



Book Reviews

New Books for Children

Yossel Zissel and the Wisdom of Chelm. Written and illustrated by Amy Schwartz. The Jewish Publication Society, 1930 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. 1986. \$9.95. Ages 6 and up.

Poems for Jewish Holidays. Selected by Myra Cohen Livingston; illustrated by Lloyd Bloom. Holiday House, 18 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022. 1986. Ages 6 and up.

A Torah is Written. By Paul Cowan; photographs by Rachel Cowan. The Jewish Publication Society, 1930 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. 1986. \$12.95. Ages 8 and up.

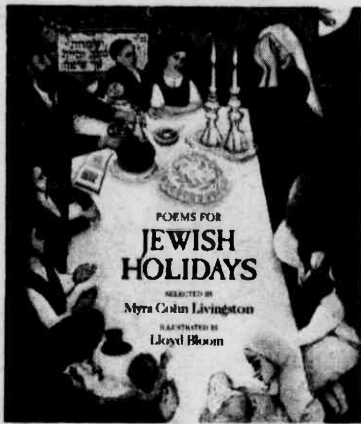
Jewish Days and Holidays. By Greer Fay Cashman; illustrated by Alona Frankel. Adama Books, 306 West 38th Street, New York, NY 10018. 1986. \$9.95. Ages 6 and up.

Reviewed by Doris Orgel.

A Chelmiter at heart—as who isn't?—I expected the most fun and fulfillment from Amy Schwartz's *Yossel Zissel and the Wisdom of Chelm*.

Well, visually, it's a delight. With her good drawing pen, Ms. Schwartz vividly conveys the down-to-earth details as well as airy lyricism of life in this shtetl. However, as the story teller, her touch is less assured.

Things start out lively and promising, with Yossel going to Warsaw to claim an inheritance he hopes to use for noble purposes such as to "build a wall around Chelm to keep out the cold." How he trades his bags of gold away before he even gets back home is within the tradition, and



amusing. But surely the end is a mistake! No, I won't, I can't, believe it. I say it can't be true that all the Chelmites "left Chelm to seek their fortunes." For just as pure-hearted, laughter-evoking foolishness is an eternal human trait, so must its home, its center be allowed to endure. To dissolve the town, to disperse its people (even with the best intentions, as here) is to do the genre harm.

My favorite of all these books is *Poems for Jewish Holidays*. Its fifteen contemporary poems resonate with tradition, but are also original, personal, full of surprises, and—most welcome—do not preach. To add to the pleasure, the sixteenth selection is "An Only Kid" with the *had gadya* refrain, rousingly affirmative, and forever fresh. And if all this is still not enough fulfillment, there are Lloyd Bloom's ten wonderful illustrations. In their dancing and swirling they're reminiscent of Chagall, but have an expressiveness all their own. I only wish that some of them could have been in color. The jacket shows what a brilliant colorist this gifted artist is.

Rachel Cowan's precise

photographs work hand in hand with Paul Cowan's lucid text to convey, step by painstaking step, exactly how *A Torah is Written*. It's a handsome book, with even a linen binding, a rarity nowadays. It's readable and informative. My only quarrel is with its just-us-men tone. The unstated but firmly held assumption is that God decreed that *soferim*, scribes, always must be male. Never for a second is the notion entertained that women could do this work with equal skill and dedication. And at the end of the book, when a new *Sefer Torah* is dedicated, its says that "Men and women follow, dancing," but in the final photograph I could only find three girls in great throngs of boys and men—no fair!

Jewish Days and Holidays has a blazing red and yellow cover. It's expensively but somewhat garishly produced—eleven holidays on different colored paper with big splashy modernistic illustrations. Frankly, I only liked three: a prayerful Jonah contained in a circle inside a complacent, half-smiling, dusky rose whale on a deep lilac page; a mother, father and the child together in their *sukkah* under a bright green sky; and the Romans storming Jerusalem, in stark black, shades of green and scarlet. All the other illustrations left me cold, because the people in them are cartoony. The text is clear but undistinguished. The only charm I could find in this book were the un-bombastic inserts on symbols, foods and customs associated with the various festivals. There's a quiz at the end which talks down to the reader. (Now you will discover how clever you are!)

