hirsh, Marilyn. *Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath*. Illustrated by Devis Grebu. Viking Kestrel.

A lovingly retold Talmudic tale, with finely detailed, full-color drawings.

Hutton, Warwick. *Moses in the Bulrushes*. A Margaret K. McElderry Book.

Retold in simple, dignified, unemotional language with exquisite pastel pictures.

Portnoy, Mindy Avra. *Ima on the Bima: My Mommy is a Rabbi*. Kar-Ben Copies.

A simple story of daily life with Rebecca and her mother the rabbi.

Schramm, Peninnah. *The Big Sukkah*. Illustrated by Jacqueline Kahane. Kar-Ben Copies.

A welcome addition to holiday literature, this story deals with a man who has a tiny house, but a big backyard.

Schwartz, Amy. *Yossel Zissel and the Wisdom of Chelm*. Jewish Publication Society.

The littlest listeners will love the whimsical pictures and the obvious foolishness of Yossel Zissel, while slightly older listeners and readers will laugh at the elaborate, but increasingly worthless exchanges Yossel arranges for his gold.

II. Books for Young Readers (Grades 3-6)

Bacon, Josephine. *Cooking the Israeli Way*. Lerner Publications.

A delightful and clear cookbook for children and parents.

Chaikin, Miriam. *Aviva's Piano*. Clarion Books.

This little story, with its pleasant, whimsical drawings, includes plenty of illustrations, details, and incidents to provide a feel of children's life at Kibbutz Kfar Giladi on the Lebanese border.

Chaikin, Miriam. *Sound the Shofar: The Story and*

Meaning of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Clarion Books.

The final volume in Chaikin's holiday series.

Cowan, Paul. *A Torah is Written*. Photographed by Rachel Cowan. Jewish Publication Society.

A beautifully written, photographed, and designed book that communicates the love, spirit, care, and work that go into making a Torah scroll.

Livingston, Myra Cohn, ed. *Poems For Jewish Holidays*. Illustrated by Lloyd Bloom. Holiday House.

A small, but delightful collection of poems, with handsome substantial illustrations. This book will be enjoyed by children and parents together.

Schnur, Steven. *The Narrowest Bar Mitzvah*. Illustrated by Victor Lazzaro. Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In this easy-to-read account of Alex's big day, a broken water main floods the Temple, but Grandpa's narrow old house becomes the ark that brings Alex's parasha, the story of Noah, to completion.

Schur, Maxine. *Hannah Szenes: A Song of Light*. Illustrated by Donna Ruff. Jewish Publication Society.

A biography for the young reader.

Spector, Barbara. *The Great Jewish Quiz Book*. Jewish Publication Society.

A fun-filled, fact-filled quiz book that will entertain children and adults.

III. For Young Adults (Grade 5 and Above)

Kushner, Donn. *Uncle Jacob's Ghost Story*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

A story replete with wonder, mysterious misdeeds, love, Polish-Jewish ghosts, and the Jewish immigration experience.

Lager, Marilyn. *Sigmund Freud: Doctor of the Mind*. Enslow Publishing.

A useful introduction to the life, studies, and theories of Freud.

Levinson, Nancy Smiler. *I Lift My Lamp: Emma Lazarus and the Statue of Liberty*. Lodestar/Dutton.

A parallel story of the life of Emma Lazarus and the development of the statue.

Neimark, Anne E. *One Man's Valor: Leo Baeck and the Holocaust*. Lodestar/Dutton.

Includes the outline of Leo Baeck's life, actions, and philosophy, with the focus on his heroic role in saving Jews during the Holocaust.

*Pitt, Nancy. *Beyond the High White Wall*. Charles Scribner's Sons.

An exciting story, told by 13-year-old Libby, of life and the pressures on Jews in "the old country."

Sherman, Eileen Bluestone. *Monday in Odessa*. Jewish Publication Society.

A story of a modern "refusenik" family.

Zakon, Miriam Stark. *The Floating Minyan of Pirate's Cove*. Judaica Press.

