

Jewish Children's Books Too Good to Miss: Selected List of 1990 Titles

Association of Jewish Libraries, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

I. The Best Picture Books

+ Feder, Harriet. *Judah Who Always Said "No"*. Illus. by Harriet K. Feder. Kar-Ben Copies.

The Hanukkah story, told from the perspective of a maturing Judah who grew from a stubborn child to a determined ruler.

+ Goldin, Barbara Diamond. *The World's Birthday—A Rosh Hashana Story*. Illus. by Jeanette Winter. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

A loving family skeptically supports young Daniel when he plans a birthday party for the world to celebrate the Jewish New Year.

Grode, Phyllis. *Sophie's Name*. Illus. by Shelley O. Haas. Kar-Ben Copies.

Sophie Davida Finkle-Cohen thinks her name is too long and begs her family to call her "Sue," but as she learns about her namesakes, "Sue" begins to change her mind.

Hest, Amy. *Fancy Aunt Jess*. Illus. by Amy Schwartz. William Morrow.

Becky loves to spend weekends in Brooklyn with her ebullient, vibrant Aunt Jess and is delighted that she helps Aunt Jess find the perfect man at Shabbat services.

Hest, Amy. *The Ring and The Window Seat*. Illus. by Deborah Heffele. Scholastic.

Although she has been saving for a ring, Stella gives her sockful of nickels to a Jewish carpenter who is trying to rescue his little girl from Nazi-controlled Europe.

*Kimmel, Eric A. *The Chanukkah Guest*. Illus. by Giora Carmi. Holiday House.

On the first night of Hanukkah, Old Bear wanders into Bubba Brayna's house and receives a delicious helping of potato latkes when Bubba mistakes the bear for the Rabbi. Illustrated by Giora Carmi, this is our award winner.

Manushkin, Fran. *Latkes and Applesauce*. Illus. by Robin Spowart. Scholastic.

When a blizzard leaves a farm family housebound on Hanukkah, they share

what little they have with some starving animals, who later return the favor by allowing the family to celebrate with latkes and applesauce on the eighth night.

Morris, Ann. *When Will the Fighting Stop? A Child's View of Jerusalem*. Photos by Lily Rivlin. Atheneum.

A young Jewish boy living in Jerusalem observes all the different people living in the city and wonders why they can't all be friends.

Ross, Lillian. *The Little Old Man and His Dreams*. Illus. by Deborah Healy. Harper and Row.

G-d comes to an old man in his dreams and allows him to attend his granddaughter's wedding, but in return the old man must come to live with G-d. A sophisticated picture book for the older child.

Zalben, Jane Breskin. *Happy Passover, Rosie and Leo and Blossom's Sukkah*. Illus. by the author. Henry Holt.

Two charming, small, picture-book holiday tales of a family of bears and their celebrations.

II. The Best Books for Older Children

Barrie, Barbara. *Lone Star*. Delacorte.

Actress Barrie's first book relates the story of a young Jewish girl forced to move with her family from their comfortable life in Chicago to Corpus Christi, Texas. As she adjusts to her new surroundings, her Orthodox grandfather is repelled by the assimilated lifestyle.

Chaikin, Miriam. *Menorahs, Mezuzahs, and Other Jewish Symbols*. Clarion.

Explains the history and significance of many Jewish symbols such as the Star of David, Menorah, Mezuzah, and holiday symbols and rituals.

*Geras, Adèle. *My Grandmother's Stories*. Alfred A. Knopf.

In a richly Jewish milieu, Grandmother relates ten traditional Jewish tales to her devoted granddaughter in this warmly illustrated (by Jael Jordan)

winner of the Sydney Taylor Book Award.

Gold, Sharlya; Caspi, Mishael Maswari. *The Answered Prayer and Other Yemenite Folktales*. Jewish Publication Society.

Interesting rich folktale collection perfect for the storyteller or reader.

Herman, Charlotte. *The House on Walenska Street*. Dutton.

An easy-to-read chapter book about eight-year-old Leah, her two younger sisters, and their widowed mother living in a small Russian *shtetl* in 1913.

+Laird, Christa. *Shadow of the Wall*. Greenwillow.

Living with his mother and two sisters in the Warsaw Ghetto, Misha is befriended by the director of the orphanage, Dr. Janusz Korczak, and finds a purpose to his life when he joins a resistance organization.

Matas, Carol. *Code Name Kris*. Scribner's.

After the Nazi occupation of Denmark forces his Jewish friends to flee the country, seventeen-year-old Jesper continues his work with the underground resistance movement.

+Mayerson, Evelyn Wilde. *The Cat Who Escaped From Steerage*. Scribner's.

Living in the steerage section of a steamship bound for America, Chanah tries to keep her newly found cat a secret.

Sherman, Eileen. *Independence Avenue*. Jewish Publication Society.