Doris Orgel is the author of *Risking Love*, *The Devil in Vienna*, and many other books for younger readers.

JWB Jewish Books in Review

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Passover Recipes



CHAROSET

Charoset is a savory treat for most people. Children eagerly await that moment in the Seder ritual when they are allowed to taste this symbolic reminder of mortar.

Traditional charoset is a combination of chopped apples, nuts, sweet Passover wine and cinnamon. Young children enjoy the task of chopping and blending the ingredients before the Seder. But other countries use different combinations of fruit to prepare this integral symbol of remembrance of when we were slaves in Egypt. Perhaps this year it would be interesting to sample some of these.

ISRAELI CHAROSET

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 apple | 1 cup almonds |
| 3 bananas | 1 tsp. cinnamon |
| juice and grated rind of 1 orange | ½ cup Passover wine |
| 15 dates | honey to taste |
| | matzo meal (optional) |

Peel and chop apple. Mash bananas. Chop dates and almonds. Combine all ingredients, adding matzo meal, if necessary, until charoset is of desired consistency.

ISRAELI CHAROSET II

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3 apples, peeled | 30 dates |
| 6 bananas | 8 ozs. ground pecans |
| juice and rind of one lemon | 1 cup dry red wine |
| juice and rind of 1 orange | candied peel, if desired |
| 2 tsps. cinnamon | sugar to taste |

Fruits should be grated or mashed or ground, and mixed with seasonings and wine. Serve at room temperature. Serves 20. Leftovers can be spread on matzo for breakfast.

PERSIAN CHAROSET

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 unpeeled apple | 1 cup raisins |
| 1 unpeeled pear | 1 cup dates |
| 1 cup walnuts | 2 tsp. cinnamon |
| 1 cup hazel nuts | 2 tsp. ginger |
| 1 cup pistachio nuts | 2 tsp. apple cider vinegar |
| 1 cup almonds | sweet Passover wine |

Core and finely chop apple and pear. Finely chop nuts. Chop dates and raisins. Combine all ingredients and blend well, adding enough wine to hold mixture together. Cover and refrigerate.

GREEK CHAROSET

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 20-25 large dates, chopped | ½ cup almonds, chopped |
| 1 cup walnuts, ground | pinch of grated lemon peel |
| 1 cup raisins, chopped | sweet Passover wine |

Combine all ingredients, adding enough wine until charoset is of desired consistency.

TURKISH CHAROSET

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 orange | ¼ tsp. cinnamon |
| 1 pound pitted dates | 2 tbsp. sweet Passover wine |

Grind whole orange with dates. Add sugar. Cook 20 minutes over medium heat. Stir in cinnamon and wine. Refrigerate 4 hours or overnight. Serve at room temperature.

EGGPLANT

Passover is always a challenge, with variety sometimes being a problem. For something different, I'd suggest this eggplant dish as being perfect for a dairy lunch. Serve ½ grapefruit as an appetizer and baked potato and a vegetable salad for a complete meal.

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 large eggplant | 1 tsp. water |
| matzo meal | oil |
| oregano | 8 oz. shredded muenster cheese |
| 1 large beaten egg | 4 oz. shredded American cheese |
| | 1 can tomato mushroom sauce |

Slice eggplant. Mix matzo meal with oregano. Beat egg with water. Dip eggplant slices in egg, then into matzo meal on both sides. Fry in hot oil on both sides until cooked. In a greased pan, place eggplant slices, muenster and American cheese, and tomato mushroom sauce. (Repeat if using a square pan.) Best if done in two complete layers. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

GRANOLA

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 4 cups matzo farfel | ¼ cup peanut oil |
| 1 cup coarsely chopped nuts | ¼ cup honey |
| | ¼ cup raisins |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine everything except raisins and spread out on a cookie sheet or pizza plate with a rim. Bake for 20-30 minutes, stirring from time to time.

When cool, add raisins and store in an airtight container. (This is a good snack or a cereal, with milk.)

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