On the way to the solution of this fast-paced mystery, young readers will learn about Jewish practice, events in the Bible, and modern Jewish history.

*Award Winners.

HART

(Continued from p. 46, col. 1)

The Committee read and reviewed numerous children's books published in 1986. Each member wrote at least 40 reviews. I thank the following librarians—Leni Allbaugh, Aileen Grosberg, Geraldine Powers, Edie Salzman, and Jan Sherman—for their excellent evaluations, their well-written reviews, and their promptness! The best of the books we read are listed in "Jewish Children's Books Too Good To Miss: Selected List of 1986 Contenders."

We thank our winners for their contribution to Jewish children's literature, and to the life and education of Jewish children.

Merrily F. Hart is the Librarian at The Arthur J. Lelyveld Center For Jewish Learning, Fairmount Temple, in Cleveland, Ohio, and Chairman of the AJL Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee for Children's Literature.

Sydney Taylor Book Award Acceptance Speeches

Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath **Marilyn Hirsh, Author** **Devis Grebu, Artist** **Picture Book Award Winners**

Introduction by
Merrily F. Hart

The award for the best picture book for 1986 goes to *Joseph Who Loved The Sabbath*, written by Marilyn Hirsh, illustrated by Devis Grebu, and published by Viking-Kestrel.

Marilyn Hirsh is well known to the members of our Association. Her more than 30 books for children have encompassed many cultures. She began illustrating children's books when she was a Peace Corps volunteer in India. When she returned to the U.S., she began to write, as well as illustrate, books. The inspiration for her early books came from the stories her grandmother used to tell about Marilyn's father's boyhood. Her books include the perennial favorites: The Rabbi and the 29 Witches (1976), Ben Goes Into Business (1973), Potato Pancakes All Around (1978), and Could Anything Be Worse (1974). Her more recent holiday books, I Love Hanukkah (1984) and I Love Passover (1985), are perfect introductions to the holidays for the little ones. Marilyn Hirsh was honored for her contributions to Jewish children's literature when the AJL gave her the second Sydney Taylor Body-Of-Work Award in 1979. That turned out to be just the beginning, however, and this latest book was just too good to pass over for the 1986 Picture Book Award.

The Sydney Taylor Awards for children's literature were established in 1984 through an endowment fund to the Association of Jewish Libraries. This has enabled AJL to make cash awards in three categories: Best Picture Book, Best Children's Book, and Body-of-Work. The award-winning books will bear a seal embossed with the names of the Association and Sydney Taylor. The awards have been established to perpetuate the memory of Sydney Taylor by encouraging the publication of quality literature for Jewish children.

Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath retells the familiar midrash of the poor farmer, Joseph, who toiled ceaselessly all week for a greedy and selfish landlord. He spent his little bit of money on the finest foods and objects to celebrate Shabbat. Reward for his piety came—as it often does in folktales—in the belly of a fine fish, purchased for Shabbat. The reward, a ruby—swallowed by the fish from the turban of the evil landlord who perished in a storm at sea—allowed Joseph to purchase the land and animals that his labor had nurtured.

Half of the joy of Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath comes from the intricate lines and beautiful colors of the illustrations by Devis Grebu. Mr. Grebu, born in Rumania, is an internationally known artist, who has lived in many places: Israel, Paris, and currently—Ossining, New York. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest. His paintings have been exhibited in Europe, Israel, Japan, and the U.S., and his illustrations have appeared in many major magazines—Time, Forbes, Harper's, and Business Week to name a few. You may have seen his depiction of Passover gracing the cover of the Spring 1987 issue of Reform Judaism. Our award-winning artist has illustrated over thirty books and has received awards in France and Austria for children's book illustration. He currently has numerous projects underway, and one of them is the Jewish Book Council poster for Jewish Book Month 1987, which makes its debut this evening. It is a pleasure to have Mr. Grebu accept the award for Joseph Who Loved the Sabbath.