

No matter what was going on in the rest of her life, Beth told me, Shabbat was a day to relax and feel peaceful with herself. We talked about what Shabbat meant to her. I remember feeling deeply surprised, relieved, and happy that I'd found this peaceful retreat in the middle of Manhattan. Here, every week, Janet and Beth reaffirmed for themselves what was important. I thought perhaps this is why this apartment feels like a home.

Thinking about Janet and Beth and that first year in New York brought up more memories. I remembered one night when I couldn't sleep. I remembered getting out of bed and taking out my journal. I expected to write regretfully about friends I'd left in California, or of my worries about finding work. Instead, I found myself making a list similar to the list Mrs. Moskowitz makes when she is first left alone in her new apartment. "I miss my blue chair," I wrote, "I miss my sofa," and so on. When I was done, I felt comforted, and could fall asleep.

I also remembered my frequent trips back to California. I remembered returning to New York each time with a suitcase full of favorite things from home. Just as Mrs. Moskowitz begins to feel happy when she unpacks her candlesticks, as I unpacked each item, I felt just a little bit more at home.

The few words I'd typed out had brought up many feelings and memories, but they did not make up a picturebook. I was stuck. I talked to my agent. We decided that I was probably not the right person to write this book. I put the project aside.

Around this time another friend of mine, Nancy, was getting married. I bought her a little handmade pillow as a wedding present. It was very pretty. Before wrapping it, and giving it up to Nancy to put on her sofa, I decided to test it out on my sofa. It looked lovely sitting there. But, my sofa didn't measure up to the pillow. My sofa suddenly looked very shabby. And, somehow, now the picture above my sofa didn't look right either. My rug looked worn, and the pottery on the coffee table didn't look right either. I felt very agitated. I rearranged the pottery. I adjusted the picture. I swept the rug and cleaned the living room. When I was done, I felt centered and calm. And, I had a structure for my Sabbath story.

I wrote up a story proposal and sent it to David at JPS. He liked the proposal, and, with his help, I began writing *Mrs. Moskowitz*.

That's the story behind my story. *Mrs. Moskowitz* is a book about some simple

(continued in column 3)

**Uri Orlev:
Children's Book Award Winner**
Introduction by
Judy Greenblatt

This year, among the candidates for the Children's Book Award, was one whose author clearly shared our goals. Immediately after World War II, there was a great silence on the part of survivors as they attempted to come to terms with what they had experienced. After a period of many years, they slowly began to find their tongues. Uri Orlev is one who has found an eloquent and powerful voice indeed. It was a long time before he could give expression to his experiences.

Uri Orlev was born in Warsaw in 1931. His father was captured by the Russians at the start of the war, and Uri spent the years 1939-1941 hiding in the Warsaw ghetto, together with his mother and younger brother. His mother was killed, and he and his brother were sent to Bergen-Belson.

The Island on Bird Street, winner of AJL's Sydney Taylor Best Book Award for 1984, is the story of Alex, a boy left alone in a Polish ghetto, based on Mr. Orlev's childhood experiences. The horrors of war are clear, yet the point of view maintained is optimistic. Alex, age 11, survives the winter in a ruined house in the ghetto. Not blind hope, but faith based on the words of his parents and of his father's friend, Boruch, guide him through his darkest days. The Island on Bird Street was published in Hebrew in 1981, and won the Mordechai Bernstein Award for Children's Literature, given by Haifa University.

Mr. Orlev immigrated to Israel after the war, and at first worked on a kibbutz in the lower Galilee. He is the author of an adult novel, The Lead Soldiers, but for the past five years has concentrated on writing for children.

Mr. Orlev lives with his wife and three children in Jerusalem, so you will understand that he could not be with us tonight. He has, however, sent us a letter.

Remarks by Uri Orlev

I wish to express my deep gratitude to your Association for presenting *The Island on Bird Street* with your Best Book Award.

I feel privileged to have been able in this book to share some of my experiences in the Holocaust with others.

I feel privileged to have been able to speak in it for all those who perished.

