AJL NOTABLE CHILDREN’S BOOKS OF JEWISH CONTENT: THE BEST OF THE BUNCH FROM 2001 ANNOUNCED

The Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee of the Association of Jewish Libraries has chosen 32 notable books for children and young people, in addition to two Sydney Taylor Award winners and one Sydney Taylor Honor Book. They were chosen from among the approximately 120 children’s books of Jewish content published in 2001. This is twice the number of children’s books of Jewish content published ten years ago, a trend that suggests that interest in Jewish children’s books is strong and growing. Among the 2001 notable titles are Bible stories, biographies, folk tales, holiday stories, mysteries, and fiction with historical and contemporary settings, published in the United States and Canada. The audience for the books ranges from preschool through high school. A complete list follows:

2001 SYDNEY TAYLOR AWARD WINNER FOR YOUNGER READERS


The author of a previous Sydney Taylor Book Award for Younger Readers again draws on childhood memories to create a story about Jewish immigrants living on New York’s Lower East Side. Rivka’s efforts to convince her family and their rabbi that Thanksgiving is indeed a holiday that Jews should celebrate are related with warmth, respect, and an understanding of the relevance of this most American holiday to Jewish tradition and history. The softly colored illustrations reflect the ambience of the story, imbuing it with atmosphere and portraying its characters with affection and humor.
### 2001 SYDNEY TAYLOR AWARD WINNER FOR OLDER READERS


The life and work of one of the modern world’s most important thinkers are illuminated in this carefully researched, superbly crafted biography. Freud was controversial during his lifetime and remains so: the author discusses his theories, points out their weaknesses and enduring values, and fairly represents the views of both his supporters and critics. This is done in the context of his family life and his position as a Viennese Jew, placing Freud’s personal and professional life within a social history. Enhanced by excellent notes, an amazingly clear glossary, and black and white photographs.

### NOTABLE BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Illustrator</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alexander, Sue</td>
<td>BEHOLD THE TREES</td>
<td>Illus. by Leonid Gore</td>
<td>NY: Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>48p.</td>
<td>$16.95</td>
<td>0590762117</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>Non-fiction for grades 2-5. Recalling the history of Eretz Yisrael from Canaanite times to the founding of the modern state, this beautifully designed book has splendid illustrations that mirror the rise, trials, and achievements of the Jewish people as reflected by Israel’s trees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biers-Ariel, Matt</td>
<td>SOLOMON AND THE TREES</td>
<td>Illus. by Esti Silverberg-Kiss</td>
<td>NY: UAHC Press</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>32p.</td>
<td>$12.95</td>
<td>0807407496</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Tu B’Shevat story for grades 1-4. Drawing from legends about King Solomon and Jewish teachings about humankind’s responsibility to care for nature, this serious, dramatically illustrated story stresses personal responsibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>da Costa, Deborah</td>
<td>SNOW IN JERUSALEM</td>
<td>Illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu</td>
<td>Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>32p.</td>
<td>$15.95</td>
<td>0807575216</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Fiction for grades 1-4. During a rare day of snow in Jerusalem, a Jewish boy and an Arab boy who live in the Old City experience a rare moment of friendship when they put aside their differences to help a stray cat. Ethereal watercolor and pencil drawings portray the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem.</td>
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In this humorous story of Jewish life in New York State’s Catskill Mountain resort region in the 1920’s, a poor family finds a way to celebrate Shavuot. The characters and action recall the traditional tales of Chelm.


In this serene picture book, a little girl helps her grandmother prepare for Shabbat. The celebration of tradition provides an atmosphere of closeness and warmth, a contrast to the wintry world outside.


The Ziz, a giant bird from Jewish legend, is a softy at heart. He confesses to accidentally doing wrong and G-d assigns him a penance: to find the hardest world. The quest is a joyful learning experience.