Elias, a fourteen-year-old Russian immigrant, arrives alone in Kansas City in 1907, finding new employment and friends, but also receiving bad news about his family back in Russia.

Strom, Yael. *A Tree Stands Still: Jewish Youth in Eastern Europe Today*. Philomel.

A collection of interviews in which young people from Eastern Europe tell what life is like as a descendant of Holocaust survivors.

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Sydney Taylor Book Award Acceptance Speeches

The Chanukkah Guest Eric A. Kimmel, Author Giora Carmi, Illustrator Picture Book Award Winners

Introduction by Sue Barancik

One book stood out from the picture books we reviewed because of its unique text and the quality of its illustrations; a book well matched, a shidekh. *The Chanukkah Guest* tells the story of 97-year-old Bubba Brayna, hard of hearing and lacking in vision, who is busily preparing a delicious Hanukkah feast of latkes for her shtetl neighbors, including the village rabbi. When the rabbi arrives a little early, he certainly has terrible manners, gobbling up the latkes, knocking over the nuts for the dreidel game, shaking his snowy fur coat all over the clean house. But we the readers can clearly see what Brayna can't—her visitor is a bear.

Eric Kimmel is the author of this funny, appealing story—the third book he has written about Hanukkah, making him the Menorah Maven. Last year, Eric's book, *Hershel and the Hanukah Goblins*, illustrated by Trina Scharf Hyman, was a Caldecott Honor Book. In this book, he continued the droll tales begun in *Hershel of Ostropol*, published by the Jewish Publication Society.

A resident of Portland, Oregon, Mr. Kimmel is Professor of Education at Portland State University, and has received several pres-

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Treseder, Terry Walton. *Hear O Israel: A Story of The Warsaw Ghetto*. Atheneum.

A boy describes life in the Warsaw Ghetto and his family's ultimate transfer to and extermination at Treblinka.

Weissenberg, Fran. *The Streets Are Paved with Gold*. Harbinger House.

Fourteen-year-old Debbie Gold and her school and family life in Brooklyn during the 1920s are the subject of this novel, the winner of the 1988 Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award. [See *Judaica Librarianship* vol. 4 no. 2 (1989), pp. 174–175.—Ed.]

+ Honor Book

*Winner of Sydney Taylor Award

tigious awards in his state for contributions to reading and literacy. He has published over a dozen books and is gathering increased recognition for his work. He is accompanied to our conference by his wife, Doris, his mother from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and his brother from New York, who are sharing this simḥah [happy occasion] with him.

Giora Carmi, the illustrator of *The Chanukkah Guest*, also illustrated Eric Kimmel's book, *The Chanukah Tree*, and a book on Japanese folklore, forthcoming in September. Although they have collaborated on three books, this is the first time the two men have met or even talked! Mr. Carmi grew up in Israel, attended the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem, and illustrated fifteen books in Israel. He is the author-illustrator of *And Shira Imagined*, a book about a child's trip to Israel. He, his wife, and three children moved to Briarwood, New York, in 1985, where he has continued to illustrate books as well as draw editorial cartoons.

We are proud to salute *The Chanukkah Guest*, by Eric Kimmel, illustrated by Giora Carmi, published by Holiday House, as the recipient of our Sydney Taylor Picture Book Award.

Remarks by Eric A. Kimmel

This is a happy occasion for me for several reasons. My mother, my brother, and my wife are able to be here tonight. It's too bad all my other relatives in Florida seem to be out of town this week, so they can't be here. That's okay. They never buy the books either.

What is also a pleasure is finally having the opportunity to meet Giora Carmi, who will have illustrated three of my books as of this fall. A large part of whatever merit they have is the result of his talent and insight. I hope this will be the first of many honors we'll share.

I was asked to prepare some brief remarks—something along the line of literary after-dinner mints: stimulating without being overly filling. This puts me in mind of an episode that occurred when I was a graduate student at the University of Illinois. The Israeli students and their families asked me—who knows why?—to lead their seder. "Now look, Arik," they said (for some reason they were always confusing me with General Sharon), "We don't want to be here all night. You don't have to read everything. Skip! Skip!"

So I did. Except that the first time I tried leaving something out, what happened? "You aren't going to do that? Why not? It's the best part!" It continued like that through the entire seder. Whatever was left out went right back in. And what was the verdict? "That was great! Why can't we do it this way every year?"

So I hope these remarks will be like that seder. Maybe not the whole megillah, but at least the Haggadah.

Why does a writer like myself write Jewish books? It's not for the money. I. L. Peretz did legal work for the Warsaw Community Council to pay his bills. Sholem Aleichem, writing day and night, was never more than a few payments away from bankruptcy, thanks to publishers who thought paying royalties to an author was a *treyf* [not Kosher] idea. Abraham Reisen had to hawk his books of poetry to the audiences at his readings to get carfare home—and he frequently didn't get it!