But perhaps, above all, I feel privileged to have demonstrated in it the total failure of

(continued in column 3)

**Miriam Chaikin:
Body-of-Work Award Winner**
Introduction by
Judy Greenblatt

The 1984 recipient of the Sydney Taylor Body-of-Work Award is Miriam Chaikin. Ms. Chaikin has won a place of deep affection and respect in all our hearts and minds, as well as in those of our children. When the books started to arrive at our door in great numbers last fall, my daughter Miriam—who was then ten—could be counted on to appear immediately after the mailman, asking longingly if another Molly book had arrived.

Miriam Chaikin was born in Jerusalem, grew up in Brooklyn—home of the Molly books—and now lives in Manhattan. She was brought up in a close-knit Orthodox family. This upbringing has been a major influence on her writing. That she feels holidays renew family ties and spirit, and link us with a shared past, is clearly evident in her work.

Earlier in her career, Ms. Chaikin worked for two U.S. Senators. She entered publishing via the subsidiary rights area, and was then a book editor and later editorial director for a major publishing house. Now a writer and a free-lance editorial consultant, Ms. Chaikin has authored the text of several picture books and has poems in various anthologies.

Molly, heroine of the series about a girl growing up in an Orthodox family in Brooklyn in the 1940s, initially appeared in I Should Worry, I Should Care, Miriam Chaikin's first novel. But the four Molly books have not

(continued on next page)

Amy Schwartz (continued from column 1)

feelings, but, to me, important ones. I'm happy that what has touched me has touched others also.

I'm grateful to the Jewish Publication Society for publishing my story. I'd like to thank my editor David Adler for his editorial help, his patience, and encouragement.

Thank you for inviting me here and thank you for this award.

Uri Orlev: (continued from column 2)

the Nazis to destroy the human spirit in even a little boy.

I am sorry to have been unable to attend this festive occasion and wish to thank you once more for the prize you have honored me with.

been Ms. Chaikin's only achievement in this genre. The Seventh Day and Joshua in the Promised Land preceded her holiday series, and now Yossi has joined Molly as a fictional character of note in a new series. A word about the books in the holiday series, which will be classics for years to come: in all of them we find meticulous care and attention to detail in a framework that reveals the whole range of holiday customs around the world as well as the history of each celebration. These are intended for children, but please let adults have a crack at them too. They'll find these books marvelous for reviving the holiday information they acquired in Hebrew School, but have since stored in somewhat inaccessible places. The books are also excellent introductions to our celebrations to share with our non-Jewish friends.

It gives me great pleasure to call upon Miriam Chaikin, winner of the Sydney Taylor Body-of-Work Award, to come forward and receive her award.

Remarks by Miriam Chaikin

I was raised in an Orthodox Jewish home, in Brooklyn. The community, Borough Park, is today totally religious-Chassidic and now looks like an affluent Meah She'arim. Then, when I was growing up, it was mostly general Jewish, with a sprinkling of Irish and Italians.

Though the Jews were numerically superior, we Jewish children were afraid of the tough, sometimes bullying, Gentile children. That was before Israel. Today, Jewish children are less afraid.

My parents, and the parents of all my friends, spoke with Jewish accents—some heavy, some heavier still. Only I among my friends came from a religious home. My friends' parents seemed to me more modern, more American, more streamlined. They didn't stick out so much in the social scene. Their fathers went to work on Saturdays. Some of their mothers smoked.

Our differentness felt like a stigma to me. I wished my parents could be more modern. Trying to get my father—he was a Hebrew teacher—to work on Saturdays was out of the question. But I wanted to know why he couldn't also have some American interests—like baseball. Or drinking beer. Or wearing pointy shoes. I tried to encourage my mother to smoke.

In the early years, when I was trying to shake free of the stigma, I rebelled against the incomprehensible rituals that were imposed upon me. I wanted to be free, like my friends. I wanted to be an American girl, like

them. And I waged war at home. As the eldest of five children, I took it upon myself to blaze a trail for my siblings. I reasoned and argued and spoke in my unblemished American accent—no small psychological advantage—demanding to know:

What does God care if we turn on the light on shabbos?

Why do we have to tear toilet paper for shabbos, it's embarrassing when my friends come?

In time, I won a few points, with the help, no doubt, of outside pressures. My father shed his *arba kanfot*, the *tzitzit*, he wore, and started wearing American undershirts. My siblings were able to listen to *Let's Pretend* on the radio on Saturday afternoons. The shredded toilet paper also went.