A pair of devils make mischief in the shtetl of Brisk but the rabbi puts an end to their escapades. This jolly story transmits the traditional message that sparks of holiness can be found in unlikely places.


Bold splashes of color illustrate this interpretation of a Bible story that emphasizes the destructive power of anger. Running through the narrative is the midrashic tradition of nature’s mourning for Abel.


When Ira loses his class’s treasured Shabbat box, he solves the problem by making a new one, all on his own. This empowering story portrays a loving family, a multicultural preschool class, and a child with imagination and perseverance. Instruction for making a Shabbat box are included.


Lemuel sails off in search of the city of his dreams, returns home without realizing it, and is astonished that all the people and places look so familiar! A droll, gentle story, beautifully illustrated.


The foolish folk of Chelm, not content to wait for the moon to rise each evening, try to capture its luminescence permanently. When neither a ladder, a net, nor delicious smelling soup can lure the moon down to earth, a little girl named Rachel captures its reflection in a barrel of water.

**NOTABLE BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS**


During the harsh winter of 1944, when food is scarce and electricity has been turned off, a nine year old Dutch girl whose mother is pregnant confronts the town’s Nazi-collaborationist mayor to try to convince him to restore the electricity before the baby is born.


A factual account of a small group of courageous German students who resisted Hitler. Photographs, documents, a glossary, bibliography and index increase the book’s value for research and reports.

She’s back! Vivi Hartman, rabbi’s daughter and teenage sleuth, uses talmudic reasoning to solve a crime committed on the Seneca Reservation in New York State.


Focusing on eight Holocaust survivors now living in the United States, this powerful book shows the hardships faced by young survivors, many of whom were without homes, families, identities or hope.


Thirteen year old Clara and her family are deported from Prague to the concentration camp of Terezin. Through their experiences, the grimness and terror of the camp are shown in contrast to its rich cultural life.


Set in eighteenth century Prague, this tells of teenage Rivka’s longing to leave the safety of the Jewish Quarter and venture into the larger world that fascinates her outside.


A fifth grader discovers that the withdrawn, silent new boy in class is grieving over the sudden death of his mother. Rebuffed by Buddy when he tries to be friendly, Sam searches for answers, including Jewish answers, to the disturbing questions that arise as he tries to understand Buddy.


Everything is going wrong on Robyn’s vacation with her family in Austria! As recorded in her diary, Robyn’s comments and observations are filled with both biting teenage wit and deep concern about her mother, who cannot get over the death of her sister. A colloquial style imparts a serious theme.


Drawing on both the Bible and on legend, the author portrays heroines of passion and purpose, representing Jewish history from the period of the Patriarchs to the Persian era.


After General Grant issues an order expelling all Jews from the territory under his control, teenaged Hannah Green, a Southern belle in the making, begins to question many of the values she took for granted, including slavery.


In a gripping story about “New Christians” and the Inquisition, the author captures the terror of the times and the varying degrees of Jewish loyalty among members of one family.


In the night and fog of a concentration camp, women and children gather at night to listen to stories told by a prisoner named Mara, the daughter of a rabbi. The stories are adapted from Jewish lore; the listening is an act of resistance.

The heroism of the people of the town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France is portrayed through a story about one courageous and “ordinary” family who sheltered a Jewish child during the Holocaust.


The headmistress of an Orthodox boarding school for girls in England is anxious to discover who, among the school’s neighbors, seems to be trying to close it down. Likeable characters and an engrossing plot convey a theme of tolerance.


An inspiring account of the Holocaust experiences of Jack Mandelbaum, who survived three years as a teen in several camps. His zest for life and ability to form friendships enabled him to begin a new life in the United States.


Mendel is a good and wise man who has been granted the power to become invisible. He uses his gift to help the poor and right wrongs. These tales paint a knowing portrait of small town life and culture in pre-Holocaust Central Europe.


An encounter with a Yiddish-spouting genie named Fishel changes Stanley’s mind about Hanukkah and family traditions.