The adjustment to American life was not easy for my parents. My mother came from Petakh Tikvah, in Palestine; my father—before a stint in the American Army—from Tula, Russia. They did the best they could, raising children, making ends meet, trying to survive personally in an alien environment. They sent me to Hebrew school, to make a good Jew of me. Hebrew school in those days was not directed by a high degree of knowledge or scholarship. The school did the best it could. I did the best I could.

I was happy enough to be a Jew, but I also wanted to be in the mainstream. And so I set out to become an American.

On my first job, I was not yet an American. It was working for the American League for a Free Palestine. But here I met a different type of Jew—European intellectuals and young Palestinian men sent by the Irgun to mobilize American public opinion. They were not timid about being Jews. They acted as if they had the right to make demands of American society.

Gradually, I entered the mainstream, working in Washington for a United States Senator, returning to New York to work in public relations, and finally entering the field I longed to work in—publishing. For early on I gravitated to books and was interested in writing.

I became editor-in-chief of children's books and had a few children's books, short stories, and poems published. I was an editor. I was a writer. I was in the mainstream. I had become an American—smoking and drinking martinis with the rest.

During dinner with a friend one evening, I was thrown a curve. Edna Barth, may she rest in peace, was also a writer and editor. Edna said: Why don't you write a Jewish story, something that grows out of your own life?

Though I did not let on, I took it as an insult. Did she regard the books I had written as failures? Was she trying to tell me to write for my own people, where I might find a more hospitable audience? Her suggestion made me feel expelled from the larger world of children's books, limited, consigned to a narrow place.

Somehow I began to write what became *I Should Worry, I Should Care*. As I immersed myself in those years—1941–42—I began to see things a little differently. I found myself writing not about the complaints of deprivation I had as a child, but about how Molly, my character, was regarded as being better off by her friends. The friends were free to do whatever they liked on shabbos. But the highlight of the week, or month, for them was to come to Molly's house on Friday night or to join there in the celebration of a Jewish holiday. That was true when I was growing up, but I did not really see it at the time.

In the book, Molly was no longer angry at her parents. On the contrary, she was enjoying them. She was no longer perturbed at God for making foolish commandments, but made the window of her room a "high place" from which to talk to God. Writing a fictionalized account of my Jewish background softened me, enriched me. I told this to Edna before she died, and also of my resentment at her earlier suggestion, and I thanked her.

I had no thought of writing another Molly book. I was happy enough to squeeze out this one. I was startled, therefore, when Charlotte Zolotow, my editor at Harper, said: What about a second Molly book?

There have been four, and I have just finished putting the last touches on a fifth one.

Nor, having set my foot on the path of Jewish life, was that the only window to open for me.

Jim Gibling, editor-in-chief of Clarion Books, and also, it so happens, Edna's publisher—*s'iz a velt mit veltelakh*, the world is made up of little worlds—approached me at a publishing meeting and said Clarion was interested in adding to its holiday series by publishing books about the Jewish holidays—Was I interested in writing one?

It had never crossed my mind to write non-fiction. Fiction—a story—was something I had always dabbled in, even as a child. But nonfiction? Researching, assembling facts, organizing information to make it accessible and palatable? I didn't think I had the background for it. I didn't think I could do it. By some miracle, I held my tongue and said I would try.

What a world I came across in my research! I knew there had been a Jewish Temple in the distant past, but nothing of the drama that surrounded it in the thousand years that it stood. Or that lavish ceremonies led by priests, singers and musicians had taken place there. I knew the Maccabees had put up a fight, but not that it was a historic battle against a world power. I knew that God had promised Canaan to the Israelites, but not that the land was not a vacant piece of real estate, waiting for the Jews to arrive. I knew that Israel was a land of milk and honey, but not of the wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives and dates that grew there, and that required cultivation, and that were joyously offered in their seasons. The breadth and sweep and depth of the man, Moses, was a revelation to me as well.

I learned of Hillel and Shammai and of the enlightened Jewish attitudes of the first centuries. I learned that when my ancestors were reading and writing, the barbarian ancestors of today's Europeans were living in caves. And Yehudah Halevi. And Maimonides. And the other physician-philosophers. How many people in their religious history have tales of the Sambatyon River, which throws up sand and stones during the week and comes to a rest on the Sabbath? And the false messiahs, even them. Even Sabbetai Zevi. How many people had a false messiah who stood under the *chuppah* and in a public ceremony married the Torah? How many people's ancestors invented whole new languages—Yiddish and Ladino—and cultures and literature to go with them?

But I am getting ahead of my story. I presented Jim with the manuscript I had written, *Light Another Candle, the Story and Meaning of Hanukkah*. Jim read the manuscript and discussed it with me. It was skimpy in its first incarnation. Being a Christian and unfamiliar with Jewish history, he had many bona fide questions to ask. What exactly does this mean? Can you say more about that? What did the Jews in concentration camps do during the Holocaust? I had to amplify and say more and say it better.

The format for my holiday books has been established. And Ann Troy, my Clarion editor, also asks, to the enhancement of the text—What exactly does this mean? And, Can you say more about that? There are now books for every major Jewish holiday. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur will come out next year.

And what of the wonderful Baal Shem Tov, and the riches of Chassidic literature? An artist friend I was walking with said one day, "Look at that Jewish rabbi." I looked and saw

a Chassid. My friend may be pardoned. He was a Gentile. But I found that many Jews knew little more. They were ignorant of the contribution to Jewish literature made by this strand of Judaism. They saw in Chassidim simply men in dark suits, with beards.

I wanted to share with these "outsiders" the ideas that stimulated me: It is forbidden for a Jew to be depressed. Sing to God. God likes to see you having a good time. So I wrote *How Yossi Beat the Evil Urge* and *Yossi Asks the Angels for Help*. Next year, *Yossi Gives God a Hand* will be published.

My writing—the subjects of my writing—greatly enrich my own life. So do my readers. One little girl wrote me that she, too, wants to become a writer. What she did not know was that she already was a writer. She had grasped the essentials of the craft. She wrote: "The main problem I have is when I start to write I don't know where to begin."

How many people's ancestors invented whole new languages—Yiddish and Ladino—and cultures and literature to go with them?

Another little girl had already mastered the complexity of reality. She wrote: "I really liked *Finders Weepers*. It tells things that are true like the part about telling the truth. People can't help lying sometimes, though."

A third reader taught me something about the mystery of writing. The return envelope bore an address in New York's Chinatown. The little girl's name was Chinese. Intrigued, I opened the envelope. She wrote about *I Should Worry* saying, "I liked your book because the same thing happened to me." What, I wondered, could have happened to a little girl growing up today in Chinatown that also happened to Molly, a little Jewish girl growing up in Brooklyn so many years ago? I read on: "My best friend lived in the same house too." That was the thread that linked Molly's story to hers.

I realized that she was my collaborator. I brought the story. She brought the crayons. My text, her pictures. A book doesn't exist if it has no reader. Not in the Zen sense where the question is asked: If a tree falls in the forest and there's no one to hear it, is there sound? The writing effort is not complete until a reader supplies pictures.

You have all supplied pictures for my books. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the Sidney Taylor Award—and I also share it with you.

SHOFAR IS A MAGAZINE JUST FOR KIDS

Every student should have a copy to use at school and to take home so that he or she can:

- Enter our contests
- Do the puzzles
- Play the games
- Read and reread the original work
- Share it with the family

SHOFAR HAS:

- Interviews and stories about Jewish celebrities and sports personalities
- Games
- Puzzles
- Contests
- Plays
- Stories
- Cartoons
- News
- and More



SHOFAR ORDER CARD

Send with check for \$14.50 made out to:
SHOFAR, P.O. BOX 852
WHEATLY HEIGHTS, N.Y. 11798

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

This is a gift from: _____

A Gift Card Will Be Enclosed With Each Subscription

SHOFAR will be published monthly
October through May.

Subscription Rate	\$14.50
Group Rates	\$11.95
(10 or more to same address)	

Teacher's Guide available if magazines are ordered for classroom use. Please request.

Canadian orders. Please send payment in Int'l Money Order. Add \$4.00 for postage.